

Microstates as Global Security Partners

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Abstract

This paper looks back at the role of militarized microstates such as Hesse-Kassel (1567-1803), and forward to tribal engagement strategies and the "new normal" of hybrid security alliances on a global scale, in order to challenge the idea that the conflicts of our own era are sui generis in terms of their complexity and heterogeneity. An alternative thesis, namely that middle and great powers implemented a "long freeze" on microstate and nonstate military agency between 1917 and the 1945, is advanced. In these terms, our current circumstances are simply the end of that freeze and a return to the world faced by Hesse-Kassel. The paper concludes with three suggestions for research and teaching opportunities drawing on this thesis.

1. Introduction

The 2014 bicentennial of the Battle of Fort McHenry included a range of events focusing on the US national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner." These events, as well as the anthem's prominence in everyday life in the US, emphasize beyond doubt that Francis Scott Key's words have over time become a frequently-accessed repository of US politico-military imagery; thus, that the survival of the "bold stripes and bright stars" referred to in the anthem's first verse stands not only for the survival of a fort garrison, but of the nation itself.

However, in this paper it is the third, rather than the first, verse of the Star Spangled Banner which is of specific concern. This verse reads as follows:

*And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a Country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.¹*

In this verse, Key's perspective switches from the present to the past tense: "that band" thus refers to the British imperial forces in the American Revolutionary War, driven in "blood" and "terror" from the "land of the free and the home of the brave" either into exile or "the gloom of the grave". But who, in this case, are the "hireling and slave" who make up the British forces?

One may be tempted to assume a literal meaning for "slave" given the interplay between manumission and military service on both sides. However, given that the US was still a slave-owning state in 1814 whereas its opponent at Fort McHenry had abolished slavery seven years earlier, a more likely conclusion is that Key's use of "slave" was metaphorical rather than literal, introduced to juxtapose the unwilling imperial draftee or American loyalist with his free revolutionary adversary. This leaves only the "hireling," a figure which in modern US memory has been assigned a very specific identity: the *Hessian*.

2. The Hessians

Most straightforwardly, the "Hessians" were contingents of British auxiliaries drawn from the official forces of German kingdoms such as Hesse-Kassel, Brunswick, and Hanover. However, the Hessians' role

¹ Smithsonian Institute, 'The Star Spangled Banner: The Lyrics'. Accessed October 08, 2014, <http://amhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/the-lyrics.aspx>

in American legend has arguably far outstripped their actual impact on the nation around and in the wake of the Revolutionary War. When, almost 40 years after the Revolution, Francis Scott Key's contemporary and fellow American mythmaker Washington Irving published his "Legend of Sleepy Hollow", the figure of the "Hessian trooper ... whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War"² needed no introduction. In modern contexts, likewise, "Hessian" serves as an easily-invoked term of opprobrium for those opposed to various elements of US domestic and foreign security policies.³ Despite almost two centuries separating these audiences, in sum, the Hessian remains a widely-recognized *bête noire* whose unarticulated antagonism to the political collective makes them innately effective as a rhetorical device.

However, in order to transcend this simply rhetorical use of the term, it should be noted that it is no accident that Irving's tale specifically locates its spectral antagonist in New York's Westchester County. The Hessians, after all, played a very particular series of parts in the American Revolution, not least as a force extender for the thinly-stretched British columns – and of the region surrounding Tarry Town and Sleepy Hollow, for example, Irving notes that ... "[the] British and American line had run near it during the war; it had, therefore, been the scene of marauding, and infested with refugees, cow-boys, and all kinds of border chivalry." Westchester County was prime territory for irregular forces, in other words, and it was from civilians' experiences in zones such as this from which the image of the Hessian-as-predator is derived. Marauding and skirmishing featured prominently in the military strategies of both sides, and

² Washington Irving, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow", accessed October 9 2014 at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/41/41-h/41-h.htm>

³ See, for example, Lloyd Green's assertion that "[President Obama] seeks to project U.S. force around the globe, regardless of priority or magnitude of crisis, as if our military was a hybrid of cops and Hessians", 'Obama is the new Dubya', *The Daily Beast*, accessed October 8 2014 at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/17/obama-is-the-new-dubya.html>

while the British did field a few of their own units for such purposes (for example, light cavalry such as ‘Tartleton’s Raiders’), the task just as often fell to the “Hessians” of Irving’s story.⁴

It thus becomes clear that a complex dynamic exists between the rhetorical and factual dimensions of the figure of the “Hessian,” both in the Revolutionary War and more generally. I unpack this dynamic below in order to establish a productive midpoint between two unproductive poles: i.e., that the “Hessians” were neither generic manpower-fillers in the British order of battle, nor militarized bandits turned loose on civilians as a terror weapon, but rather a specialized product of a global security system predicated on security partnerships between microstates and hegemons, and sustained by highly instrumental domestic institutions both within those microstates and between them and their patrons.

2a. Auxiliaries, not Mercenaries

The etymology of ‘auxiliary’ places the term’s origin within the mid- to late Roman Empire. During this phase, the legions’ use of tribal contingents from tribute-paying nations or had standardized into the *auxilia* system. As with the Hessians of Irving’s Westchester County, the *auxilia* both arose from from the politico-military geography of Rome’s wars, and constituted it; that is to say, the use of auxiliaries as an early warning system or buffer belt not only worked because of the presence of these groups on the empire’s borders, but also configured these borders so that in the course of their ordinary functioning they generated potential *auxilia* by grinding down nascent national formations into a spread of divisible and co-optable factions.⁵

In the wake of the fall of Rome, then, for a state to use “auxiliaries” continued to mean that it was using readymade military formations whose allegiance to the state’s own force commander was the result of a

⁴ Rodney Atwood, ‘The Hessians, pg. 175

⁵ Edward Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire

deferred or redirected allegiance to the auxiliaries' own sovereign elsewhere. As with the Hessians, these formations were generally not designed to supplement, not duplicate, the patron's own forces: where the Romans used the *auxilia* to provide cavalry wings to their infantry-heavy armies, European nations employed Venetian, Swiss and Balkan auxiliaries to provide artillerists, pikemen, and littoral capacity.⁶

Several commonalities and distinctions between "mercenary" and "auxiliary" thus become clear. What these figures likely (but not always) have in common is simply that they are "foreigners" relative to the armies of the state employing them; what sets them apart, on the other hand, is primarily an issue of scale, with auxiliaries operating as cohesive units or even entire armies, and mercenaries tending to operate on a much smaller scale.⁷ Our standard sense of the mercenary – i.e. one who fights for pay – may well also be true of auxiliaries, but a significant difference exists in terms of the distance between the patron and the recipient of those funds. Specifically, we tend (albeit, amidst a field of exceptions!) to associate mercenaries with more-or-less direct remuneration by the patron, whereas auxiliaries might never see a single coin bearing their patron's imprint and instead simply draw regular pay from their sovereign.

In these terms, it would thus be a clear misuse of the term to refer to the Hessians of the American Revolutionary War as a "mercenary" force. These units were, after all, formally constituted formations of the state armies of Hanover, Brunswick, Hesse-Kassel, and so forth. Although they operated under the overall authority of the British crown and its field commanders, they had their own officers, their own uniforms, their own standardized gear, and their own officers. Furthermore, while the British state had inarguably entered into a fairly explicit remunerative contract by which it paid for these soldiers' presence in its war, this contract was with the Hessians' sovereigns, not the soldiers themselves. Lastly, this

⁶ Dylan Craig, 'Intermediarized Security Governance and the "Sultan's Retort"', *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, August 2014

⁷ A conspicuous exception to this rule of thumb being, of course, the condottieri of Enlightenment Italy.

contractual relationship was buttressed by a very formal set of international treaties and obligations. George III was German himself, after all – the first of his line to speak English – and was, in addition to being the head of the British state, also the “Elector” (prince) of the German kingdom of Hanover. The provision of troops by Hesse-Kassel and others to “Elector George’s” war, then, was part financial opportunism on a domestic level and part treaty obligation to a fellow German state on an interstate level. It is to the complex interactions between these levels of analysis that our analysis now turns.

2b. The *Soldatenhandel* (“Soldier Business”)

It would be difficult to overstate the degree to which states like Hesse-Kassel had, since the 17th Century, turned the provision of auxiliaries into a national industry. The clearest indicator of this specialization was an enormous growth in the military sector of these states. The 16 000 troops provided by Hesse-Kassel to the British during the American Revolutionary War, for example, should be read both against the estimated 350 000 people which made up its largely agrarian population, and its standing army of 24 000 troops; thus, that Hesse-Kassel’s contribution to the American Revolutionary War approached 5% of the entire population and two thirds of its standing army.⁸ One in four households in Hesse-Kassel was a military household; income from the *soldatenhandel* constituted, by some accounts, up to half of the state’s foreign revenue.⁹ Brunswick and the other German kingdoms had placed themselves in a similar situation, contributing forces of between 1000 (from the relatively small kingdom of Anhalt-Zerbst) and 6000 troops (Brunswick) to the British force. Each kingdom could anticipate, in exchange for the provision

⁸ Charles Tilly, *Coercion and Capital*. For comparative purposes, the reader should note that Hesse-Kassel’s mobilization rate during this period bore more of a resemblance to the US in 1945 (12 million in uniform out of a population of 120 million) than it did to Britain’s in 1783 (121 000 in uniform out of a population of 6.4 million); and at the outset of the Revolutionary War, Hesse-Kassel’s 24 000 standing troops represented *twelve times* as many soldiers, per capita, as their patron.

⁹ Edward J. Lowell, *The Hessians and the other German Auxiliaries of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War*. NY: Harper & Brothers, 1884

of these troops, to not only receive payment in advance but also to have the troops' transport and upkeep paid for by the British; a compensation for every Hessian killed in battle would also be delivered. For Hesse-Kassel alone, the contract for providing troops in North America was worth 20 million thaler – 4 million British pounds.

Providing auxiliaries, then, was not just a profitable business; it was the lifeblood of the otherwise-poor Hessian states in domestic terms, and as such it was served by a range of carefully designed institutions. Hesse-Kassel, for example, was less of a “state with an army” than an “army-sustaining state”; conscription was universal, foreigners were widely press-ganged, and only the practitioners of essential trades – meaning, in principle, military trades – were exempt from the draft. To keep the army fed between deployments, the very administrative boundaries of the state were redrawn by Frederick II so that each canton, or district, could be tasked with the upkeep and maintenance of its own regiment: this, in combination with the payment of annual retainers by states like Britain (which paid 250 000 pounds to keep 12 000 Hessians ready for action from 1760) enabled the Hessian states to sustain a level of militarization way in excess of any actual need.

In sum, then, the Hessian *soldatenhandel* should be understood as a system operating on two levels. Internationally, the Hessian states were able to play the game of international relations by offering their forces to allies and patrons, and ensure a steady flow of foreign revenue into their empty state coffers while doing so; and internally, they used carefully crafted military institutions to produce the raw material – professional soldiers – of the *soldatenhandel*.

2c. Employment

Although Hessians were only one of a range of auxiliaries available to European states in the 17th and 18th Centuries,¹⁰ they were inarguably some of the most conspicuously used. The following table illustrates the breadth of Hessian deployments in the 17th and 18th Centuries:

Conflict / Hessian Deployment	Hiring Power	Target Power	Did Hiring Power Win?
Scanian War, 1676-1679	Denmark, Brandenburg	France, Sweden	No
Morean War/War of the Holy League/Sixth Ottoman-Venetian War, 1684-1699	Venice	Ottoman Empire	Yes
Wars of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697)	Britain	France	Yes
Glorious Revolution, 1688	Holland	Britain	Yes
Jacobite Rising, 1689	Britain	France, Ireland	Yes
War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714)	Britain/Grand Alliance	France	Yes
Great Northern War (1700-1721)	Sweden	Russia, Prussia, Britain	No
War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748)	Britain	Bavaria, Austria	Yes
War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748)	Bavaria	France	No
Jacobite Uprising, 1715	Britain	Scotland/France	Yes
Jacobite Uprising, 1745	Britain	France, Scotland	Yes
Seven Years War (1756-1763)	Britain	France	Yes
American Revolution (1775-1783)	Britain	United States	No
Napoleonic Wars (1793-1794)	Britain	France	No
1798 Rebellion	Britain	Ireland	Yes

Table 1. Hessian Deployments in Europe, 1676-1798

If the arguments presented in section 2b., above, made clear the degree to which “the Hessians needed war” during this period, Table 1 is intended to make clear the degree to which “17th and 18th century war needed Hessians.”¹¹ Of particular note should be Columns 2 and 3, ‘Hiring Power’ and ‘Target Power’, in

¹⁰ Even Britain, it should be noted, initially sought to contract with Empress Catherine the Great to provide 20 000 Russian “Hessians” for use in 1775, given fears that Hessians might find ethnic loyalties a hindrance when dealing with American colonists of German descent.

¹¹ “Hessians for Hire- Meet the 18th Century’s Busiest ‘Mercenaries’.” *Military History Now*, June 15, 2013. Accessed on September 25, 2014. <http://militaryhistorynow.com/2013/06/15/hired-guns-ten-amazing-facts-about-the-hessians/>; Pesalj, Jovan, Nikola Samardžić, and Charles W. Ingrao. 2011. *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*. West Lafayette, Ind: Purdue University Press, 2011. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed September 26, 2014); Showalter, Dennis. “HESSIANS: The Best Armies Money could Buy.” *Military History* 24, no. 7 (10, 2007): 36-43,4; McDowell, R.B. “The Protestant Nation,” in T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, eds. *The Course of*

which the power players of Europe are overrepresented. Hessian forces, in other words, were not relegated to sideshows or brush wars during their heyday, but rather to pivotal clashes between great powers.¹²

Two other things stand out from Table 1. First, the table shows perhaps the last instance of the medieval practice in which troops from a single state could, though overlapping treaty obligations, find themselves on both sides of a major conflict. Hessian contingents served on both sides of the War of Austrian Succession, although they never encountered each other on the field of battle. Second, we must note both the string of victories that Britain experienced with the aid of Hessian contingents, and the more mixed record enjoyed by other patron states. Either of these in isolation might tell us something, but in conjunction they suggest a very particular conclusion: that Hessians were an indispensable part of the European system of war in the 17th and 18th Centuries, and that one would sooner conduct a war with no artillery than without giving some consideration, at least, as to the use of auxiliaries. This was, after all, an era in which Louis XIV could both emblazon his cannons with the Latin phrase *ultima ratio regum* ("The final argument of kings) and employ Huron warriors to harry the British in North America. In the figure of the Hessian we see this instrumentality of outsourced state violence taken to its most extreme via a cluster of highly evolved states capable of providing an on-call, neutral, professional army for worldwide deployment at a moment's notice.

Returning, by way of conclusion, to 'the Star Spangled Banner' and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' we see that Irving's account inadvertently grasped more of the truth of the Hessians in America than Key's. The

Irish History. Cork: The Mercier Press, 1967; Simms, Brendan. "The Irish Rebellion, 1798." *The Month* 31, no. 9 (Sep, 1998): 376.

¹² One ironic exception stands out in this regard. The small contingent of troops contributed by Anhalt-Zerbst to the British forces during the American Revolutionary War was indeed sent to a less-prominent posting in order to free up the British garrison there to deploy to the colonies; however, no sooner had the Germans arrived in this 'less prominent' posting than it was attacked by a Franco-Spanish force in what would become the Anglo-Spanish war of 1779-1783. The British, German and Corsican troops held the island through four years of blockades and repeated assaults until relieved after the end of hostilities in 1783.

Hessians were neither slaves nor hirelings; they were an internationally traded human commodity whose existence owed a great deal to a set of complex intra- and interstate security institutions, the geopolitical equivalents of the “border chivalry” of Westchester County. To rebel against an imperial overlord is a very old form of war indeed, but in coming to grips with the Hessians I argue that the American revolutionaries were inadvertently presaging a form of war never before seen on the international stage: a center-periphery counterinsurgency, with state-sponsored rebels on one side and a global hegemon drawing on a coalition of the willing and the bribed on the other.

3. Modern Hessians?

All of this poses the question: where are today's Hessian states, if any exist at all? As I have outlined above, the benefits of understanding the Hessians "in place", i.e., within their international and domestic contexts, are manifold. Asking whether some modern states exhibit, or aspire to, a Hessian mode of operation within our contemporary global security system might go as far in explaining militarization, alliance-seeking behavior, and the "border chivalry" of the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world as understanding the Hessians did in understanding the 18th Century. In addressing this opportunity, I draw three characteristics from the previous section as likely cornerstones of a "Hessian state":

- **Small in Size.** In terms of population, Hesse-Kassel, Brunswick and the other Hessian states were dwarfed by Britain, France, and the other patron states of the era. Of course, several explanations may obtain as to why being small pushes states into some patterns of behavior and not others;¹³ a fuller explanation of this topic lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, of specific interest to the issue of a generalized "Hessian state" is to distinguish between Great Power-specific security concerns of the 18th and 19th Centuries (like the maintenance of colonies in the New World) and those concerns held to be true of all states (like border integrity). It is safe to assume that while "Hessian states" may want, on some level, what all states want – power, continued existence, prosperity – it is their small size which allows them to join global high-stakes wars whose actual outcomes were of great import to their patrons but of little import to them. Thus, there is at least some reason to believe that a "Hessian state" must be small.
- **Degree of Militarization:** as Hesse-Kassel makes clear, a "Hessian state" must have the capacity to bring a disproportionate volume of state security assets to bear in service of its patrons. These assets can be complementary rather than additive to in-theater patron forces, just as the Hessian *jaegers* or Roman *auxilia* were intended to add specialist units rather than simply multiply legions, but they must be substantial - the "Hessian state", by definition, "punches above its weight."
- **Breadth of Deployment:** As indicated previously on Table 1, it is not enough for a small state to have a big army: that army must also be frequently deployed in service of global security concerns for the model of a "Hessian state" to apply.

¹³ Walt, 'Balancing vs. Bandwagoning?'

Given these three criteria, I created a list of 50 candidates for “Hessian state” status. These states are small in population terms: the largest, Kosovo, has less than 2 million inhabitants. Taken together, these candidate states represent the lowest quartile of presently extant sovereign states:¹⁴

Andorra	Grenada	Qatar
Antigua and Barbuda	Guinea-Bissau	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Bahamas	Guyana	Saint Lucia
Bahrain	Iceland	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Barbados	Kiribati	Samoa
Belize	Kosovo	San Marino
Bhutan	Liechtenstein	Sao Tome & Principe
Brunei Darussalam	Luxembourg	Seychelles
Comoros	Maldives	Solomon Islands
Cyprus	Malta	Suriname
Djibouti	Marshall Islands	Swaziland
Dominica	Mauritius	Timor-Leste
Equatorial Guinea	Micronesia	Tonga
Estonia	Monaco	Trinidad and Tobago
Fiji	Montenegro	Tuvalu
Gabon	Nauru	Vanuatu
Gambia	Palau	

Table 2a. Candidate “Hessian States”

Assessing the degree of militarization required a decision to be made relating the how best to operationalize this phenomenon. Raw defense spending varied significantly across candidate states; raw size of the military would not have been a good way to capture the military utility of auxiliary specialists, nor did it account for the proportion of combatants to noncombatants in each country’s defense forces (also known as “tooth to tail ratio”). Accordingly, with reference to the precedent set by Hesse-Kassel, defense spending as a percentage of GDP was chosen to illuminate potential modern Hesse-Kassels supporting an overlarge military in the hope of leasing it out to patron powers. 33 countries were found to have spent a measurable percentage of their GDP on defense in the 2000-2010 period; of these, 19

¹⁴ Data drawn from World Bank

spent more than 1% of their GDP on defense, with an average spending of 3.4%. To benchmark this figure, 3.4% is midway between Iraq's 2012 spending (3.5%) and Singapore's (3.3%); the US spends 3.8%.

The 19 candidate states who spent more than 1% of their 2012 GDP on defense are as follows:

Qatar	Comoros
Equatorial Guinea	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Maldives	Seychelles
Swaziland	Fiji
Bahrain	Guyana
Brunei Darussalam	Belize
Cyprus	Estonia
Djibouti	Montenegro
Guinea-Bissau	Bhutan
Solomon Islands	

Table 2b. Most Militarized Candidate States¹⁵

To determine breadth of deployment, two indices were used: country contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and country contributions to regional (e.g. NATO) peacekeeping missions between 2000 and 2010. These contributions included non-combat troops but excluded civilian contingents and police:

<u>Contributed to UNDPKO</u>	<u>Contributed to regional</u>	<u>Contributed to both</u>
Fiji	Fiji	Fiji
Guinea-Bissau	Estonia	Estonia
Qatar	Guinea-Bissau	Brunei Darussalam
Montenegro	Equatorial Guinea	
Estonia	Brunei Darussalam	
Brunei Darussalam		
Cyprus		
Djibouti		

Table 2c. Most deployed, most militarized candidate states¹⁶

¹⁵ Data drawn from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security.

¹⁶ Dataset available on request.

These ten states, then, are the best contenders for the modern “Hessian state.” They are small – among the world’s smallest sovereign entities – but they spend conspicuously on arms and they deploy their militaries abroad. These latter characteristics are especially significant when these ten states are seen against the fifty candidate states which provided our starting list. Only 13 of the 50 provided a single soldier to the UN between 2000 and 2010; only 11 provided soldiers to regional peacekeeping missions. Our “most deployed, most militarized candidate states” are thus clearly a band apart. However, are they modern Hessians?

3a. Wars

Fundamental to the model of the “Hessian state” laid out above is the idea that Hesse-Kassel’s military strength existed almost entirely to be rented out via the *soldatenhandel*. We should therefore exclude from our list any candidate state for whom a substantial military serves a more obvious Clausewitzian role, i.e. the pursuit of (interstate) politics by other means. The following thirteen candidate states experienced an interstate dispute between 2000 and 2010; candidate states from the shortlist on Table 2c. are underlined:

Bahrain	Guyana
Belize	Palau
Bhutan	<u>Qatar</u>
<u>Cyprus</u>	Sao Tome and Principe
<u>Djibouti</u>	Suriname
<u>Equatorial Guinea</u>	Tonga
Gambia	

Table 2d. Exclusion cases

It is immediately apparent that for microstates such as those on our candidate list, the presence of conventional threats requiring an expensive military and the presence of an expensive military are only roughly correlated at best; furthermore, none of the most prolifically deployed candidate states (column

3 of Table 2c.) have experienced recent conventional threats that might mandate the maintenance of a large standing military.

3b. Mercenaries

Returning to the blurred line between mercenaries and auxiliaries, and despite the fact that reliable data on the number of candidate states serving as mercenaries are hard to establish, the idea that modern mercenarism is somehow linked or coeval with the intermediarization of state violence bears examination. Accordingly, estimates of “mercenary” forces including recognized private military contractors (PMCs) but excluding individual candidate state citizens serving in foreign armies, the following states emerge as prolific producers of modern mercenaries. Once again, candidate states from the shortlist on Table 2c. are underlined:

<u>State</u>	<u>Estimated Number of Citizen-Mercenaries</u>
Malta	1700
Guyana	5398
Timor-Leste	4750
<u>Estonia</u>	<u>4383</u>
Kosovo	2779
Luxembourg	2200
Bahamas	2100
<u>Montenegro</u>	<u>1900</u>
<u>Cyprus</u>	<u>1700</u>
Barbados	1455
Belize	1180
<u>Fiji</u>	<u>1000</u>
Saint Kitts and Nevis	600
<u>Guinea-Bissau</u>	<u>300</u>
Sao Tome and Principe	67
Bahrain	40
Gambia	12
Mauritius	12
Marshall Islands	5

Table 2e. Candidate states linked to mercenary activity

Here, at last, we see an overlap: two of our three “most militarized, most deployed candidate states” (Fiji and Estonia) appear on the mercenary list. Clearly, the difficult relationship between mercenaries and auxiliaries cannot yet be considered to be a thing of the past.

4. The Global War System

In this section, I combine the rough empirical work detailed above, and the historical case study of the Hessian states of the 17th and 18th, with an argument about what we can learn from the prospect that modern Hessians, clearly distinct from other states of equivalent size but still seemingly entwined in the gray zone between “soldier” and “mercenary,” still exist in this world. As a precursor to this, however, a brief account of why it is that modern conflict studies missed the return of the Hessian is necessary. After all, with “Hessians” of one form or another being frankly ubiquitous on the 18th Century battlefield, and some initial evidence presented above that small modern states have learned to exploit the same niche either formally as auxiliaries of the UN or informally as providers of mercenaries, why are they not more prominent in our thinking about war?

4a. Gasoline Wars

The period between the cessation of global conventional warfare in 1945, and the draw-down of superpower commitments to a range of theaters in 1989 (for example, in Afghanistan, Angola and Nicaragua), was responsible for the insertion of a series of new theoretical commitments into the field of conflict studies, based around the notion that mechanized, mass conventional interstate war was giving way to a combination of intrastate war and nuclear exchange as the dominant source of predicted and actual conflict.

Mass conventional interstate war, of course, had not only a range of socially constructed foundations but also a host of material precedents or “conditions of possibility”; indeed, one might well think of these wars as wars of the gasoline era or “Gasoline Wars”, because of the many levels at which nationalism, the industrial capacity of developed nations, and new technologies such as the tank and the long-range bomber combined to enable the theater-level exchanges of violence which reached their uniquely destructive apogee in World War 2.

However, although these exchanges produced the vast majority of the human and infrastructural casualties during what Philip Bobbitt has called the “Long War” of the 20th Century between liberal democracy, fascism and communism, it nonetheless bears underlining that mechanized mass warfare had by 1945 enjoyed only the briefest of heydays – stretching, we might say, from the first successful employment of tanks at the Battle of Cambrai in 1917, to the fall of Berlin in 1945. Between these two dates, mechanized warfare swept all before it both in the landscape of the human mind and the field of battle; on either side, mechanized ground forces such as tanks were an irrelevant sideshow to the main event of artillery and infantry duels (before 1917) or of counterinsurgency conducted in the shadow of the nuclear Armageddon (after 1945).

Given that the conflict scholars of the 1945-1989 generation might well have seen with their very own eyes the tank appear and disappear as warfare’s defining technology, we might expect from their cohort a particularly acute appreciation for how quickly and completely the historical structures of war can change. This, however, was not the case. Although conflict scholars rose immediately to grapple with the salience of their era’s “new tanks” – that is, to studying the strategic considerations surrounding air-delivered atomic weapons, or to the challenges of counterinsurgency in Algeria, Vietnam, and Angola, each of which brought with it as distinctive a “way of war” as had the original, “old” tank – what is most notable about this work is not where it sees change but where it fails to see it. In this regard, where the

conflict scholars of 1945 did not go looking for changes (because there were none of any salience to find) was in the role of the state, i.e. in the first dimension of any model of the historical structures of war which considers the question “who fights”.

The end of the Gasoline War era is well exemplified by David Kilcullen’s concept of “nested hybridity.” Kilcullen defines a nested and hybrid conflict as one in which complex and many-sided state-nonstate partnerships (i.e., hybrid alliances of violent actors) are the primary motive force upon which combatant factions of all kind draw to enable their use of violence; so that while states still fight, their primary focus is on enabling (and being enabled by) their nonstate war partners on the field of battle.¹⁷ At the same time, these nonstate war actors may themselves be far from unitary, instead forming opportunistically out of alliances between a range of actors including (but by no means limited to) violent soccer hooligans, international hacker brigades, and even foreign fighters fighting under a common banner with the local rebels. And of course, any one element in such an alliance may itself be a complex alliance of even smaller actors – hence Kilcullen’s depiction of these conflicts as both hybrid and nested. The successes of these dispersed and fluid networks at fighting modern wars have even provoked mimicry in the war-fighting forces of the world’s military hegemon, with US general Stanley McChrystal asserting that ‘it takes a network’ to achieve military objectives in such conflicts.¹⁸

4b. The Long Freeze

One may well ask where these war-defining networks sprung from with such speed, that they could go from being (as I have argued above) largely absent from the pre-1989 conflict landscape, to being the

¹⁷ David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (Cambridge University Press, 2013)

¹⁸ Stanley A. McChrystal, ‘It Takes a Network: The New Front Line of Modern Warfare’, *Foreign Policy* (March-April 2011)

defining feature (as per Kilcullen) of the conflicts of the 21st Century.¹⁹ The New War and Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) theorists who made up the first wave of responses within conflict studies find their answers to this question in the mutually reinforcing processes of globalization and technological innovation.²⁰ While there may be much to recommend these ad-hoc responses to the unforeseen rise of the networks, they do not withstand the simple objection that globalization was not newly created in 1989. Instead, I contend that the reason networks surprised the scholars of the mid- to late 1990s – with Mary Kaldor, as one of the first of the New War theorists, only publishing her genre-inaugurating work in 1999 – is that the ascendancy of networks represent a paradigmatic shift in the historical structures of war; a shift which was unanticipated because it problematized the very thing which had remained stable through both the 1917-1945 mechanized wars and the 1945-1989 standoff which followed, i.e. states as holders of a military monopoly. When new actors did seem to appear in the 1990s, conflict scholars thus turned to trying to fit these new actors into existing state-centric models of war rather than asking whether our notions of war itself might need revising now that states had become partners in it rather than monopolizers of it.

Janice Thompson and others have written at length of the painstaking process by which states first invited nonstate security partners onto the field of battle, and then slowly began to exclude them from it. The “Gasoline Wars” discussed previously represent the apogee of this brief window of state monopolization of violence, but the process overall could not have succeeded had not it also been true, between 1917 and 1945, that it took a state to fight a state. Partisans and tribal auxiliaries may have dominated

¹⁹ Note that I am not ignoring the superpower-backed proxy force here; as I discussed previously, these apparently hybrid alliances cannot be considered to have represented some new form of war actor because, overwhelmingly, their existence both served and reproduced conventional interstate rivalries and factional aspirations to statehood. Contrast this with Kilcullen’s networks, in which the military objectives of these alliances can run the gamut from global human rights activism to Salafist jihadism without ever laying covetous eyes on a seat at the United Nations.

²⁰ For a broad review of transformations in war, including the revolution in military affairs, see Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (eds.), *Rethinking the Nature of War* (Routledge 2011).

peripheral theaters in both World Wars and across the colonial experience,²¹ but the wars themselves were still decided by *force majeure* of the kind that only a gasoline state could produce. The chilling effect of this consensus was longer-lasting in the battlefield of theory than on the actual battlefield, and profound enough that even when the auxiliaries reappeared on the main stage of the Global War on Terror, and the US found itself playing the role of coalition leader against a Syrian- and Iranian-backed Iraqi insurgency, the whole affair seemed more of an *evolution* of war than a *revolution*.²² The question is thus posed: having missed the marching beat of history²³ once, how can we do better in future?

5. Conclusion: A New *Soldatenhandel*

Three avenues suggest themselves for expanding on the rough and preliminary work done here.

First, an in-depth analysis of our most-deployed, most-militarized candidate states from Table 2c. is likely to produce as many insights about the domestic effects and correlates of “going Hessian.” Although the data seem to support the idea that “militarized microstates” – our modern Hessians – are indeed pursuing economies of scale in sending oversize contingents abroad at the behest of patron entities like the US, UN, and NATO, further examinations might uncover more in this regard. Does the Hessian path, given the shorter tours of duties associated with modern militaries when compared to Napoleonic militaries, mean that modern Hessian states are necessarily primed to produce the kinds of incompletely demobilized veterans who then become tomorrow’s mercenaries? Alternately, what are the interplays between

²¹ The colonial war record speaks for itself in this regard, but the ideational power associated with industrialized states in fighting pre-industrialized ones can also be glimpsed in the frank admiration of “poets of Empire” such as Rudyard Kipling, who proclaimed Sudanese fighters (“Fuzzy-Wuzzys”) to be the “the finest o’ the lot” and “a first class fightin’ man” on account of having achieved the impossible when they “broke a British square!” Rudyard Kipling, “Fuzzy Wuzzy”, Edmund Clarence Stedman, ed. (1833–1908). A Victorian Anthology, 1837–1895. 1895. Accessed 11/06/2014 at <http://www.bartleby.com/246/1128.html>

²² Hannah Arendt, On Revolution

²³ From Bismarck: ““The statesman's task is to hear God's footsteps marching through history, and to try and catch on to His coattails as He marches past.”

“modern Hessians” and institutions such as democracy and human rights? The Landgraves of Hesse-Kassel and Brunswick had little to fear from revolutionary subjects, but in contemporary autocracies and anocracies the idea that militaries should either be starved (to keep them weak) or fed handsomely (to buy their loyalty) must of necessity complicate this relationship. How does this play into the internal dynamics of the militarized microstate?

Second, as per Washington Irving, further work might well be done on the “border chivalr[ies]” to which the modern Hessian is well adapted. My own work on “sovereign interstices” falls into this category, as do works on border economies and sovereignty regimes, but a more nuanced set of measures for power projection capacity and a better model of how, for example, the (tactical, strategic) securitization objectives faced by a UN blue-helmet force are and are not like those faced by a Hessian *jaeger* company would enhance our ability to assess whether “modern Hessians” are effective boots on the ground, or a wasteful jab at collective security made by opportunistic small fry.

A third project involves comparing “micro- and macro-Hessians.” The discussion conducted here, for example, does not touch on the role played in the modern *soldatenhandel* by medium-size states such as Uruguay, Mongolia, and Pakistan – all prolific contributors to global peacekeeping, but none within the bottom quartile of sovereign states. If indeed there is something particular to the notion of a “modern Hessian”, something which is distinct from simple power politics and bandwagoning behavior extended over a global scale, then we should expect to find it in the contrast between Fiji and Australia, or between Brunei and Vietnam, or between Djibouti and Ethiopia.

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