Fighting for a Living

Published by Amsterdam University Press

Amsterdam University Press, 2013.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/66285.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/66285

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2319417
Introduction

Understanding changes in military recruitment and employment worldwide

Erik-Jan Zürcher

For a long time, labour historians have not regarded the activities of soldiers as work. Work was defined as an activity yielding surplus value and the efforts of soldiers were seen as being essentially destructive rather than productive. This assumption that military work is necessarily destructive and does not produce surplus value is debatable for at least two reasons. The first is that soldiers everywhere spend far more time in barracks than on campaign and, while they are garrisoned, they have very often been employed as cheap labour in agriculture or in building works and road repair. Many of the greatest infrastructural works in countries as far apart as France and China – city walls, dikes, canals – would never have been realized except for the massive use of military manpower. Soldiers have frequently been employed in the wake of natural disasters, in which case their labour should be regarded as similar to that of nurses and ambulance drivers. The second, more profound reason is that, as Peter Way has argued, the end result of warfare, if successful, is that surplus value for states and their elites is created through territorial gain or economic advantage.¹

Whatever the merits of the argument, the result of the view that what a soldier does is not work has been that military labour has not become the object of research in the same way as the labour of, for instance, dock-workers, textile workers, miners, or agricultural workers.² One of the very first people to resist this approach was Jan Lucassen of the International Institute of Social History (IISH). As early as 1994, he considered the “proletarian experience” of mercenaries in early modern Europe.³ That was a pioneering effort, because it is only very recently that the topic of military labour has begun to receive attention from social historians. In 2003, Bruce

¹ Following Marx, Peter Way closely identifies the growth of capitalism and the modern state with warfare, particularly, colonial warfare. See Way, “Klassenkrieg”.
² Chris Tilly and Charles Tilly express this point of view in their book Work Under Capitalism, p. 23: “To be sure, not all efforts qualify as work; purely destructive, expressive, or consumptive acts lie outside the bound; in so far as they reduce transferable use value, we might think of them as antiwork.”
³ Lucassen, “The Other Proletarians”, p. 185.
Scates published “The Price of War: Labour Historians Confront Military History”, in the Australian journal *Labour History*, and this journal has since continued to show an interest in the subject with the publications of Nathan Wise. However, the scope of the Australian publications had been limited in time and space (mainly the Australian volunteer army of the First World War). In 2006, German historical anthropologist Alf Lüdtke published a text with a broader comparative scope – “War as Work: Aspects of Soldiering in 20th Century War” – which was, however, as the title implies, limited to the recent past. In 2011, the journal *International Labor and Working-Class History* devoted a special feature to “Labor and the Military”, which contained six very interesting articles on the subject. The approach, however, is different from ours in that the military (or the army) and labour, both in the sense of work and in that of the workforce, are seen as two separate elements in the equation, the relation between which is studied, whereas in the context of *Fighting for a Living* questions are asked about military service itself as a form of labour. In our view, soldiers are not a separate category of people who sometimes fulfil the role of workers; they are workers.

Another recent initiative that indicates a growing interest in the subject was a conference at Duke University in April 2011 entitled “Beyond the Battlefield: The Labor of Military Service in Latin America and the Caribbean”, which treats some of the same issues in a regional context. But once more, the papers at this conference largely concentrated on the non-military, or at least non-martial, roles played by soldiers in the societies and economies of the region and thus seemed to understand labour as something essentially outside the core business of soldiering.

I became more and more aware of the degree to which a soldier’s life itself can be understood in terms of labour when I did empirical research in the 1990s on the everyday realities of Ottoman soldiers’ lives during the First World War. The paths of Jan Lucassen and myself converged and in 1999 we published “Conscription as Military Labour: The Historical Context”. Over the years, my specialist interest in the history of conscription in the Middle East convinced me that there was a need to pursue more wide-ranging

---

4 Wise, “The Lost Labour Force”, “In Military Parlance, I Suppose We Were Mutineers’”.
5 One article that does strike at the heart of the discussions in *Fighting for a Living* is the contribution by Jennifer Mittelstadt, “The Army Is a Service, Not a Job”, in the special feature edited by Joshua B. Freeman and Geoffrey Field.
research into the circumstances which have produced starkly different systems of recruiting and employing soldiers in different parts of the globe, as well as to analyse the social and political implications that the different systems have had in a number of states and societies. When I moved to the IISH in 2008, this idea was received enthusiastically by the research department of the institute and, as a consequence, the project Fighting for a Living was started in 2009, of which this book is the result. It concentrated on land armies in Europe, the Middle East, India, and China in the period 1500-2000 because the project was limited explicitly to state armies in the context of advanced state formation. That means that important areas and categories were not included – Latin America, Africa and Australasia – but also non-state forces (guerrilla movements, slave or peasant rebel armies). That we also excluded the navy may be seen as a serious omission, but this is because we recognized that navies, which in many respects are very different from land armies in their skill levels, in their traditions, and in their recruitment, offer a hugely interesting field for comparative research on military labour in their own right. We have decided to leave that topic to a possible separate project.

Of course, it might be argued that “the state” in a sense is a modern concept and that to use it to categorize pre-modern phenomena is anachronistic. Doubtless, neither the sixteenth-century Landsknecht nor the nineteenth-century Swiss mercenary would see himself as fighting for a “state”. They were members of corporate bodies whose identities were to a large extent formed in the field, and they were hired by kings. Early twentieth-century Ottoman soldiers certainly saw themselves as defending their ruler and their religion, but that does not have to prevent us, as twenty-first-century historians, from using the state as an analytical category, to distinguish the soldiers recruited by monarchs and republics (directly or indirectly) from guerrilla forces and rebel movements.

Such a project could build on the work done by maritime and labour historians in the mid-1990s, which has resulted in the volume of conference proceedings edited by Van Royen, Bruijn, and Lucassen, *Those Emblems of Hell?* This book is not exclusively about navies, however. It is primarily about commercial shipping.

The term “mercenary” over time has acquired very negative connotations, especially since the advent of the nation-state, when defending the fatherland came to be denoted as both a duty and a privilege of citizens. Throughout this book, however, we use it without expressing any value judgement, simply to denote those soldiers who operated in a market in the sense that they had a choice of employers and engaged themselves at least formally on the basis of free will. This serves to distinguish them from those soldiers who were also paid for their services (and sometimes generously), but who did not operate under market conditions and had only one possible employer.
If we decide to regard the work of the military as labour, one legitimate question to ask is, of course, whether military labour is in any fundamental sense different from other forms of labour. One could argue that one aspect of military work is unique in that it explicitly transcends humankind’s greatest taboo: killing members of the same species. Even if soldiers spend far more time in barracks or on the march than in actual battles, the fact that the ultimate purpose of an army is to fight and kill makes it different – more so, certainly, than the fact that there is risk involved, as for most people in most societies exposure to risk has been the normal condition, be it from violence, starvation, childbirth, or contagious disease. But whatever its exceptionality, ultimately an army is built on the factors of capital and labour just like any other industry, and it is this that makes it possible to analyse the activities of the soldier as just another form of work.

Fighting for a Living has yielded twenty hugely interesting case studies covering four continents and five centuries and these are now presented in this study. The following is an attempt, based on the twenty draft chapters that the members of the research group have produced and the many thought-provoking discussions we have had, to construct a taxonomy of military labour relations in Europe and Asia over the previous five hundred years, to discern underlying patterns and make some suggestions about what kind of determinants influence the prevalence or demise of certain types of labour relations within the military.

Huge variations

On a phenomenological level, even when we limit ourselves to land armies in the service of the state, the variety of forms of military labour is almost endless but, to make meaningful comparisons possible, a basic classification has to be applied. The search for such a classification was high on the agenda of the research group of Fighting for a Living.

One way of grouping the different phenomena is that employed by John Lynn in his seminal work on the developments of European armies.9 Lynn distinguishes four basic “army styles”: the “feudal army”, the “aggregate contract army”, the “state commission army”, and the “conscription army”. Central to his thesis is the notion that, around 1650, the aggregate contract army, which Lynn describes as “a force cobbled together from a small number of state troops, the hiring of mercenary bands, and the incorporation of private

9 Lynn, “The Evolution of Army Style in the Modern West”.

armies raised by major aristocrats and put at the ruler’s service”,¹⁰ gave way to a recognizably different style, that of the state commission army. The state commission armies that came to dominate in Europe after 1650 were both more national in composition and more uniform, as well as much bigger than the mercenary armies had been. States took upon themselves more of the responsibility for clothing, feeding, and equipping the troops, something that, among other things, led to the invention of the uniform itself. However, in his recent work, Lynn has recognized that in some countries, such as the Dutch United Provinces with their small population but well-filled coffers, the mercenary remained very important after that date. In fact, the eighteenth century was the heyday of the seigneurial system, in which smaller German states hired out their regiments to richer, more powerful states in exchange for “subsidies”. As is well known, the British fought their wars in North America partly with Hessian and Hanoverian regiments acquired in exchange for subsidies.

Although the dividing line of 1650 has kept its validity, the exceptions show that army styles in fact rarely occur in a pure form. Like Max Weber’s bureaucracy, they are ideal types. In reality, our research shows that armies were composite bodies with different army styles coexisting at the same time. Mercenaries continued to play a role in the state commission armies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even if they no longer dominated and, as Thomas Hippler shows, the army of the ancien régime also included conscripted soldiers long before the formal introduction of conscription during the French Revolution.

Lynn’s classification is both convincing and useful as an analytical tool, but it has to be recognized that it is based on European history only. Several “army styles” that have been extremely important in Asia and the Middle East in the early modern period and even later therefore are not included. The first to come to mind is that of the “slave army”. For a thousand years, from the early ninth century to the early nineteenth, mamluks or ghulams, soldiers who were bought as slaves by rulers outside their realm and regarded as their private possessions, were a prominent feature from Algiers to India. Regions as far apart as the steppes of Central Asia and Ethiopia exported soldier-slaves on a large scale. The janissaries of the Ottoman Empire clearly belonged to the same category, slave troops, although they were levied within the Ottoman domains and not bought abroad. The

¹⁰ Noted military historian John Lynn unfortunately had to withdraw from the project at an early stage, but he kindly supplied a written commentary that served as the basis for discussions in the Fighting for a Living working party. This description is taken from p. 2 of his commentary.
second style is that of the tribal forces, which were no longer an important feature of warfare in early modern Europe, but remained important to the Ottoman, Mogul, and Chinese Empires until their demise.

Naturally, a classification of army styles pertains to forms of military organization, and not to labour relations. The temptation is great to assume that the different army styles coincided with different forms of labour relation, but as the case studies in our project have shown, the two do not necessarily coincide. While in what we may perhaps broadly call “feudal” armies – that is to say, in armies raised by landlords from among their own retinue and dependent peasantry – one type of labour tributary relation seems to dominate (the one that we will call “tributary”), the studies show us that not only can two or more army styles coexist, in a single army style (for instance, a state commission army or a conscript army), different labour relations can coexist as well. In other words: a single type of army may contain very different types of labour relation. Following Lynn, Michael Sikora describes how the Prussian canton system was a “hybrid military organization” with a standing army consisting partly of foreigners (designated as mercenaries) and a militia within one structure. Virginia Aksan in her chapter gives a particularly rich example. In 1708, the military population of Damascus consisted of local janissaries or guards, imperial janissaries sent from Istanbul, mercenaries paid by the governor (who themselves seem to have been composed of Anatolian levends, Kurdish musketeers, and North Africans), and the timariot (or sipahi) cavalry – a mixture of forces that had been around since the early fifteenth century and “army styles” that had developed in the seventeenth. The French army of the Third Republic was on paper a conscript army, in which citizens exercised their right and duty to defend their fatherland, but like all nineteenth-century conscription systems, the French one enabled its more affluent citizens to pay for replacements, an opportunity they availed themselves of on a very large scale. As most of the people who were available as replacements were soldiers who had served their turn but because of their long service in the army had little chance of a job in civil society, the conscript army in fact consisted to a considerable degree of veteran professionals. The Italian case, studied by Marco Rovinello, reflects the same reality, but in an extreme form: the state was quite happy that the extra income from bourgeois “liberations” (exemptions) allowed it to recruit veterans to beef up the army and, accordingly, no fewer than forty-six articles of the 1854 regulations detailed “how enlisted people can be exonerated from service”. In the Netherlands, too, we see the same phenomenon of volunteers re-engaging as substitutes after the reintroduction of conscription in 1819-1828.
The studies in this book are about soldiers, not about officers. Everywhere and always, the officer corps was treated very differently from the rank and file and had its own set of labour relations. States have never been able to recruit or control armies on their own. They have always needed to rely on status groups (nobility, landowners, educated middle classes) for this, and mechanisms of negotiation rather than of coercion are typical of the relationship between the state and these status groups. The same seems to be true for cavalry forces, which only rarely seem to have been recruited through coercion.

We are faced with different army styles that succeed each other but in part also overlap, and we also note that within a single identifiable army style a variety of labour relations is possible. The twenty cases studied in the context of the project in total yield about a hundred different forms of labour relation. As I shall discuss below, there are several reasons for this, but one of them is that, in many places, smaller forces of “experts” coexisted with the mass of the main army: from the European Landsknechte and Albanian cavalry to the Ottoman and later Portuguese artillery experts in the Mogul army and the French officers of Mehmed Ali Pasha’s new Egyptian army, armies have always felt the need to employ high-skilled specialists for specific tasks. The seventeenth-century Swedish army of Gustavus Adolphus II offers a very good example of the coexistence of different army styles and labour relations within a single institution. In many ways the most modern army of its day, it rested on Europe’s oldest conscription system, but at the same time the Swedish king was one of the biggest employers of mercenaries in Europe with an army, only 12 per cent of which consisted of native Swedes.

Once we have learned to look at the different forms of military labour in terms of commonalities rather than differences, we then need to establish a taxonomy in which all the different forms of military employment that have occurred in the different areas over a period of five hundred years can find a place. For this we can have recourse to the basic threefold division of labour relations developed earlier in the IISH’s Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations 1500–2000: reciprocal labour, tributary labour, and commodified labour. Of course, one could argue that besides the three broad categories outlined (reciprocal, tributary, and commodified), volunteerism should figure as a fourth variant. There are several reasons why we prefer to avoid this. First of all, and except for individual cases, it is almost impossible to get accurate information about people’s motivations in joining the military. Representatives of the state and commanding officers may grossly misrepresent people’s mindset. Even if the soldiers themselves are literate and write about it in ego-documents, there...
(on the basis of shared assumptions about obligations) is subsumed under reciprocal labour. Workers who are obliged by the polity (most often the state) to provide work are categorized as tributary labour. Their labour is owned by the polity. In the third category, commodified labour, labour power is acquired by the employer (the army, the state) in the marketplace.

Our research group has tried to place the different phenomena described in the case studies in the taxonomy and to use the result to help answer the following questions:

1. How can we explain the predominance of certain types of labour relations, and combinations of labour relations, in certain circumstances? and

2. How can we explain the replacement of one dominant system by another?

It goes without saying that the taxonomy is a tool to make fruitful comparison possible and should not be forced onto historical phenomena as a straitjacket.

The very empirical richness that makes military labour such an attractive subject to a social historian means that it is as yet too early to give a definitive answer, but in this synthesis I should like to present some preliminary findings that have come out of the project. The aim is not to give a complete overview of the cases and their relevance, but to illustrate the main findings of the project with examples taken from the case studies in order to give a sense of what is possible with this kind of comparative approach, both in terms of testing the usefulness of the basic taxonomy (reciprocal/tributary/commodified) and in terms of finding determinants for the dominance of a particular system of army recruitment and employment, or the change from one system to another.

is no telling how accurate this information is. It may be a rationalization or self-justification. Tradition, economic need, or social pressure may force people to volunteer and in some cases (as the US Army during the Vietnam War) volunteering may even be a stratagem to avoid being drafted and so get a privileged position within the army. It is not the volunteer character of the “all-volunteer force” of the United States introduced in 1973 that is relevant for us, but its all-professional nature and the fact that it can be seen as a form of free and commodified labour.
Reciprocal, tributary and commodified labour

To determine where a particular form of military labour should be placed in this taxonomy, we can look at the following variables:
– Income (wages or fees, high or low, coin or kind, regular/irregular);
– Duration of service (short-term contracts to lifelong employment); and
– Legal constraints (freedom to enter or leave the system, to change employers).

The reciprocal form of labour relations perhaps figures least in our studies. Nevertheless, we see references to the use of tribal forces by the Ming emperors in China and by the Ottoman sultans. The states of Hindustan often had recourse to Afghan tribal warriors. Whether the Eight Banners of Ch’ing China, the original Manchu tribal forces, represented reciprocal or tributary labour seems debatable. Perhaps one was succeeded by the other as the Manchu tribal chiefs acquired their new status of Chinese emperor and old tribal allegiances were given a place in the Chinese imperial order. Local militias very often were also based on reciprocity: there was a generally recognized mutual obligation within closely knit communities to share the burden of defence. But when state, or “national”, armies were built by incorporating these militias into centralized structures commanded by professional officers, as we see in Ming China or ancien régime France, but also during the American War of Independence, militias evolved into a kind of primitive conscription system. The gradual transformation of militias that were primarily a form of reciprocal labour bound up in local duties to protect the community, into a form of permanent duty to the state, is traced by Sikora to early seventeenth-century Germany. The problem is that the term “militia” is really too all-embracing. Clearly for any analysis the terminology would need to be refined to make a clear distinction between militia systems in which the influence of local society dominates and those governed by the interests of the state. Frank Tallett describes how first France under Louis XIV and then many German states developed the militia system to create a trained manpower pool that could be drafted into the army as the need arose. In these systems, which culminated in the Prussian canton system, clearly a tributary rather than a reciprocal relationship dominates. The roots of modern conscription clearly lie in the militia system of France, which already used a form of conscription with the attendant mechanisms of a draft and exemptions. On the other hand we can also argue that, at the lowest level of early conscription systems like those of seventeenth-century Sweden or eighteenth-century Russia,
the fact that the local village community, which was charged with delivering recruits under the supervision of the landed nobility, spread out the burden of conscription in much the same way as it shared out the use of common lands or the obligation of agricultural labour means that a degree of reciprocity – an equal sharing of burdens and benefits within the community – was involved. As Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter notes, at least until the codification of recruitment rules in 1831, the practices of peasants and local landlords determined the recruitment process in Russia. We can also note that followers of military leaders who themselves had a contractual relationship with the court or the state were tied to these leaders through bonds of kinship or patronage and that because of this their labour relations with their commanders were of a reciprocal nature even if this relationship was itself part of a larger system in which other types of labour relation (the free commodified labour of the mercenary) dominated. The Scottish mercenaries quite often seem to fall into this category, but, as Herman Amersfoort notes, Swiss mercenaries in early modern Europe often had kinship ties with their recruiters as well. As all of these examples demonstrate, reciprocity should not be confused with equality.

The large majority of military labour relations and recruitment practices surveyed in our project fall into one of the other two categories of the IISH Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations: tributary or commodified. Tributary labour occurs when the official position of the state is that serving in the military is an obligation that can be legally imposed and that is essentially interchangeable with the categories of tax and corvée – other obligations imposed by the state. This concept is usually well understood by the populations as is evident from the name given in France to conscription – the “blood tax”. The precise form that the tributary labour relationship takes can vary from legal enslavement (as in the Ottoman devşirme) to levies for specific campaigns, hereditary obligations (as in the case of the Ming where households were obliged to provide one member of the household for military service instead of corvée or tax obligations) and early and modern forms of conscription. In levies and early forms of conscription the obligation is typically imposed on a community (the “People’s Stalwarts” of the Ming or the peasants of the Russian mir) while in modern conscription systems it is essentially an individual duty incumbent on the citizen. Tributary and reciprocal forms intermingle in the case of tribes that have a tributary relationship with, for instance, the Mogul, Ottoman or Ming Empire, but that mobilize their own tribal warriors on the basis of reciprocity.
The second quite common category is that of commodified labour. This seems to be the category into which both the aggregate contract army and the state commission army of Lynn's classification fall. Typical for these categories is that there is a contractual relationship for a limited time between the court or state on the one hand and the military on the other. Both the modern volunteer army (like the all-volunteer force of the United States studied by Beth Bailey) and the contractors operating in Iraq or Afghanistan, on whom Yelda Kaya reports, fall into this category as well.

A complicating factor is that different types of labour relationships sometimes figure on different levels of a single system. In analogy to food chains or commodity chains, one could perhaps speak about “recruitment chains”. An early modern European state may contract a mercenary colonel, who will then contract with officers, often from the nobility, who will bring to the army peasants from their feudal estates, who have a tributary relationship with their lord. The fact that early modern states, whether European, Middle Eastern, or Indian, as a rule relied on the landlords or notables to execute levies on a local level opened the door to all kinds of combinations of reciprocal and tributary systems, with the local notables and officials sometimes becoming military contractors. In the Ottoman army of the nineteenth century and right up until the First World War, Kurdish tribal chiefs were given officer rank and placed in the army hierarchy, but it proved impossible to impose regular army discipline on the Kurdish units commanded by these officers, because the rank and file recognized only tribal allegiance, not the hierarchy of the army. Theirs was a reciprocal mini-system within a tributary (because conscription-based) whole of the Ottoman army, with free commodified labour (the officers) at the top. A particularly complex case is that of the Soldatenhandel discussed by Tallett and Lynn. The soldiers hired out by, for instance, the state of Hesse-Cassel to the British crown, were hired and had no interest in the British cause, and in that sense and on that level they were mercenaries; but, one level down, they had in most cases been recruited by their own state through a form of coercion, be it a cantonal militia system or impressment. If they were “volunteers”, it was often in the form of indentured labour to pay off family debts. Robert Johnson gives the example of the native soldiers of the East India Company Army, who enlisted as volunteers, but who at the same time were offered to the army by the heads of their families, who expected these family members to serve out of tradition (and undoubtedly to add to the family income or at least save having to feed an extra mouth). This is a case of a commodified labour relation on top of a tributary or possibly even reciprocal one.
In order to create a basis for comparative analysis of all these forms of military labour relations, we need to find a common language to describe the phenomena, one that is not bound up exclusively in the historical development of one of the regions studied. In other words: rather than busy ourselves overmuch with the question of whether the timar system of the Ottoman Empire or the mansabdari system in Mogul India is a form of feudalism (which is, after all, a term from European social history), we should recognize that for hundreds of years states have been in need of a form of military service in which soldiers, mostly relatively expensive mounted warriors, were remunerated with land or the usufruct of land in exchange for exclusive service to one court or state.

**Pay and labour relations**

The question of pay does not in itself determine in which category (tributary or commodified) the different forms of military labour should be placed, although it can be an indicator: the porters recruited by the Ch’ing army from native tribes were not paid when they carried foodstuffs for their chieftain, because their work was considered corvée, but they were paid when employed directly by the state, so the very same work was tributary in one context and commodified in the other. It is true that defining military service as a duty analogous to the payment of taxes allows the state to escape the need to compete in the labour market and therefore to offer competitive wages, but most troops in tributary systems were in fact paid. The Chinese Empire, for example, did pay its garrison troops during the Ming era, even if these troops were made up of members of hereditary military households that were obliged to produce soldiers, and the Ottomans paid their janissary troops handsomely, even if legally they were the sultan’s slaves and the members of the corps had originally been levied as a form of tax-in-kind in Christian Balkan villages.

On the other hand, mercenaries and state-commissioned armies – examples of commodified labour – were often paid badly. Mercenaries could be compensated by giving them the right to pillage (about which more later) but once armies grew in size and permanence (something that seems to have happened in China five hundred years before it happened in seventeenth-century Europe), states were forced to allow soldiers to pay their way (and earn a living), either by doing non-military labour for the state (road repair being a popular option all over the world) or by producing goods for the market. Otherwise, these mass armies would simply have been
unaffordable. Here the Russian example is very clear. The soldiers of the Russian army were nominally full-time soldiers, but they were allowed to do productive work and even benefit from their own workshops and farms while they were garrisoned. The tributary labour of the soldiers thus became partly commodified. Standing armies, such as state-commissioned armies in early modern Europe, the Ottoman janissary garrisons, or the military households of the Ming, could (and in fact had to) reduce their costs by allowing soldiers to become part-time producers. The garrison troops of the Ming military households spent most of their time in agricultural labour, not on military duties and half of the grain they raised in the fields had to be handed over to the local garrison to cover the expenses of the troops. Janissaries very often became co-owners of shops in the bazaar in cities such as Istanbul, Damascus, Aleppo, or Cairo and, as Gilles Veinstein notes, this was not some form of “degeneration” of the corps in the seventeenth or eighteenth century: it had always been part of the system. Problems arose only when the janissaries became primarily involved in non-military trades.

If it is true that many soldiers in standing armies were part-time agriculturalists or artisans, the reverse is also true: peasants and artisans could become part-time or short-term soldiers. Dirk Kolff in his description of the north Indian labour market makes the point that we should primarily look at soldiering as part of the survival strategy of families and village communities. Peasants could turn into weavers or soldiers as the opportunity arose, and making use of the full range of opportunities was a sensible living strategy for families. For this reason, the Hindustani villagers equipped themselves with firearms on a massive scale, much as they would acquire or make looms or hoes. It is very likely that a similar logic holds true for the communities that delivered levends to the Ottoman army and for villages in south-western Germany that provided Landsknechte. Spreading the risk is an essential strategy for peasant communities, and seasonal soldiering could compensate for a bad harvest.

Forms of remuneration

Basically, the state has three options in the way it remunerates its soldiers: through the apportioning or the usufruct of land; through cash payment or payment in moveable goods; or through granting rights, notably the right to pillage. The granting of land or usufruct was always a popular option for cash-strapped states. It had clear advantages for societies with low levels of monetization, and it seems to have been the preferred option for relatively
expensive cavalry forces and commanding officers in medieval Europe as well as in India and the Middle East in the early modern period. Generally the rank and file were paid in cash or kind, but both in Europe (Cossacks, Croats on the Austrian military border) and in China (Banner troops) we see the phenomenon of troops settled on the borders as colonists, who were given land in the area they settled.

Both copper and silver played an important role in systems based on cash payments. Where soldiers were paid on a weekly or monthly basis, copper coin seems to have been used frequently, while silver was preferred when larger sums were involved, as for signing bonuses or payments of arrears. In the Chinese army, soldiers were paid in copper when in their garrisons, but in silver when on campaign, as carrying large amounts of copper coin would have been too burdensome.

Generally, cash payment became more widespread after the flow of silver from the Spanish Americas started, but it was primarily an attractive option for states with a high degree of centralization and huge powers of extraction (the Chinese Empire being in a class of its own in this respect) or states with highly developed credit and banking systems like the Italian city-states, the Dutch Republic, or Britain. Spain and Japan were in an exceptional position in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because their direct access to rich silver stocks gave them a unique ability to raise troops for cash. For most early modern European states, however, but also for the Ottoman Empire, raising the cash for the aggregate contract armies of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and for the expanding armies of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was, of course, notoriously difficult. One way of overcoming the problem was by allowing soldiers to raise their income by granting them the right to pillage. As both Lynn and Tallett show, for the mercenaries in the armies of the Thirty Years War this source of income was far more important than their nominal wage, and Tallett clearly has a point when he says that this makes the soldier less a wage-earner than a petty entrepreneur. While this kind of remuneration seems to have lost its importance in Europe from the mid-seventeenth century onwards as states grew stronger and increased their ability to raise taxes (as Charles Tilly has famously argued), it continued in other areas. As Mehmet Beşikçi shows, the Ottoman Empire in 1914 gave volunteer bands the right to collect “donations” from the local population, acting as a kind of de facto tax collector.

In addition to regular pay, there are many examples of bonus and incentive systems in the form of rewards for valour in battle, for the number of enemies killed, for signing up, or for extending one’s service. Aksan quotes
the memoirs of an Ottoman soldier of the early nineteenth century, who confesses to cutting off the heads of unsuspecting Christian villagers with the intention of handing them in as proof of the number of enemies he had killed. When he then meets a company of janissaries, the first thing they do is to rob him of his heads. The incentive, both for him and for the janissaries, is not bloodthirstiness or fanaticism, but simple material gain – the heads represent a source of extra income in the form of a bonus. Signing bonuses were a double-edged sword for the recruiters, however. On the one hand, the immediate attraction of an up-front payment in cash was hard to resist for many poor peasants or casual labourers in the towns, so they were very effective. On the other hand, the cash in hand gave recruits the means of survival (albeit for a limited period), and deserting immediately after the receipt of the bonus seems to have been a common strategy for recruits the world over. Signing bonuses were expensive for the state or its recruiters and, as Sikora points out, imposing military service as a duty (in other words, turning it into tributary labour), for instance, in the form of state-controlled militias, saved a great deal of money.

Perhaps a distinction should be made between the right granted to soldiers to live off the land and exact “contributions” from the population, especially in enemy territory, which can be regarded as a form of regular income, and the right to pillage, for instance after the taking of a town, which, because of its unpredictable nature, can more properly be regarded as a bonus or incentive.

Throughout the period studied there seem to have been huge differences in remuneration between officers and troops, in both Europe and Asia, but also between the well-trained professionals that were hired for their expertise (and who on the whole were much smaller in number) and large masses of peasant soldiers with only basic skills. Officers were not only much better remunerated, either in land/usufruct or cash, but in many cases (European and Indian mercenaries seem to be prime examples) officers also functioned as recruiters and were regarded, as Amersfoort says, as “owners” of their regiments. This allowed them to run their units as private enterprises and turn military service into a very profitable business. As Amersfoort shows, getting rid of these intermediaries, who controlled the military labour market, was a strong argument in favour of the establishment of cadre-militia or conscript armies in the nineteenth century.

The professional mercenaries of early modern Europe, the Household Men of Ming China, and the Ottoman janissaries, with their strong corporate identity and hierarchy based on skill and experience, can perhaps best be compared to guild members and artisans. Landsknechte regarded
their units as independent corporations and as a rule even elected their own officers without interference from any state. The soldiers of the mass armies raised in eighteenth-century France or Prussia, the levends of the Ottoman Empire, the garrison troops of the Ming, or the Green Standard forces of the Ch‘ing can be more usefully compared with unskilled labour. The evidence seems to show that pay levels for this type of soldier were fairly consistent with wages being paid at the lower end of the civilian labour market, in both Europe and Asia. Where soldiers were recruited in the labour market, the army generally seems to have been an employer of last resort, as shown by the fact that recruitment generally was easier in times of economic crisis, or in the seasons with little agricultural work, when it was hard to find other jobs. The trump card of armies no doubt was the fact that, apart from the basic wage, they offered a degree of security in the form of board and lodging, however dismal it may have been.

When discussing the remuneration of soldiers it is important to include the long-term effects as well as the immediate reward. Some of the most valuable elements of remuneration may be in the shape of future rewards such as upward social mobility, land, pensions or (in the modern state) insurance, and educational opportunities for the soldiers themselves or their children. This is true of civilian labour as well, of course, but armies have often pioneered this kind of remuneration scheme. Especially in the late twentieth century the cost of the non-pay elements in the total remuneration of soldiers became very considerable. As Kaya writes (citing James Jay Carafano), in the US Army it doubles the cost of employing a soldier.

The duration of military service

When we look at the practices in Europe and Asia in the past five hundred years, the basic distinction we see in the term of service is that between long-term and short-term. Long-term service seems to be associated with reciprocal and tributary labour relations. The most extreme form is, of course, military service that is in principle an engagement for the rest of a person’s life, as was the case with the Ottoman janissaries, mamluks, sipahis and mansabdars, Ming household troops, and Ch‘ing Eight Banner forces. Obligations within (reciprocal) tribal systems are also generally of a lifelong nature.

Still long-term, although not lifelong, was the obligation that came with militia and canton systems and more generally, with the state commission armies in Europe and, for instance, the Green Standard Army of the Ch‘ing.
In the modern all-volunteer army, military service is defined as a career and therefore fundamentally seen as a long-term engagement but, as it is contract-based, the labour relation cannot be defined as tributary and long-term service cannot be enforced.

At the opposite side of the spectrum we find the short-term contracts of mercenaries, tribal auxiliaries, and levies such as the Ottoman levends. Sometimes these were hired for a single campaign season, but more generally the – often implicit rather than explicit – term of contract seems to have been until the end of the present conflict or emergency.

One system of recruitment moved from long-term to short-term over time: conscription. In the older (seventeenth- and eighteenth-century) conscription systems, such as the Russian and the Swedish, service was for an indefinite term, which in practice usually meant twenty-five to thirty years. In the modern conscription systems introduced in the nineteenth century the term of service was much more limited and in general was lowered significantly over the course of the century. Hence, the mass conscript armies of the century between 1870 and 1970, with their two- to three-year service, formed a halfway house between the lifelong soldier and the soldier engaged for one single campaign that is so characteristic of earlier times. It has to be remembered, however, that all conscript armies have been built around a core of long-term professionals.

Free or unfree? Legal constraints

The problem with determining whether soldiers in the different armies can be classified as free or unfree labour is complex. Soldiers serving within a system of reciprocal obligations must at all times count as unfree (as reneging on the communal obligation usually carries a very high social cost), but very few soldiers in history have been legally completely free actors in the sense that they could terminate or change their employment without being subject to prosecution under criminal law. In almost every country, joining the army altered people’s legal status. In most cases this restricted their freedom, but in the case of Russia the opposite was true: conscription turned serfs into free men (and their wives into free women), albeit free men subject to military discipline. As in many other fields, the prototypical Marxian free worker historically seems to have been a quite exceptional phenomenon in the world of the military. In his essay “Who Are the Workers?”, Marcel van der Linden has argued that “there is an almost endless variety of producers in capitalism, and the intermediate forms
between the different categories are fluid rather than sharply defined".\textsuperscript{12} He gives examples of slaves working voluntarily for wages part of their time, and he also points out that “free” wage-labourers have at times been locked up by their employers, a practice that in countries such as China or India is still a regular occurrence. Our research seems to confirm the truth of this statement.

Members of aggregate contract armies undoubtedly come closest to the status of free worker. In theory they were free to choose their employer, which gave them some negotiating power, and their contracts were of limited duration, although, as James Miller notes, the actual term of service often seems to have been unrecorded. The premise seems to have been that soldiers served as long as hostilities required their presence. But even the mercenaries were subject to articles of war once they had signed up and received their bonus. According to a decree of December 1789 quoted by Hippler, the soldiers of the French revolutionary army would lose their civic rights for the duration of their (voluntary) service and even the all-volunteer force of the United States, which, according to Bailey, in the 1970s explicitly sought to redefine military service from a citizen’s obligation to the state to just another form of labour, comparable to work in services or industry, subjected its soldiers to a legal regime distinct from the civilian code. The criminalization of breach of contract seems to be an enduring characteristic of military employment that sets it apart from most civilian labour relations.

Appearances can be deceptive: the Ottoman janissaries were technically possessions of their sultan, but had accumulated traditional rights, which they guarded jealously, much like a guild. Many of the janissary mutinies that occurred from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries started as “industrial actions” or pay disputes, when they interpreted government measures as unjustly transgressing on their acquired rights.\textsuperscript{13} On the other hand, soldiers who signed up of their own accord, as free men, for an eighteenth-century state commission army were faced with draconian regulations and frequent physical abuse, which in armies such as the Prussian could be quite as bad as what plantation slaves had to face.

When judging conditions of service, whether in terms of pay or in terms of the opposition free/unfree, we should always take into account contemporary conditions in society at large. Conditions of service that may seem unfair or even atrocious in our eyes may have looked very different to a Scottish day labourer, a Russian serf, or a Hindustani peasant. The status

\textsuperscript{12} Van der Linden, “Who Are the Workers?”
\textsuperscript{13} See Stremmelaar, “Justice and Revenge in the Ottoman Rebellion of 1703”.

of free actor in the labour market, as enjoyed by a European mercenary or a Rajput warrior, historically is the exception rather than the rule, and that is true for the military profession just as much as for society at large.

**Determinants: general considerations**

Hopefully, the preceding paragraphs have shown that it is possible to classify the different forms of military labour by looking at their shared characteristics and to place them in a taxonomy based on a distinction between reciprocal, tributary, and commodified labour. Taking into account the variables of remuneration, term of service, and legal status, we can try to gauge which factors influence the choice for a particular form of military employment on the part of the state: in other words, which were the most important determinants?

All forms of military recruitment and labour represent different solutions to shared problems. To find the determinants, we first have to look at the basic problems and aspirations of the people and the state. As a rule, people like to be left alone. Outside the ruling elite, they are fully occupied by their daily concerns to make a living, to preserve their health, to protect their children, and, in the more dynamic societies, also to gain advancement or amass wealth. They are prepared to defend their homes and families and throughout recorded history they have also shown themselves ready to defend the larger community of which they perceive themselves to be a part: the village, the town, or the tribe. Indeed, in some societies (those of border and highland Scotland, of Albania, and of the Central Asian steppes, for instance), small-scale local armed conflict was the normal state of things, and it is no coincidence that these societies produced highly sought-after soldiers. Of course, history is also riddled with instances in which people have united in much larger, more anonymous groups to fight in a "cause": the crusades in medieval Europe, rebellions such as those of the Celalis in the early seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire or the Tai Pings in nineteenth-century China. Sometimes hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people have taken part in these armed movements, but two characteristics distinguish these movements from the kind of organized violence we discuss in our project: they are generally short-lived (even the longest lasting only about fifteen years, most being much shorter) and at least at the start spontaneous. In our project we deal with military systems established by states for the longer term.
States therefore have a problem: it is very difficult to get people to devote themselves exclusively or predominantly, on a permanent basis, to fighting, killing, and dying in the service of distant entities such as courts or abstract notions such as the state or the nation. Yet this is exactly what princes and states need. Faced with the need to raise soldiers, states have a basic choice between two options. To put it in Gramscian terms they can either coerce people into serving or convince them to do so through the establishment of a hegemonic cultural code, in other words, to create a measure of consent. Both coercion and consent have obvious advantages and disadvantages, which are well known from the debates about slavery versus wage labour. At first sight the hiring of professionals, in the form of both mercenaries and standing armies, may seem the more expensive option, because it makes high demands on the state’s ability to pay and often forces the state to compete with other employers in the labour market, but at least mercenaries (but also levies) have the huge advantage that they can be contracted for a single campaign season or emergency only and that they can be disbanded thereafter. This seems to have been the practice in India and Europe as early as the fourteenth century, but also in the Middle East from the seventeenth century onwards. Coercion may seem cheap, but it is more expensive than it appears at first sight, because of the need for forceful recruitment and constant supervision after soldiers have been recruited. Like slaves, coerced soldiers may also be less motivated or “productive” than those who have joined the colours of their own free will. In the Ottoman army in the First World War, conscripted Arab soldiers were sometimes marched to the front in chains and this army had the highest proportion of deserters by far of all armies engaged in the war.

On the other hand, coercion allows the state to escape the need to compete in the labour market. It does not have to entice people to become soldiers with signing bonuses nor does it have to pay wages in conformity with the market. Ultimately, what is the decisive factor may not be cost in itself, but value for money or, in other words, cost-effectiveness. It is extremely difficult to introduce the concept of “productivity” into discussions on military labour. After all, what is a soldier’s productivity when he is engaged in his core business of fighting and killing? Is it the measure of destruction he manages to inflict on the enemy? Or is it the degree to which his activities help to enlarge the tax base of the state through conquests, or further the economic interests of the elites that control the state? In economics, productivity is the total production divided by the necessary

---

14 Fenoaltea, “Slavery and Supervision in Comparative Perspective”.
workforce, so we not only have to take into account the end result of military campaigns, but also the size of the armed force needed to achieve the result. Although an interesting topic, this issue is too complicated to deal with in the context of this synthesis or even the Fighting for a Living project. In this context it is perhaps best to see cost-effectiveness as the lowest expenditure that would still give a state good prospects of success on the battlefield.

Whatever the definition, it seems to be the case that courts and states historically are looking for the army that is most effective on the battlefield at the lowest possible cost (that even this lowest possible cost can still be crippling to state and society alike is another matter). However, there can be a huge difference between the immediate costs and the long-term financial burden: both early seventeenth-century mercenaries and early twenty-first-century contractors have been expensive in the short run, but they were and are easily dismissed at the end of the conflict, while standing state commission armies were a continuous drain on the treasury and the modern all-volunteer forces bring with them huge long-term obligations to the soldiers and their families.

The choice made by different states at different times is influenced by many more factors than economic or financial ones alone, however. If maintaining a monopoly of violence, or, to put it more realistically, getting as close as it can to a monopoly of violence, is a central function of the state, the dilemma faced by states that create a powerful military they may not be able to control, and that may threaten the established order, is a very real one. This is just as true for the state that recruits highly specialized military experts (like the mamluks of the Middle East or the Turks and Afghans of Hindustan) as for the one that, through conscription, recruits mass armies from a population that is at the same time denied access to civil rights (as in the cases of Prussia and Russia). Apart from this kind of political consideration, ideological considerations or cultural prejudices may play a part. The Ottoman decision to exclude non-Muslim citizens from the conscription system (a decision that cost them up to 40 per cent of their manpower pool before 1878 and at least 20 per cent thereafter) is a case in point, but so is the commitment to general conscription of the late nineteenth-century French Republic and the Kingdom of Italy, which was informed by notions of patriotism and nation-building. As Jörn Leonhard shows, the rejection of conscription in Great Britain was influenced both by the Whig interpretation of history, which saw large standing armies as instruments of tyranny and essentially un-British, and by an idealized view of the army as representing traditional country values, with aristocratic officers and a sturdy peasantry for soldiers. This shifted toward the end of the nineteenth century with a changing image of the imperial military and
an intensified perception of continental models of the nation-in-arms – still it needed the new realities of the First World War to introduce general conscription in Britain.

Many states held strong opinions about which populations produced good soldiers, and these ideas were not without foundation. As Miller writes, one factor that made soldiering attractive for Scotsmen and made Scotsmen attractive as soldiers was the long tradition in the country of military training through the state-imposed tradition of regular weapons training shows. In addition, the internecine small-scale warfare among the Scottish nobles and clans formed a permanent training ground for future soldiers. The same is true for the Albanians, who gained a reputation as warriors both in early modern Europe and in the Middle East. The Albanian Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt turned to conscripting the fellahs of the Nile valley into his army only when he had no other options left, partly because the docile peasant population of Egypt was regarded as completely devoid of martial qualities. In the end, it turned out that with extreme coercion and professional leadership these peasants could be made into a very effective army, but as Khaled Fahmy shows, the population continued to see military service as a kind of corvée and never developed a “military ethos”.

The exemption and substitution systems that were introduced into all countries parallel to the introduction of modern conscription were often motivated by economic and ideological concerns. On the one hand, there was the fear that conscripting the most economically productive males (white-collar workers, people with education) would damage the economy, as the French debates charted by Hippler show. In the Kingdom of the Netherlands even wage-earners were exempted. On the other hand, the tendency of regimes as far apart as the Dutch, the Russians, and the Ottomans to exempt clerical students shows a concern with maintaining the ideological bases of the social order. In Germany, Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891) feared that the arming of the workers would constitute a permanent danger for the new nation-state.

**Universal patterns**

When surveying the different case studies in our project, we are struck by a number of characteristics that seem to be almost universal. One is, as noted before, that we always see different types of army style, and different

forms of recruitment and labour relations, coexisting. One telling example is that of the Delhi sultanate described by Kaushik Roy: its army consisted of mercenaries, retainers of tributary chieftains, slave soldiers, and troops maintained by holders of fiefs. Change from one army style to another may be sudden, but is rarely absolute (the transition of the US Army from conscription to an all-volunteer force in 1973, followed by similar transitions in most NATO countries, seems to be the exception that confirms the rule). While it is true that war nearly always brings with it some degree of change, the introduction of new types of armed forces triggered by developments in war very often takes place side by side with the continued existence of older forces, which remain important even if they are obsolete and have lost their credibility on the battlefield. The Ottomans kept their sipahi forces in existence for at least two centuries after their military usefulness had ended, and the Chinese Empire seems to have been equally conservative, as is shown by the example of the Eight Banners of the Chi'ing, who, according to Christine Moll-Murata and Ulrich Theobald, were militarily effective until about 1680, but were kept in existence until 1912 and consumed about a fifth of state revenues.

It is not hard to see why. Military corps were, after all, in an excellent position to defend their vested interests, especially when garrisoned in major cities or the capital. This is one reason why both the Ming and the Ottomans, when they started hiring, or levying, mercenary troops, left their obsolete formations (garrison troops and household troops in the case of the Ming, sipahis and janissaries in that of the Ottomans) in place. Another, almost inverse reason, also evident in both these cases, seems to be that a military system, even when obsolete on the battlefield, can still be an important element of control inside the country, not just in terms of law and order, but also in ideological terms. Military elites often exemplified the existing social order. The concept of military households was important to the Ming as a vital element in its social order, just as the concept of a “military class” (askeri) was to that of the Ottomans. Moll-Murata and Theobald, basing themselves on the work of Mark Elliott, say that the militarily useless Eight Banners were kept in being and paid by the state primarily because they served “the display of the presence of the ruling elite in the capital and in the provincial garrisons.” The continued reliance of the French state on its nobility for the recruiting and officering of its army even after that nobility had lost its autonomy can be interpreted in the same sense.

Hereditary military labour has been judged very differently in different states and societies. On the one extreme, we find the Ming Empire, which originally imposed hereditary military service on a section of the popula-
tion. On the other, we find the Egyptian mamluks and Ottomans, who (at least in theory) explicitly rejected the idea that sons should follow their fathers in the military profession. In both cases the injunction was closely linked to ideas about a stable social order, as hereditary service under the Ming was only one part of a rigid division of society into hereditary professions, while in the Middle East exclusion of offspring from the military elite was seen as a way to buttress a social order with a military elite (askeri) that was theoretically completely separated from the mass of the ruled in a way that is a perfect illustration of Ernest Gellner’s famous description of the “agro-literate polity”.

Apart from the formal positions of states on hereditary service, for or against, hereditary elements often played a role in communities that traditionally provided mercenary soldiers, such as the Swiss, the Scots, the Rajputs, the Gurkhas, or the “House Men” of the Ming. As Roy says for India, “at times military service defined the identity of various communities”. Indeed, in early modern aggregate contract armies in Europe children often accompanied their fathers (and mothers) on campaign, and being a member of a family with military experience was considered an advantage. Officers the world over mostly came from “military” families, although Europe from medieval times to the twentieth century seems to have been unique in the degree to which performing military service was considered the noble occupation par excellence and a hallmark of noble status. The Rajputs display the same characteristics, but in the Indian context their case seems to have been rather exceptional.

What is very clear is that there is no teleological sequence. There is no single process of armies progressing from one stage to another on some developmental or modernization path. Because of the strong ideological resistance in the Anglo-Saxon world to the idea of conscription, which was closely identified with tyranny, this system, which became universal in nineteenth-century Europe, was not introduced in Britain until a century later and then only temporarily. A century later again, the reduction of the armed forces of industrialized countries after the end of the Cold War, in combination with a glut of arms and officers caused in part by the end of the Warsaw Pact and in part by the end of apartheid in South Africa, led to a resurgence of mercenary forces in the form of “contractors” such as Blackwater as a major component in military campaigns of NATO countries. Only decades before, when mercenaries played a role only in post-colonial conflicts in Africa, the resurgence of a form of military labour that had been in decline since the seventeenth century was not predicted by anyone. Nevertheless, although there is no single path of development,
in some periods certain systems clearly come to dominate while others fade. As Lynn has noted, the mercenary did not disappear after 1650, but in Europe the state commission army did become the norm. In the Middle East the janissaries remained in existence until 1826, but irregular levies had become the mainstay of the army by the eighteenth century. After 1815, many restoration regimes, like those in the Netherlands or Italy, rejected conscription as a revolutionary legacy, but in the decades thereafter the system became dominant throughout Europe and the Middle East. What were the factors determining these changes?

Now let us try to draw up a preliminary survey of those factors that act as determinants where military employment is concerned.

**Manpower and money**

The availability of people and of money seem to be the most important determinants. It is these two factors, the classic factors of labour and capital, that create the parameters within which choices can be made. In these choices political, ideological, and cultural considerations very often play a significant role.

Let us first look at demographics, at manpower. Both the Chinese and Indian experience is determined first and foremost by the availability of an enormous, and seemingly unlimited, manpower pool. This gave the Mogul Empire the chance to raise vast peasant armies and the Chinese Empire the opportunity to raise armies that were of a different order of magnitude altogether, when compared with European, South Asian, and Middle Eastern examples. As Roy notes, at the end of the sixteenth century the population of the Indian subcontinent was five times that of the Ottoman Empire, ten times that of France, and thirty times that of England. The Chinese manpower pool was clearly unique when looked at in a global comparative perspective, as it was almost as large as that of the subcontinent in 1600 (and became much bigger later on), but much more of this population fell under the central control of Beijing than was the case in India. As Bailey shows, the transition from a conscript army to an all-volunteer force in the United States was also very much the result of demographic development, i.e. the baby boom, which “translated into a flood of young men eligible for military service in the early 1960s”. Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had a very small population, but – relative to its size – an abundance of surplus labour that was used to handling weapons. When population growth stagnated in the eighteenth century, the recruitment of Scots by the British Army became a problem. The manpower demands of the army in the nineteenth century meant that the British had to start
recruiting in the urban centres of England, rather than in the countryside, in spite of strong objections to the enlisting of urban riff-raff in the army. For the Dutch, as Amersfoort shows, the small population in combination with the drying up of foreign recruitment sources meant that a return to conscription became inevitable after 1813. This drying up was due to the expansion of the textile industry in Switzerland, which created attractive alternatives to the traditional practice of hiring oneself out as a soldier. Conversely, according to Zhao Zhongnan and Suzuki Tadashi (cited by David M. Robinson in this volume), the manpower pool available to the Ming army increased considerably when civilian farmers and military household soldiers lost their land to increasingly powerful landlords in the late sixteenth century, and this allowed the state to recruit on a large scale.

The second factor is money. Where labour markets were tight, states essentially had only two ways to strengthen their armies: either through more coercion (isolating groups of people from the labour market), which also carries a cost, or through improving the position of the army in the labour market by offering higher wages or other benefits. Coercion is much in evidence, and here too we see recurrent patterns in a number of cases. The “press”, or similar systems, although not used as frequently and brutally as in the case of the navy, was used by British, German, and Ottoman authorities to get rid of social undesirables, which usually meant vagrants, beggars, and more generally men without property, protection, or regular work. Miller gives a telling example from 1630, when the Privy Council of Scotland ordered “all beggars, vagabonds, and masterless men with no lawful trade or means of livelihood” to enlist. In 1769 an Ottoman chronicler noted that provincial governors recruited thieves and the homeless. In Russia, communities and landlords used conscription to send off criminals, troublemakers, drunkards and men deemed disobedient, unruly or simply lazy. It is hardly surprising that armies time and again complained about the quality of the personnel that was provided to them in this way. As Johnson shows, this meant that well-trained native troops in the East India Company Army, who were essentially volunteers, were considered much better than the soldiers shipped out from the mother country.

Paying higher wages was a difficult option for the state. Financing the troops was a continuous problem for most states, certainly in Europe and the Middle East. This is true as much for the Habsburgs during the Thirty Years War, who became dependent on a new breed of general contractors that provided credit as well as an army, as it was for France in the late seventeenth century or the Ottomans in the nineteenth. As Tallett notes, states such as Prussia in the eighteenth century — those which maintained
a disproportionately large army compared to population size and had under-commercialized economies – needed a high degree of coercion to fill their ranks. The Dutch Republic was on the opposite side of the spectrum. In spite of its small population, which was averse to military service because there were more profitable opportunities in the labour market, the Dutch managed to raise sizeable aggregate contract armies because of their financial strength and advanced banking system. The Chinese Empire, when united under the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties, was at the opposite side of the spectrum from Prussia in a different way. Its huge population in combination with its ability to extract and import such enormous amounts of silver and grain that it could provide for its armies in spite of their huge size (between five and ten times that of the biggest European armies) meant that it needed relatively little coercion. Roy draws attention to the fact that, because of their huge manpower pool, neither India nor China has ever had to introduce conscription. France, on the other hand, did. After the restoration of 1814, conscription was abolished, as it was under nearly all other restoration regimes as a detested revolutionary legacy, but according to Hippler the pay offered to soldiers was so low that only 3,500 recruits came forward, and in 1818 a form of compulsory military service was re-established. Conscription was seen as a cheap alternative to the pre-revolutionary state commission army and, faced with the choice between higher rewards to make the army more attractive as an employer (persuasion) and the imposition of a tributary labour relation (coercion), the French state opted for the latter.

Technology
As mentioned above, most states were constantly on the lookout for the best army at the lowest cost to the treasury. But the army had to be effective as well, which meant – and means – being technologically state-of-the-art and reliable. Many of the most far-reaching changes in army recruitment and employment were due to the desire to apply lessons learned in war (primarily through defeat) and to emulate more successful competitors. As Tallett has shown, this did not necessarily centre on new technologies (in the sense of hardware) but more often on that of “social technologies”, things such as new forms of discipline, training, and institutional structures. This seems to have been a decisive factor in the long Austro-Ottoman wars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as well as in the success of relatively small European colonial forces all over Asia. Ultimately, this led to the adoption of Western-style discipline, with uniforms and drill, in Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and China. That the change was not necessarily
always in the direction of technological innovation is demonstrated by the case of French revolutionary and Napoleonic armies, which replaced the perfectionist drill of the eighteenth-century professional armies with armies that were poorly trained and armed, but possessed overwhelming manpower, speed, and high morale.

Changes in military technology, financial constraints, and the size of the available labour pool undoubtedly were the most important factors determining the choice for a specific form of recruitment and military employment, with defeat in war acting as a catalyst, but other considerations also played a role.

**Politics**

Political considerations were always important, as balancing the need for a larger army with the need to maintain control over those who could provide it or finance it (in the early modern states) or the need to manufacture or maintain consent among the public (in modern states) has always been high on the agenda of those in power. As Charles Tilly has argued, the development of the modern state rested on its ability to offer protection and the benefits, or rent, of that protection to the interest groups that made the waging of war possible in the first place. 16 The same large modern army that allowed a prince to be successful in fighting external wars and in maintaining a monopoly of violence at home risked delivering him into the hands of his creditors. High numbers of casualties or exorbitant expenditure bring with them the risk of loss of political support. One of the major reasons behind the widespread use of contractors by the US Army in Iraq and Afghanistan has been the way it lessens the state's need to maintain public support for its policies.

**Ideological and cultural factors**

Ideological and cultural factors determining who should fight or should be excluded from the bearing of arms are also prominent. Conscription was so bound up with the revolutionary period in the eyes of the restoration regimes after 1815 that they preferred to fall back on state commission professional armies and militias (as Amersfoort shows for the Dutch case), while for the French Third Republic conscription as an expression of citizenship and as the supposed legacy of the great revolution became an issue of almost mythical proportions, as Hippler demonstrates. As noted before, the refusal of the Ottomans to conscript non-Muslims severely limited

16 Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”.
their manpower base until 1909. Rovinello highlights a problem that was faced by many states: while in itself the Italian population after the wars of unification was more than ample to fulfil the manpower needs of the army, the Piedmontese army command had severe doubts about “diluting” the army with unreliable southerners. The same kind of doubts can be found in Britain and France, not so much in terms of regional preferences but in terms of a distrust of the urban proletariat, especially after the Paris Commune of 1871. The reservations of Moltke in this respect have been noted already. The Ottomans considered recruiting Christians and Jews bad for morale, and the Russians rejected Central Asians as unsuitable until 1916.

A change in the dominant ideological paradigm sometimes exerted powerful influence on recruitment practices, especially if it went hand in hand with economic or demographic change. It may have been true that sources for mercenary recruitment in Switzerland dried up primarily because of the expansion of the textile industry, but it was also true that the spread of enlightenment ideas about citizenship and the nation made soldiering for money a disreputable trade. And, while the baby boom certainly decreased the need for forced conscription in the United States in the 1970s and made volunteerism possible, the rise of neo-liberal free-market economists and politicians, who defined conscription as a “hidden tax” and who advocated recruitment through the labour market, was a decisive factor in forcing through the transition to a professional army.

Popular cooperation and resistance

The analysis thus far concentrates almost exclusively on the needs and actions of the state, but we should not, of course, envisage the people who were the objects of the state’s intervention as being merely passive; they had and have agency as well. As much as the state has a repertoire of options, the people also have a repertoire of options open to them. Of course, they can comply with the demands of the state, and this may simply be a form of acquiescence on the part of communities faced with the power of the state. On the other hand, compliance does not necessarily have to equal acquiescence. People can see the army as an opportunity structure, offering them chances of social advancement or of improving their living standards, the chance to escape issues at home including getting women pregnant, feuds, or crimes (as Johnson notes), or simply the possibility to travel and see more of the world than their own village or valley. Rovinello shows that this was a factor for Italian recruits in the nineteenth century. He also makes the point that the draft acquired a symbolic meaning as a rite of passage to adulthood. Being declared fit for the army was a “public certification of their
masculinity” (and, one might add, of their health). In the industrialized world of the twentieth century, young healthy males who had served their country in the army were seen as attractive workers, as they had been declared healthy (psychologically as well as physically) and had acquired discipline.

The fact that the state is in need of manpower to fill the ranks of its army also enables people to instrumentalize military service for their own ends. Communities that provided soldiers during levies often managed to get compensation in the form of tax breaks. The Cossacks of the Russian Empire are perhaps the most telling example of a community that managed to exchange its loyalty and military prowess for concessions in the form of autonomy, royal protection, and tax exemption. Another interesting form of “exchange” is the one that Beşikçi describes for the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, when prisoners were released in large numbers if they agreed to serve in labour battalions or in militia units.

There is evidence that, whether in Asia, the Middle East, or Europe, the army was rarely a popular employer, at least where the rank and file were concerned. It was often an employer of last resort. But even so, when work was scarce, when harvests failed, or when industries went through a slump, the army offered low but regular pay, food, and lodging – in other words a security that was hard to find anywhere else.

On the other hand, people may also resist. But, to borrow from Charles Tilly’s conceptualization of social movements, the repertoire of resistance is also varied. First there is the tendency to avoid service altogether. Conscript systems, old and new, just like enslavement, have generally been deeply unpopular. As Beşikçi says (citing Alan Forrest), “conscription can also be depicted as a battleground between individual and local communities on the one hand and a distant impersonal state on the other”. Privileged sections of society have generally been able to make use of exemptions, and both communities and local authorities seem to have done their best to make sure that “undesirables”, who were unproductive and might otherwise create unrest in society, were taken into the army. This is a clear case of instrumentalization of the state’s recruitment drive on the part of social actors. For populations that were faced with coercion on the part of the state and its representatives, different forms of avoidance were open: going into hiding or self-mutilation, which, according to Fahmy, was especially widespread in nineteenth-century Egypt. Once in the army, both desertion and defection became options, even if sometimes highly dangerous ones.

17 Tilly, Social Movements 1768-2004.
18 Fahmy, All the Pasha’s Men, pp. 260-263.
The ultimate form of resistance was mutiny. “Industrial action” by its own armed forces was of course the most serious crisis any ruling elite could face. There seems to be some evidence that groups with a strong corporate identity that could be regarded as “artisans of war” such as mercenaries or janissaries, and troops raised from an urban background, seem to be more prone to mutiny while, on the other hand, peasant armies seem to be more prone to desertion. This may well be linked, as Sikora suggests, to the fact that peasant armies, whether early modern state commissioned armies or conscripted ones, were subjected to stronger coercion, control, and discipline from the late seventeenth century onwards. It may also be linked, I would suggest, to the different repertoires of resistance in towns and in the countryside. To an urban population, industrial action and collective protest were familiar, even before the advent of industrialization, while traditionally desertion – that is, fleeing the land and going into hiding – had been a form of resistance to the demands of the state and the landowning class in many rural societies.

A final word

What the project has shown us is that there is, to paraphrase van der Linden, an almost endless variety of military workers in history, but also that we can develop a taxonomy that allows us to group all these different forms from many different countries and periods in categories on the basis of shared characteristics and to do so in a meaningful way. When we combine the classification thus achieved with a set of the most important determinants, we can discern a number of patterns and reach tentative conclusions about the circumstances that influence the choice for a certain type of recruitment and a certain form of military employment. It is hoped that, alongside similar research conducted at the IISH on industries that offer opportunities for comparative research because of their global nature (textiles, docks, prostitution), this study of military labour helps us to increase our understanding of labour relations worldwide.19

19 In writing this synthesis I have profited from the comments and suggestions of the colleagues who participated in the project and of Jan Lucassen and Marcel van der Linden. My special thanks go to Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter for kindly correcting the English of the original text.