

MILITARY CONSCRIPTION AND DEMOCRATIC NATION-BUILDING

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, the author explores whether military conscription supports positive socio-political outcomes in terms of democratic nation-building, reduces states' propensity for war, and builds social capital. In addition, the increasing trend of thinking about military conscription in socio-political terms rather than military effectiveness was also examined. Using a detailed analysis of the arguments for and against the varying purported outcomes of military conscription, the author determines that there remains a diverse body of views and conclusions regarding the effectiveness of military conscription, and that no meaningful generalisation can or should be reached. He feels that a highly likely explanation is due to different contexts and different policy implementations in each of the case studies and samples that he has raised for discussion. Crucially, this insight points to the need to clearly determine what are the strategic objectives that military conscription, as a policy option, is meant to achieve, and what are the surrounding context and circumstances. This will allow for the implementation of military conscription to be designed for effectiveness, within its specific national security context.

Keywords: Military Conscription; Nation-Building; Social Capital; Supports; Objectives

INTRODUCTION

Military conscription has been implemented by many states for a variety of reasons. Ostensibly, the initial instances of modern military conscription were primarily driven by considerations of military effectiveness and strategic necessity.¹ Over time, however, other competing considerations and objectives have been attributed to the mechanism of conscription.² These included socio-political outcomes such as contribution to democratic nation-building, a reduction in states' propensity to go to war, and the build-up of social capital, amongst others. Even as military effectiveness appears to have given way to these socio-political objectives, the effectiveness of conscription in supporting these objectives remain contested.³

In this essay, the author sets out to determine whether military conscription provides positive socio-political results, by comparing arguments for and against each of the three aforementioned socio-political outcomes. Definitions of key terms will be established where necessary. Further, the author will examine the continued relevance of conscription for military effectiveness, which appears to have fallen out of favour in recent years. Observations along the way will support his argument that the varied conclusions drawn regarding military conscription point to the highly-

contextual nature of national circumstances and specific conscription policies. Specifically, evolving security and societal contexts globally point towards a need to be circumspect in the implementation of conscription as a policy option.

If military conscription is asserted to support democratic nation-building, it should reflect democratic principles in its objectives, execution and outcomes.

While at first glance, 'military conscription' may seem tautological, a dictionary definition of 'conscription' points at the breadth in which it may be interpreted to include military and/or civilian conscription.⁴ Taken in the broadest sense, conscription is often referred to as 'national service', with citizens serving in a variety of areas such as soldiers, police, factory workers, social workers, student mentors, etc.⁵ However, in this essay, the author will focus solely on military conscription, the compulsory enlistment of civilians for military service, in order to examine the specific question of the relationship between military

conscription and the purported socio-political outcomes. Henceforth, the use of 'conscription' will be taken to be synonymous with the more specific subset of military conscription. Additionally, although the author's focus is on military conscription, comparisons with an All-Volunteer Force (AVF) as a military recruitment and staffing policy are inevitable, and will feature where relevant. This understanding of military conscription will form the basis to begin an examination of its contribution to the socio-political objectives.

CONSCRIPTION FOR DEMOCRATIC NATION-BUILDING

Fukuyama suggests that 'nation-building' refers to an intra-state process of 'creating or repairing all the cultural, social and historical ties that bind people together as a nation.'⁶ This is contrasted with 'state-building', which is limited to 'creating or strengthening such government institutions as armies, police forces, judiciaries, central banks, tax-collection agencies, health and education systems, and the like'.⁷ However, instead of the binary distinction Fukuyama has proposed, it is possible to interpret both concepts as related to the process of (re-)building structures, both tangible ('state-building') and intangible ('nation-building'), that are typically associated with a functioning nation-state.

There is value in adopting such an encompassing interpretation of democratic nation-building, as both types of structures are mutually-reinforcing and co-exists in the everyday lives of citizens. Additionally, it is the sum total of these formal and informal structures experienced by citizens that cohere into the entity known as a nation-state. Above all, a democratic nation-state should arguably represent all of its citizens and constituents, and comprise structures that '[supports] not one political party or another but the principle of democratic governance.'⁸ Therefore, if military conscription is asserted to support democratic nation-building, it should reflect democratic principles in its objectives, execution and outcomes. These respective effects can be considered in the following fashion—does military conscription provide a morally justifiable means of building a military, civilian control of the military, and an equitable burden-sharing in the nation-state?

First, military conscription is often summarily judged to be an unethical method of military recruitment as 'the state did not have the right to infringe on personal liberties and to take the services of young men involuntarily.'⁹ Intuitively, forcing citizens to give up their time and resources would appear to be an undemocratic endeavour. This argument prioritises individual liberties, and was adopted by the 1968 Gates Commission as part of their decision to end the draft in the United States (US), as 'compelling an individual to serve is at odds with democratic principles and could be against the individual's values and beliefs,' like in the case of conscientious objectors.¹⁰

However, Sagdahl makes a case for conscription as a morally preferable form of military recruitment, by citing Rawls' assertion that 'conscription is permissible... if it is 'demanded for the defense of liberty itself.'¹¹ He recognises the counter-arguments against conscription, but proposes the 'Priority of Liberty' which suggests that in a state of emergency which necessitates the formation of an armed force for national defence, the liberty and security of the collective should 'take moral priority over other types of considerations.'¹² Essentially, the state has an overriding imperative and duty to temporarily overrule citizens' rights and liberties, in order to secure them in the long-term. Nevertheless, this argument would appear to possess a time-bound nature, as conscription can then theoretically be 'incompatible with a classical liberal view of society once it is no longer based on an existential threat to the liberal democratic order.'¹³

Second, military conscription is suggested to contribute to democratic nation-building by facilitating civilian control of the military. This argument is premised upon the belief that mandatory citizen participation in the military exposes the population to more frequent interactions and creates awareness of security and foreign policy issues. This civilian control of the military is an important aspect of democratic nation-building, following from the Clausewitzian precept that war is an extension of politics and subordinate to political ends. By exercising civilian control, a democratic nation can then ensure that the means of state violence are wielded responsibly and in line with the democratic interests of the nation and her

people. Correspondingly, Kant's writing suggests that standing armies, such as an AVF, are considered to be 'antidemocratic bulwarks' that are more inclined to exercise its independence of the democratic nation-state.¹⁴ An interesting example of such an effect of a conscripted army was during the South African liberation struggle and the anti-apartheid movement. Although the conscription of white South African males was carried out to 'control, oppress and perpetrate injustice' against black South Africans, 'at the crucial moment of the liberation struggle, [the conscripts'] demands and campaigns were aligned to those of the majority of black South Africans'.¹⁵ Ironically, it was the actions of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), as part of the broader liberation movement, which proved the effectiveness of civilian influence on the military. By targeting their messaging and campaign at the young white men who were being conscripted, the ECC sought to disrupt the incumbent state by mobilising conscripts for a democratic solution to the end of apartheid rule. Accordingly, this ensured that a significant portion of the military, a key national institution, would no longer defend the apartheid state.¹⁶



End Conscription Campaign Logo used against the South African apartheid government.

On the other hand, Sagdahl suggests that as 'modern armies are of a much smaller size than in the past', 'only very few individuals will actually get conscripted' and 'gain experience with military matters' that can be translated into legitimate influence over the military.¹⁷ Pfaffenzeller had also suggested that civilian control over the military is easier in theory than practice, as the military leadership, 'would be better organised than any spontaneous opposition of conscripted recruits is likely to be', rendering it 'highly implausible that those in the

lowest ranks of [the] organisation should exercise a control function over their leadership.'¹⁸

One way that military conscription builds social capital is in its reminder to individuals of their civic obligation to society in the form of military service.

Third, it is believed that conscription contributes to democratic nation-building by ensuring that the burden of defence is shared equally by all members of the nation. In a democratic nation, the state should ensure that 'citizens should share the duties and burdens of citizenship equally', especially in the case of an undesirable task involving the privations of military service.¹⁹ In comparison, the main alternative of method of military recruitment, the AVF, is argued to lead to a much less equitable outcome. By employing the labour market to attract volunteers for military service, 'racial minorities and the economically disadvantaged would be disproportionately represented'.²⁰ Empirically, after the draft was removed, the US military was under represented by minorities in the commissioned officer ranks, as compared to the civilian populations.²¹ While enlisted ranks were largely representative of the population, the discrepancy in the leadership positions of the military speak to the unequal burden sharing resulting from the AVF. Aside from racial inequality, the 'geography of [US] military recruits has also become increasingly distinct', resulting in the observation that 'It's small town America and the inner city' that serves.²² Thus, conscription seeks to remove this inequality that is antithetical to the principles of democratic nation-building, by demanding the commitment of every individual without exception. However, exceptions and deferments in military conscription policies have blunted this potential outcome. An obvious example is the disproportionately high number of draft-eligible men from middle and upper-class US families who were able to avoid the draft during the Vietnam War.²³ Such policy variances leading to diverse outcomes will become a common thread throughout the rest of this essay.

Empirically, German views have supported the belief that military conscription is fundamental to democratic nation-building. A 'prevailing belief among the political and military elite that, stripped of its compulsory military service element, the Bundeswehr would become irretrievably undemocratic and that undesirable changes to the form and substance of Germany's foreign and security policy would follow.'²⁴ These views held to be true for the German nation, unsurprisingly, as a result of its experience in World Wars I and II. For them, the need to ensure democratic civilian control of the military, and a full representation of civilians in the military helped to cement the role conscription played in the development of the modern German state.

In contrast, military conscription in early 20th Century Argentina arguably contributed to nation-building by integrating its citizens through a 'common social and political understanding of what it meant to be Argentine.' It 'framed citizenship around ideas of duties, but not of rights', and promoted the idea that 'the armed forces were the ideological and spiritual anchor of the nation.'²⁵ While there was greater pushback within the Argentinean society than in the German experience, and Argentine conscripts were subject to humiliating practices as disciplining punishment, the universal enforcement of military conscription (for men) in Argentina helped develop the narrative that military

service was a necessary 'rite of passage' for Argentine men.²⁶

CONSCRIPTION FOR REDUCING THE PROPENSITY FOR WAR

The claim that military conscription reduces states' propensity for war is commonly linked to the previously examined impact on civilian control of the military. Without rehashing the arguments from above, the success of the latter 'reduces the risk that an army would become an uncontrollable source of violence' and more likely for the armed forces to remain subordinate to civilian politicians as an implement of last resort.²⁷ Hence, there is reduced propensity by national leaders to be led into a conflict by the military.

Additionally, conscription further serves to exercise a restraining effect on militaries when support for conflict is adversely affected by conscription policies. Empirical evidence suggests that during the Vietnam War, 'draft vulnerability influenced political attitudes', with the anticipation and threat of the draft alone causing eligible males to become less supportive of the war effort.²⁸ The reasons for this is simply related to the unfavourable impact of wartime conscription at the individual level for eligible persons. 'Anxiety and fear were commonplace. Employment opportunities... were limited. Future plans had to be put on hold, revised or abandoned altogether. Attempts to elude the draft took



Wikipedia

The Army of the Republic of Vietnam forces assault a stronghold in the Mekong Delta.

time, energy, and financial resources.²⁹ The sum total of these effects '[fuelled] opposition to the draft and to the war.'³⁰ With reduced support for the war, nation-states would become more predisposed towards refraining from a likely war, or withdrawing from an ongoing one.

However, Henderson and Seagren suggest that the avoidance of war should be treated as a public good that is subject to the classic free-rider problem. They focus their attention on the actions of the politically powerful and influential, and propose that in a conscription system amenable to influence by external agents, the use of private resources to seek deferment for the individual 'provides an alternative with a superior private payoff' as compared to agitating against war for the entire country.³¹ This is because the amount of resources required to seek deferment for one individual is far outweighed by the resources and effort required to make a noticeable impact on governmental decisions on a major issue such as going to war.³² Further, they contrast conscription with the AVF, and suggest that 'having an AVF makes the cost of the force and of war more visible'.³³ Thus, any restraining effect conscription may have on the war is mitigated by the fact that 'part of the cost of war' is hidden as an implicit tax on the conscripts. Manning a war using an AVF is financially costly, and places a disproportionate and substantial burden on those who are more politically powerful and resourceful. In sum, the potential ease and benefit of getting a particular individual deferred from the draft, combined with the potential financial costs to man an AVF, skews the behaviour of influential individuals to prefer a conscripted armed forces for conflicts. In societies where these individuals are able to influence governmental policy, the use of conscription may actually lead to increased propensity for war.

Although Choi and James' study concluded that states with conscription are more likely to become involved in militarised interstate disputes, this was countered by Vasquez who rightly pointed out that they had 'examined the effects of military manpower systems by themselves, not their interaction with democracy... [and that there was] no compelling reason to think that democracies and non-democracies, both relying on conscripts would be equally constrained by domestic actors.'³⁴ This suggests that the effect conscription may have on a state's propensity for war is

much less important than the disposition of the state's political system and leadership. A government inclined to war may even be able to count upon conscription to 'give a broad swath of society a stronger rationale for supporting the war effort because they feel they too have a direct stake in the outcome', and 'sends a powerful signal about the importance of the conflict to ordinary voters.'³⁵ These dependencies and caveats suggest that specific contexts and policy variances may lead to diverse outcomes.

CONSCRIPTION FOR BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

According to Putnam, the term 'social capital' refers to 'connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.'³⁶ In understanding the effect of military conscription on the development of social capital, three different aspects will be examined: 1) the social obligations of individuals within the nation towards military service; 2) the military and conscription as an agent for socialisation; and 3) the effect of conscription on labour and criminal outcomes.

Conscription further serves to exercise a restraining effect on militaries when support for conflict is adversely affected by conscription policies

One way that military conscription builds social capital is in its reminder to individuals of their civic obligation to society in the form of military service. Depending on how it may be applied and enforced, Hegel claims that 'military service [is] the ultimate expression of the individual's recognition of his membership of the ethical community of the state.'³⁷ The reciprocal nature of this individual civic responsibility is expressed by Mill, who noted that 'everyone who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit, and that each person should bear his share.'³⁸ Nevertheless, the relationship between conscription and obligations in a democratic state is a contentious one. Leander points out that the idea of 'exchanging military service for citizen rights... does not

sit well with current understandings of citizenship' as 'citizenship is increasingly viewed as something one is born with, not something one has to pay for by serving in the military.'³⁹ In contrast, it is more likely that an individual's responsibility to the state are 'equated with paying taxes or actively participating in politics.'⁴⁰ Changing societal contexts will increasingly form the basis for a negotiated understanding of the effect that conscription has in this regard.

It is suggested that the militaries may 'socialise soldiers to national norms embedded in the military's manpower policy....bring together individuals of various ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds in common cause.... to break down communal barriers... [and] alter the view of future leaders.'⁴¹ Organic social networks tend to be homogenous and concentrated around common identifying traits, such as race, religion, social class. A universal and compulsory military conscription may be an 'unusually powerful agent of socialisation', by mixing individuals who are typically in their 'impressionable years' and from across different social networks, segregating them from their organic networks in typically spartan conditions.⁴² These individuals would be exposed to 'a much greater range of individuals and groups than most had ever known', and thus developed contact and relationships out of and across their original in-groups. The underlying outcome desired is a more complex social network that spans the entire nation, which affords greater 'social capital' and resilience to the society. Nevertheless, there are countervailing claims that these enforced experiences may actually produce the opposing effect and 'foster consciousness of difference' between groups.⁴³ Even if encounters are positive, there is no guarantee that 'fraternal sentiments... survive the return to civilian society.'⁴⁴ Furthermore, in contemporary societies, access to modern communications and technologies prevents any conscripts from ever really being cut off from their own networks.⁴⁵ This milieu of arguments for and against suggests that there is significant difficulty to reliably predict the outcomes of military conscription on the socialisation effect of conscription. This may also naturally be so, given the complex nature of social interactions.

Lastly, it has been proposed that military conscription supports the development of social capital

by upgrading the skills and prospects of the citizens who go through the experience, and setting them up as positive and contributing members of their social networks and relationships. In relation to the labour market, conscription could be seen as a 'positive signal of quality by employers, or improved marketable skills' that were picked up during service. For example, Swiss corporations and trade associations believe that 'militia officer training is useful for civilian career development.'⁴⁶ Similarly, the enforced routine and segregation of conscripts from the society may be seen as 'putting conscripts on a new path of lower criminal intensity... [whilst experiencing] the promotion of democratic values and obedience and discipline.'⁴⁷ Nevertheless, much of the research on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations are in agreement that overall labour and criminal outcomes are poorer following military conscription, interrupting the educational path of youth and increasing post-service crime.⁴⁸ There may even be an intensification of social inequality, with an amplifying and divergent impact of military service on both employment and crime, depending on an individual's (dis)advantaged social background.⁴⁹ These findings likely place greater stress on the stability of social networks and relationships in a society.

With advances in educational and employment norms, it will be increasingly more likely that the youths of the day will be ready to operate with the qualities required in a grey zone conflict and across the full spectrum of hybrid operations.

A dissenting voice in this regard was Lyk-Jensen, who found 'no clear direction of the effect of... military service on crime.'⁵⁰ Instead, she proposes that 'differences in results [across studies] may reflect corresponding differences in the nature of the military experience, the design of the conscription procedure, or other country-specific factors'.⁵¹ Once again, contextual

understanding and policy variances may lead to diverse outcomes, and possibly ameliorating or worsening the effects of military conscription.

In recent years, three Gulf states have introduced the draft to both 'support the emerging security needs' as well as to 'strengthen the link between state and citizen' in each of the countries. Although Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar did not originally practise conscription, preferring to staff their militaries from tribal elites who could be counted to remain loyal to the royal families, a change in the security and societal context prompted tailored models of conscription for each of the nations. Specifically in the societal context, there was a desire to 'create, develop and strengthen national unity' under a broader process of 'Emiratisation.' Second, there was a desire to shape and nudge young citizens towards positive traits such as hard work, self-sacrifice and healthy living. While some researchers believe that such 'indoctrination is doomed to fail' as the populace will easily see through and identify its true nature, the national context in which the policy is taking place should matter.⁵² The Gulf

States have a much shorter national history and national narrative than many Western nations, and it may not be useful to adopt a Western perspective in this context to assess the likelihood of success. Even within the Gulf States, the UAE was alone in seeing their conscription programme as 'part of the empowerment of Emirati women'.⁵³ Hence, it is imperative to understand the specific national and societal context, and shape the implementation of conscription policy accordingly, to achieve the effect of building social capital.

CONSCRIPTION FOR MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

Glaringly, in a discussion of conscription outcomes, military effectiveness seem to have fallen victim to a trend of diminished relevance. It should however be noted that it is not a given that conscription will lead to 'the catastrophic consequences for military standards and performance that some seem to presume'.⁵⁴ There are two parts contributing to this trend. First, the temporary and coerced nature of conscript service means that these soldiers will never be able to acquire the same level of proficiency as



Swedish conscripts in 2008.

professional soldiers in AVFs.⁵⁵ Second, the contemporary global security environment, which has shifted away from mass conventional state-on-state conflict towards smaller, bespoke military operations other than war, suggest a decreasing relevance of mass military conscription of soldiers with limited training in the specialised skills needed for tailored operations.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, there remains important reasons to consider military effectiveness and objectives when studying conscription systems. Drawing back to an earlier discussion, a conscript service that is committed to the purposes and principles of military effectiveness and professionalism will have greater legitimacy in abrogating the personal liberties of conscripts. An observable and meaningful capability to support the national security mission will likely enhance the commitment of soldiers. In Singapore, the belief is that the sum total of 'a technologically advanced military coupled with committed confident soldiers and cohesive units, anchored on a set of values shared by the people they defend' will reinforce the ability and will of the nation to prevail in a military conflict.⁵⁷

Also, conscription supports military effectiveness as an 'efficient way of building reserves.'⁵⁸ Changing security contexts in recent years have elevated the threat perception of many countries, including many Western nations which had to reinstate the draft after a period without conscription.⁵⁹ After going without conscription from 2010 to 2017, Sweden began to call up new recruits in response to rising concerns over Russian incursions and hostilities, as 'conscripts are seen as bolstering the 'deterrence' capacity of the armed forces, not undermining it.'⁶⁰ On the other side of the border, Russia continues to maintain conscription for the purpose of building up their own reserves.⁶¹ The deterrent role of mass forces are clearly still relevant.

Finally, there are strong signals that suggest warfare is moving into a more complex setting of grey zone conflict that operate under the threshold of conventional hot war, and utilising a full suite of complex technologies. Similarly, conflict and contestation will increasingly occur not just in the military domain, but across a full spectrum of levers of power. In the face of all these changes, there are

opportunities to be exploited by a conscript military. An increasing proportion of military technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence and drone technologies, are dual use technologies with civilian applications. Through conscription, a nation can bring into its armed forces its entire population of talents and skill sets, much of which are increasingly applicable in military contexts. Youths proficient in cyber security skills will find themselves much sought after in the modern military, even as a conscript soldier. Similarly, with advances in educational and employment norms, it will be increasingly more likely that the youths of the day will be ready to operate with the qualities required in a grey zone conflict and across the full spectrum of hybrid operations. This is akin to the Whole Force Concept adopted in the United Kingdom (UK), extended beyond the incorporation of reservists, by exploiting the strengths of the entire national population and matching the skills and capabilities of individuals to a military task.

CONSCRIPTION AS A POLICY OPTION

The examination of military conscription and its potential outcomes has been a problematic affair, with different researchers arriving at contrasting conclusions when examining different metrics. It is difficult and not meaningful to assert a generalised claim as to the effect of conscription on any specified outcome.

Instead, the author posits that conscription must be treated as a policy option, which is impartial to any potential socio-political, military and even economic outcomes. Of critical importance is the context in which a particular conscription system is operating within. This context comprises any or all of the nation's history, societal norms, national narrative, regional security environment, other supporting or enabling policies for military recruitment, resource allocation, etc. For example, in Germany, military service was strongly shaped by '*Kultur der Zurückhaltung* (culture of restraint)' as a result of its historical experience in World War (WW) I and II. Nevertheless, this context was gradually changing, and conscription increasingly problematic, with 'fewer young men needed for conscript service... [challenging] the constitutional claim for the universality of the practice.'⁶² Even with a strong historical path determinacy, conscription in Germany could not go further beyond its eventual termination in the face of a changing societal context.

In our contemporary environment, there are three key societal changes that would shape the immediate landscape of conscription systems, and require attention. First, the 'shift away from collectivist identities... to more individualistic and pluralistic societies... leading to a tension between 'institutional' and 'occupational' motivations for service.'⁶³ This has clearly impacted the willingness of youths to be subject to compulsory military service, but also suggests that this can be overcome by shaping the narrative of conscription to be aligned to their motivations for service. Second, the reduced 'relevance of national boundaries' leading to 'societies [and individuals which] are increasingly transnational.'⁶⁴ The more globally mobile individuals typically are the same profile of candidates for leadership positions in a conscript or militia system, as experienced in the Swiss militia.⁶⁵ This international competition for talent must be acknowledged in the legislation and commitment of military conscription. Third, the 'strong pressure on armed forces [for] the full integration of women, the acceptance of homosexuals and removal of the role of spouses.'⁶⁶ This will necessitate a conversation on the correlation between military service and citizenship. Possible policy solutions include the expansion of mandatory military conscription to all genders, such as in Norway, Sweden and Israel, or to articulate a special dispensation to 'see women as a privileged caste in society.'⁶⁷ The possible mitigations in light of these changing societal contexts should not be seen in the light of value judgement, but neutral options that take on meaning only when applied in the specific national context.

Lastly, in recognising that conscription should be viewed as a policy option, and in response to the changing societal and security context, it is paramount to clarify the strategic objectives that will direct the aims and goals of conscription for the specific context. This will allow for greater coherence of ends, ways and means.

As an example of designing conscription policy upfront, Sagdahl proposes a Nordic Model of Conscription (NMC) that is a hybrid of the Danish and Norwegian systems, and which achieves three key objectives for the armed forces: 1) to prioritise commitment and individual liberties by requiring a low

level of compulsion; 2) to prioritise recruitment for the regular armed forces, and 3) to prioritise a stated military objective of being able to contribute to international operations.⁶⁸ In this regard, Sagdahl's NMC identifies desired objectives at the start, and tailors a bespoke conscription model that will work in the context of the Scandinavian countries. It should be noted that Sagdahl hints at other problems discussed in this essay, such as the potential that the NMC 'may not provide the military with a representative or proportional demographic make-up', but acknowledges that other policy aspects, such as the minimisation of recruitment from poorer and underprivileged sections of the society, may make up for the impact on democratic representation and control.⁶⁹ The important point here is not necessarily the specifics of the policy, but the considered approach that can be taken to develop a conscription policy, by having a holistic understanding of the arguments for and against military conscription.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, the author discusses whether military conscription supports positive socio-political outcomes in terms of democratic nation-building, reduces states' propensity for war, and builds social capital. In addition, he also examines the increasing trend of thinking about military conscription in socio-political terms rather than military effectiveness. Using a detailed analysis of the arguments for and against the varying purported outcomes of military conscription, the author also determines that there remains a diverse body of views and conclusions regarding the effectiveness of military conscription, and that no meaningful generalisation can or should be reached. A highly likely explanation for this diversity is that the variance is a result of different context and different policy implementation in each of the examined case studies and samples. Crucially, this insight points to the need to clearly determine what are the strategic objectives that military conscription, as a policy option, is meant to achieve, and what are the surrounding context and circumstances. This will allow for the implementation of military conscription to be designed for effectiveness, within its specific national security context.

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