Margaret Levi

The Institution of Conscription

Johnnie get your gun, get your gun, get your gun,
Take it on the run, on the run, on the run,
Hear them calling you and me,
Ev’ry son of liberty.
Hurry right away, no delay, go today,
Make your daddy glad to have had such a lad,
Tell your sweetheart not to pine,
To be proud her boy’s in line.

George P. Cohan, “Over There”

The chronicle of mass conscription in modern democracies is the story of the changing relationship between the state and its citizens, and the Great War is one of the major turning points, especially in the Anglo-Saxon democracies.1 The institution of conscription significantly extends the obligations of male citizens and the reach of the state. Its history offers insight into both the institutional arrangements that promote or undermine the consent of the governed and the changing bases for that consent. After all, conscription poses

a serious problem for liberal theory as originally conceived. The Hobbesian
and Lockean social contracts require citizens to relinquish certain liberties
to the state in exchange for government protection of property and life. The
institution of conscription contradicts this element of liberal democracy by
demanding the possible sacrifice of one’s life for one’s country.2

The high degree of citizen support necessary for conscription hinges
on the perception of an acceptable policy bargain whose terms government
actors are likely to uphold. The minimal terms of the democratic conscrip-
tion bargain are that government will conscript according to some legis-
lated and relatively equitable formula. The history of conscription in France
throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is one of ongoing
negotiations between citizens and state officials over what makes for equitable
rules governing conscription. In the Anglo-Saxon democracies of Britain,
the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where conscription
followed the extension of democratic participation, there was a further con-
tractual requirement, at least for its initial imposition: Conscription could be
imposed only during war and, moreover, only during a war of defense.3 Sel-
dom, however, were even these terms adequate to garner universal support.
There are numerous cases in which citizens agree to conscription only when
they believe government has kept other policy bargains as well. Citizens
who lack confidence in the ability of state officials to make credible com-
mitments are unlikely to behaviorally consent to greater government control
over their lives.

The focus of this article is how the obligations of citizens are determined
and shaped and how the institutions of government were transformed during
World War I in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and
Australia. It was not until World War I that a full-scale modern, national draft
came into being in these Anglo-Saxon democracies. Conscription for local
militia was not uncommon, and several of the countries experimented with
some form of the draft prior to 1914. Both the Confederate and the Union
armies relied on conscription during the U.S. Civil War, and Australia and
New Zealand required national service for home defense early in the twen-
tieth century. All Anglo-Saxon democracies, especially the last four in my
list, share some rules and traditions. The comparison of these five countries
highlights some interesting variation in policy results. New Zealand and the
United States established conscription relatively easily. The Australian gov-
ernment was unable, despite major efforts, to impose overseas conscription in World War I. Britain effectively exempted the Irish from conscription. Canada, faced with vociferous opposition from the francophones, nonetheless succeeded in establishing a universal male draft.

What is at issue here is how government actors design policies that will elicit the contingent consent of the relevant members of the polity. By contingent consent I refer to behavioral compliance with state obligations; however, it is compliance that is neither coerced nor totally selfless. It requires either approval of the policy to which consent is requested or approval of the process by which the policy came into existence. The precondition to contingent consent is a policy bargain that defines the mutual expectations of the parties to the bargain. The policy bargain establishes the terms of exchange between the citizens and the state. It delineates the conditions under which compliance can be demanded by government; the services, money, or obedience citizens must provide; what government actors must do in return; and the penalties for failure to uphold these terms of trade.

The conscription policy bargain is a necessary but not sufficient condition for contingent consent among those who approve it or who feel the negotiation process was fair. Contingent consent also requires the existence of institutional arrangements that enforce government’s commitments. The delineation of penalties against government actors must be enforceable. Without a policy bargain, the policy lacks legitimacy. Without appropriate institutional arrangements, the policy bargain lacks credibility. Contingent consent expands with increased citizen confidence that key government actors will keep their policy promises and that government will enforce the compliance of those who attempt to free ride.

The model of contingent consent suggests that the decision making of government actors is strategic—that is, they consider the likely reactions of citizens to the policy bargain before enacting the policy. The factors that determine the strength and direction of citizen reaction are the degree of representation of key groups in the negotiation process, the track record of state actors in making credible commitments, and the institutional arrangements that ensure that government keeps its promises. To the extent that a set of citizens perceives its interests as insufficiently represented, government actors as untrustworthy, and institutions as incapable of compelling promise-keeping, that set of citizens will refuse their consent. To the extent
that a group of citizens can make reelection or implementation impossible or highly unlikely, then a policy will fail to emerge.

Alternative explanations of the variation in government policy on conscription rest on arguments about geopolitics, national cultural attitudes about conscription, and the nature of the social structure, most particularly class and social cleavages. Comparisons of countries reveal little evidence for the first two. Cleavages, although an important factor, correlate with but cannot explain the observed variation. The mediating political process and the credibility of government actors are critical to the outcome; a social structural account that neglects the institutions that affect representation and credible government commitments is neither adequately explanatory nor adequately fine-tuned.

A Short History of World War I Conscription

United Kingdom

Britain was the first of the Anglo-Saxon democracies to institute a full-scale draft that included overseas duty. The two Military Service Bills of 1916 made provision for the wartime conscription of males between 18 and 24 years of age; they were reinforced and extended by the Military Amendment Bill of 1918.

The people of Britain had long prided themselves on their relatively small standing army and continued reliance on their Militia, Volunteers, and Yeomanry. However, the importance of the Militia declined throughout the nineteenth century until it was no more than one source of reinforcements for the regulars (Spiers 1980: 162–71, 179–81; Wilcox 1994). The Boer War (1899–1902) precipitated the twentieth-century debate over conscription, and the battles in South Africa made the military command painfully aware of limitations in training nonregulars (Spiers 1980: 236–64; Adams and Poirier 1987: 2–3ff.). One consequence was a nationwide preparedness campaign dominated by the National Service League (NSL), an organization founded in 1902 to lobby for compulsory military service (ibid., 5–19). The government responded to its military problems and to the lobby for compulsory military training with a major reform of the army. Following the election of a Liberal party government in 1905, Richard Burton Haldane
professionalized the officer corps and reorganized the regular army into two relatively equal parts: a garrison for the empire and a new Expeditionary Force, for which the Militia, whose members would now be obligated for overseas duty, was to provide a special reserve. For home defense and as an additional reserve for the Expeditionary Force, he combined the Yeomanry and Volunteers into a new Territorial Force, based on voluntary enlisting organized locally (Spiers 1980: 265–87; Adams and Poirier 1987: 28–30). This, says Gooch, “was the closest that Britain could hope to get to conscription on the continental model in time of peace” (1980: 138).

The British commenced World War I with voluntary recruiting. Initially, it seemed likely to succeed, but quickly proved unsatisfactory. Voluntary recruiting depends on peer and community pressure, and this was considerable during the first months. There was a noteworthy white-feather campaign in which women would stigmatize nonenlistees by sending them or presenting them publicly with a white feather as a sign of cowardice. Many cities, particularly northern industrial cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool, competed to field pals battalions, composed of local young men who could sign up and serve together. These were successful at their start, but the energy soon burned low. In fact, the recruiting boom was relatively short-lived. There may have been enough potential recruits, but there were not enough volunteers, particularly as the war dragged on. Moreover, voluntary recruiting led to geographical and occupational inequalities. Not all communities were active in raising pals battalions; southwest England and rural counties such as East Anglia never even tried. Perhaps even more importantly, because voluntary recruitment was unrestricted, the effects on industry were uneven, sometimes adversely affecting essential wartime industrial production (Simkins 1988: 111–12; Parker 1957; Perry 1988: 16; Adams and Poirier 1987: 90–91). Winter notes that “one of the striking features of the early phase of enlistment was the high rates of recruitment, not from among workers in precarious trades who had little or nothing to lose by joining up, but rather from among skilled workers in trades that were not threatened by unemployment” (1985: 35). As the war progressed, civilian wages and employment opportunities improved. According to Simkins, the recruiting boom transformed a prewar “labor surplus into a labor shortage in many trades” (1988: 108).

In May 1915, Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith announced
the formation of a coalition government. The Cabinet was composed of twelve members from the Liberal party, eight from the Conservatives, one independent, and one from Labour (Adams and Poirier 1987: 82). One month later, David Lloyd George, minister for the new Department of Munitions, introduced the Munitions of War Act, which was "one of the initial steps in the creation of what turned out to be the greatest network of state-owned or regulated manufacturing facilities since the coming of the Industrial Revolution" (ibid.: 93). A crucial part of the new legislation was an industrial census. This was soon followed by a National Registration Act, introduced by Walter Long, the president of the Local Government Board. The evidence from these two censuses suggested that the industrial capacity of Britain was being threatened by the loss of critical workers to the military. It further revealed that there were large numbers of men in unreserved occupations who had yet to enroll (Simkins 1988: 148).

Asquith was faced with a campaign within the Cabinet and without to introduce compulsory enlistment, but he also had to contend with considerable opposition. His leadership was in jeopardy. His solution was to push voluntary recruitment to its limits. The resulting Derby Scheme, as it came to be called, involved social pressure on potential enlistees through publication of all the names in the National Register in a new set of forty-six age classifications, which were then circulated to all men between 19 and 41 (Adams and Poirier 1987: 120–21; Simkins 1988: 152–56). The men were encouraged to either join up directly or "attest" to a willingness to serve if called—with an emphasis on single men. Those who attested were given 2s 6d and an identifying armband. Workers with skills or in trades considered to be of national importance wore special armbands. The government established local tribunals to consider exemptions and other disputes. The scheme did not apply to Ireland.

The scheme failed, as many suspected it would. Asquith's government, however, had so far survived. In January 1916, he introduced what was to become the first Military Service Act of 1916. It involved the immediate compulsory military enlistment of unmarried males between the ages of 18 and 41 who did not fit one of the listed exempt categories. Conscription was soon extended with the second Military Service Act of 1916. Consequently, married men were drafted, the duration of service was extended to the duration of the war, and the standards for rejection from service were changed and
men reexamined. Ireland, which had recently experienced the Easter uprising, was not subject to conscription, however. Labor was appeased by the commitment to refrain from industrial conscription to which they were inalterably antagonistic (Simkins 1988: 157; Adams and Poirier 1987: 191–92).

By 1918 the manpower crisis was severe. The length of the war and the tremendous losses already sustained were compelling the coalition government, headed since 1917 by Liberal Prime Minister Lloyd George, to consider revoking exemptions and redefining indispensable civilian work. The prime minister was especially concerned about the reactions of the organized working class and of the Irish. Lobbying by trade union leaders against any form of civilian national service was augmented by widespread and vehement strikes in May 1917 (Adams and Poirier 1987: 202–3). To appease labor, Lloyd George engaged in a series of negotiations and concessions, the most important of which was to reinforce Asquith’s earlier commitment to refrain from industrial conscription (Winter 1985: 41; Adams and Poirier 1987: 201–5; 209–10).

The Irish presented greater difficulties. Field-Marshall Lord Kitchener, secretary of state for war, overcame his reluctance to grant war office authority for the Ulster Volunteers, a unionist group. The Ulstermen were enthusiastic supporters of the war effort, and initially so, too, were many of the nationalist Irish. John Redmond, the leader of the Irish nationalist parliamentary party, encouraged enlistment in the Irish Volunteers (Denman 1992: 20–27, 133; Simkins 1988: 94). Sinn Fein adamantly opposed Irish enlistment. Redmond believed, however, that active endorsement of voluntary recruiting by the Irish party would help in the party’s campaign for home rule, that serving together in the trenches might help reunite the Irish, and, if all else failed, that the training provided to the recruits would serve them well in the subsequent battle for independence. The link between home rule and Irish party support of enlistment was relatively explicit; speech after speech by Redmond and others in the Commons emphasized Irish cooperation as long as England treated Ireland fairly (Denman 1992: 29–30). This implied not only home rule but also authorization of the Irish Volunteers, which Kitchener continued to stall.

The Easter Rising of 1916 transformed the relationship between England and nationalist Ireland forever. The British army experienced particular difficulties in maintaining the strength of Irish units after the initial rounds of
recruitment in 1914–15, and this situation worsened considerably after the rising (Denman 1992: 132–36; Perry 1988: 20). Conscription was unthinkable in nationalist Ireland, where the costs of enforcement would be insupportably high. Lloyd George and his government perceived that a policy bargain on conscription acceptable to the majority of Irish Catholics depended on the granting of home rule—and even that might not suffice. By contrast, a policy bargain on home rule acceptable to the rest of Britain, especially the Unionists, depended on the conscription of the Irish.

Given that all other eligible men were being drafted and that eligibility itself was being extended, the anomaly of exempting the Irish began to have serious political repercussions for the government. The fairness of the draft was in question. In the view of many, the Irish were not doing their share, and the government should have been compelling them to. Dangerfield believes, “judging by his maneuvers from this time on, that Lloyd George intended to solve this dilemma by offering home rule as a quid pro quo for conscription, and then seeing to it that both were indefinitely postponed” (1979: 273).

Although Lloyd George recognized that it would be very costly and difficult to enforce the draft in Ireland (ibid.: 272–73), he introduced the Military Service Amendment Bill of 1918, including Ireland but without simultaneously introducing home rule. His speech made clear, however, that home rule was on its way, and his actions made clear that he would not expend a great deal of resources enforcing conscription in Ireland.

Various and quite diverse Irish groups strongly expressed their continued opposition to Irish conscription. While the bill was being debated in Parliament, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), through a group called the Volunteers, began organizing against conscription, as well for land redistribution (ibid.: 258–59). The Irish Parliamentary party left the Commons upon passage of the 1918 bill (Townshend 1983: 280) and formed an alliance with the Sinn Fein aimed at building united opposition to compulsory military enlistment (Dangerfield 1979: 279). They developed a pledge to be taken by all Irishmen: “Defying the right of the Government to enforce compulsory service in this country, we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal” (ibid.). The Catholic Church supported Irish resistance, and clergy read the pledge at masses (ibid.: 280; Townshend 1983: 281).

Given such concerted Irish opposition to his policy, why did Lloyd
George continue to pursue it? There are several possible answers (Adams and Poirier 1987: 240–41): It enabled Lloyd George to take repressive measures against the Sinn Fein leadership while appearing moderate through his support of some version of home rule; the policy appeased the French who wanted commitments of men and the Americans who wanted concessions to the Irish; Lloyd George was a brilliant strategist whose mix of promises and concessions enabled him to stay in power and eventually realize home rule. Another explanation is that the most important policy bargain was with those already subject to conscription. This required the government to enforce its conscription policy universally and fairly. Continued legal exemption of the Irish represented a broken contract with the mass of the British citizenry.

New Zealand

New Zealand introduced conscription in August 1916, just months after Britain. Among the countries being compared here, New Zealand experienced the least turmoil over compulsory enlistment. Indeed, Baker (1988) argues that conscription might have been introduced even sooner if the National Government, a coalition government formed in 1915, had not been mistakenly fearful of opposition, especially from organized labor.

New Zealand had been an enthusiastic participant in the Boer War with a contingent of over 6,000 men, most of whom provided their own horses (ibid.: 11). The conflict in South Africa affirmed to the New Zealanders the limits of British military might and the need for a better prepared New Zealand army. In 1909 the Liberal government, under Prime Minister John Ward, introduced compulsory military training (CMT) for males between 12 and 21 and later revised for males between 14 and 25. The vote in Parliament was nearly unanimous.

Not all New Zealanders were supporters of compulsory military training and the 1912 revisions made to it by the Reform government under Prime Minister William Massey and Minister of Defence James Allen. The same sectors of the population who would later denounce conscription comprised the opposition: pacifists, anti-militarists, and militant labor. They were the minority, but often they and their sons were willing to resist to the point of imprisonment, fines, and military detention for absence from parade (ibid.: 12).
Entry into the Great War had nearly universal support, and there was an initial rush by young men to volunteer. The illusion of the war as a short and relatively low risk adventure was shattered in May and June 1915 with word of the losses at Gallipoli and the sinking of the *Lusitania*. The effect of these events seems to have created a new surge of volunteers, but it also increased the numbers of enlistees considered necessary for a full fighting force. Although government began to have a sense of both a shortage of soldiers and a misallocation of manpower generally, conscription was not yet a popular option. According to Baker, a resort to conscription "would be an admission that New Zealanders had to be forced to fight" and that, therefore, they "were less manly or patriotic than the men of other British nations" (ibid.: 31).

August 1915 witnessed the formation of a National government in which Massey was prime minister, Ward his deputy, and Allen the minister of defence. Reform and Liberals shared the remaining twelve Cabinet seats. Labour refused a seat. Allen preferred conscription as the best way to efficiently and equitably mobilize manpower, but he and the Cabinet chose to push voluntarism to its limits before introducing compulsory enlistment (ibid.: 42–43). Baker argues that fear of strikes, resistance, and other disruptive behavior by organized labor was the primary reason for delay (ibid.: 43ff.).

The alternative to conscription was intense moral suasion, exercised both through private pressure on those presumed to be eligible and through bureaucratic tactics. There was considerable antipathy expressed toward anyone perceived, justly or not, as a shirker. Employers denied jobs or fired "shirkers"; neighbors ostracized them; churches and newspapers denounced them; and there was a noteworthy white feather campaign. Even wounded and returned veterans found themselves recipients of white feathers if they appeared to be fit. One such young man complained "he could make a feather duster with the white feathers he'd been sent" (quoted in ibid.: 51). The government ultimately found it necessary to issue badges to identify the "worthy eligibles."

The government also tried to persuade eligible young men to join with its own modified version of the National Register and the Derby Scheme. The War Regulations permitted government censorship and other abridg-
ments of civil liberties, and the government was not loath to repress those who spoke against the war or were disruptive of the recruitment effort.

By 1916 it was increasingly clear that a majority of the population supported conscription. There was some evidence that voluntarism was not producing sufficient enlistees. Perhaps as important was the recognition that only conscription could ensure equality of sacrifice. In addition, it would permit the government to mobilize and allocate the labor of the male population in an orderly, efficient, and sensible way. The introduction of conscription in Britain removed the last major obstacle. New Zealanders no longer needed to be ashamed of requiring their men to fight.

The Military Service Act was introduced in May 1916, passed in August, and implemented in November. It differed from the British bill in its categorization and ordering of potential enlistees. It had fewer exemptions, but a clear hierarchy of recruitment. The New Zealand legislation continued to encourage volunteering by dividing the country into military districts and the population into types. Each had quotas, but in New Zealand compulsory enlistment was by a monthly ballot that took place only when the quota was unfilled. In addition, Military Service Boards, composed primarily of civilians, would hear appeals for exemptions (ibid.: 86–87).

Prior to the passage of the Military Service Act, members of the labor movement called for a referendum, but the government refused to hold one (ibid.: 71). Defence Minister Allen, when he heard of the defeat of conscription by referendum in Australia, told Prime Minister Massey, “Thank goodness we have avoided that blunder” (quoted in ibid.: 155). With the introduction of conscription, several unions threatened strikes. However, the government’s fear of massive labor disruption proved ungrounded.

United States

The United States was the last of the Anglo-Saxon democracies to enter the war and the third to introduce national overseas conscription. The U.S. experienced less overt conflict over the issue than any of the other countries being compared. Several factors distinguish it: previous experience with conscription by the central state during the Civil War, the relative weakness of organized labor, and the absence of a territorially defined cultural group. In
addition, both its leaders and citizens had the opportunity to observe the experience of Britain in its efforts to achieve efficient and equitable manpower allocation. Equally important were institutional arrangements that permitted a strong president to achieve his policy preferences during wartime.

Militias, obligating the adult propertied males of the community to train regularly and to defend the community as needed, were the dominant military organization of the American colonies. By the eighteenth century, however, militias increasingly became less military than social organizations, "the hallmarks of full citizenship in the community" (Shy 1976: 29). The actual fighting soldiers volunteered, were impressed, or were hired by contract from among young men seeking adventure and from among those not permitted in the militias: lower class whites and sometimes freed slaves and Native Americans.

With the American Revolution, the Confederation created a Continental Army by relying on state-provided units and longer enlistment periods. The issue of how best to organize and maintain an effective military was a principal concern for the new, postrevolutionary, property-based democracy. The Constitution of 1789 granted the national government the power to maintain domestic order and to raise an army, but it was silent on means. The Constitution provided for taxation, both national and state roles in developing a military capacity, limited central government, and, most importantly, protection of individual liberties. From its founding (and before), the United States was a country whose citizens generally "did not expect to have their careers interrupted to serve in the army" (Chambers 1987: 28).

The changes in the military brought about by the war of 1812 remained the basis for army organization until the Civil War (Skelton 1986). The only major change in the years between 1812 and the Civil War was the abandonment of compulsory military training for the militias of the northern states (Chambers 1987: 36–39). Throughout this whole period, national conscription was politically unacceptable to the populace. Increasingly, at least in the North, even local conscription became untenable, and the old militia began to disappear.

The Civil War revealed how unprepared the country was for large-scale warfare. The Confederacy, conscious of its relatively fewer numbers and eager to retain the experienced soldiers whose one-year terms were coming due, instituted compulsory military service with the Conscription Act of
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16 April 1862. The first act required three years of service. Three years later, service was extended to the duration of the war (ibid.: 45–46).

The Union, too, ultimately introduced conscription but only after trying a number of inducement strategies to retain and attract volunteers. Even with conscription, the Union relied primarily on volunteers; the introduction of conscription was more important in inducing volunteerism than it was in its direct production of men. Only about 2% of the Union Army were conscripts and 6% substitutes furnished by those who had been drafted (ibid.: 44). Of those who actually were subjected to the draft, the totals were not much greater: 5% were actually conscripted, 9% furnished substitutes, 12% commuted, and a whopping 41% were exempted (percentages calculated from U.S. War Department 1866: 184–85, 199–200, 211–12).

The first national conscription bill, the Enrollment Act of 3 March 1863, was “largely a symbolic measure” (Chambers 1987: 51); however, the institution of conscription did have three major consequences for the nature of the state-citizen relationship. First, it redefined the military obligations of male citizens. Second, it provided the basis for extension of citizenship to some previously excluded groups. Third, it introduced federal authority where it had not previously been. As Chambers describes it:

In a land where the only federal presence had been an occasional postman or customs clerk, the act authorized the army to assign provost marshals to be in charge of the draft in every congressional district. These officers . . . were authorized to conduct door-to-door registration, hold lotteries to select potential draftees, and examine and induct eligible conscripts. Claims for exemption would be decided in each district by an ‘enrollment board’, composed of a provost marshal, a physician, and a third person, all appointed by the president. Contrary to the traditions of American jurisprudence, the decisions of these boards were to be considered final; they could not be appealed. (1987: 52)

Although the decentralization and discretion of the provost marshals and all later enrollment and draft boards reflected the American commitment to localism, they nonetheless were the means of extending the reach of the national state into the lives of the ordinary citizen.

The introduction of conscription was not universally popular. The summer of 1863 witnessed some of “the worst rioting in the nation’s history”
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(ibid.: 53). Opposition to the draft also took the form of evasion (ibid.: 54–55; see also Murdock 1971). Approximately 160 thousand men failed to show up for examinations. The draft evaders were disproportionately the lower classes: Irish and Roman Catholic immigrants living in the cities and native-born Protestants living in the rural regions. Urban opposition to the draft seems to have been largely grounded in class and culture. Although Irish Catholics represented a majority of the volunteers for the army, they also represented a majority of the urban protesters. According to Chambers (1987: 54–55), immigrants at the bottom of the industrial workforce feared they would be disproportionately conscripted and killed, and they distrusted the Protestant, nativist Republican Party and the powerful government it controlled. He claims the rural evaders possessed the Jacksonian Democratic party commitment to limited central government. They may have also feared for their crops and their livelihood.

The conclusion of the Civil War signaled the end of conscription. By the turn of the century there was a preparedness campaign, and with the advent of the war in Europe in 1914 there was significant mobilization by pro-conscriptionists. There was also considerable opposition to the draft by members of the Democratic party, particularly the agrarian wing, peace groups, left-wing political organizations, and various sectors of both the immigrant and rural populations. Some of the opposition fell away with the passage of the Selective Draft Act in April 1917, and the voices of many who maintained their opposition were repressed—most notably members of the Socialist party and of the International Workers of the World (IWW).

As the war proceeded, the industrial and social elite came to favor a selective service system during wartime. President Woodrow Wilson initially, probably for reasons of political expediency, preferred to institute the draft only after first trying a volunteer system. He was always committed to the eventual use of conscription, however. He believed a selective draft would be the most efficient means of mobilizing manpower with the fewest disruptions to the economy. During the debate in Congress over the draft in May 1917, he wrote: “The idea of the draft is not only the drawing of men into the military service of the Government but the virtual assigning of men to the necessary labor of the country. Its central idea was to disturb the industrial and social structure of the country as little as possible” (quoted in Chambers 1987: 126). Nor, it should be added, was Wilson averse to the extension of state
intervention in the economy. A wartime draft was consistent with this perspective, particularly given the proven inadequacy of the volunteer system.

On 2 April 1917, Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war. On 6 April, the day after war was officially declared, the secretary of war submitted an army bill that included a request for immediate authorization of the draft. On 28 April, after considerable debate, the bill was passed; resolution of differences between the houses was achieved by 8 May.

According to Chambers, "the wartime replacement of the U.S. Volunteers by a National Army of draftees in 1917 is best understood as a victory for the values of a cosmopolitan urban-industrial elite over rural-agrarian traditions" (177). This was not a conservative/progressive split, but a division between "modernizers" and their opponents.

The introduction of conscription was not wholly consensual in the United States. Government acted to prevent dissent from having major political consequences by breaking up protests, jailing Socialists and others who were considered problems, engaging in "slacker raids," and prosecuting draft evaders. Even so, a large number of young men managed to escape the system. By one estimate, three million may have failed to register (ibid.: 211). There is little evidence, however, of the serious ethnic cleavages that divided Britain or Canada both before and after the introduction of conscription, or of the politically significant opposition of organized labor that characterized New Zealand, Australia, and Britain.

The absence of politically effective opposition made it easier for Wilson to negotiate a policy bargain with Congress. The strong powers of the executive, particularly during war, facilitated the negotiations even with many of those in the House and Senate who had been opponents of conscription.

Canada

Canada introduced universal male conscription in World War I and again in World War II, despite immense controversy and bitter opposition, especially by the francophone population. The effects have been long-lasting.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Canada depended on a small regular army supplemented by companies of volunteers in times of greater need. Canada's discovery of its relative military unpreparedness during the Boer War—to which it sent a small contingent—paralleled that of Britain
(Stanley 1974 [1957]: 279–89; Miller 1975). When Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914, the Canadian government, headed by Conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden, announced it would rely on volunteers to fill the ranks of its armies. British-born volunteers rushed to defend their homeland. Response from the Canadian-born was less enthusiastic, but still substantial, especially in English Canada. Of the 36,267 soldiers who comprised the first Canadian contingent, 1,245, or 3%, were French Canadian and 9,635, or 27%, were British Canadian (Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War as cited in Granatstein and Hitsman 1977: 23). According to the 1911 census, the Canadian-born French Canadians made up approximately 29% of the total population and Canadian-born British Canadians nearly 44%.

The strength of the response seemed to indicate the voluntary system would serve all of Canada's military needs for what nearly everyone thought would be a short war (Armstrong 1974 [1937]: 60). Within months the initial enthusiasm for military service waned throughout Canada as the supply of British-born volunteers dissipated. Recruiting levels dropped everywhere, but the level of recruiting in Quebec was especially low.

By late 1916 the Borden government, faced with what appeared to be a military manpower shortage and by a failure of all other efforts to encourage sufficient volunteers, began to consider conscription. Borden's last attempt to mobilize recruits involved a national, but noncompulsory, registration. Much of the public perceived registration as a precursor to conscription, despite Borden's disclaimers (Granatstein and Hitsman 1977: 42–47).

On 18 May 1917, Borden introduced compulsory conscription with the Military Service Act of 1917. Explicit opposition to conscription was strengthened where it had already been expressed and surfaced where it had not been before. The antagonism of the francophone nationalistes and the Nationalist party under Henri Bourassa was no surprise, but they were joined by important figures in the French Catholic Church and by nearly the entire Quebecois press. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, leader of the Liberal party and former prime minister, came out strongly against conscription and demanded a referendum, which was denied. Parliament passed the bill on 29 August by a vote of 119 to 55. Thirty-seven Quebec Liberal MPs voted against it. The Quebec Nationalists also were opposed (ibid.: 69; Wade 1967, 2: 762–
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Following its passage, there were riots throughout Quebec; particularly noteworthy were the ones in Montreal and especially in Quebec City.

The clear split along "racial" lines in the support for conscription tends to obfuscate the existence of opposition in English-speaking Canada as well. Organized farmers and organized labor throughout Canada lobbied against conscription (Granatstein and Hitsman 1977: 73–76). There were sixteen Labor party candidates in the 1917 election, nearly all of whom allied with the Opposition (Scarrow 1962: 28–29). Nor was there much support for the government evident among non-British naturalized citizens (Granatstein and Hitsman 1977: 71).

In the immediate aftermath of the passage of the Military Service Act, Borden formed a new coalition Union government, composed of pro-conscription Liberals as well as Conservatives. Faced with the prospect of a general election, this government achieved the passage of the wartime Elections Bill, which enfranchised close female relatives of military personnel and servicewomen (giving some women the vote for the first time in a federal election), disenfranchised conscientious objectors and naturalized citizens from enemy countries, and permitted the government considerable leeway in assigning the votes of service personnel to any riding it chose.

Victory in the 1917 general election, characterized as a vote on conscription, went to the newly formed coalition Union government under Borden's leadership. The Liberals under Laurier won only 82 seats to Union's 153. The anglophone vote was not uniformly Union, however, and the civilian vote was relatively close, 841,944 to 744,899. If one eliminates the francophone ridings and the fourteen seats procured through the manipulation of the military vote (Beck 1968: 146), there still remain a number of ridings that voted against Borden's government.

Nonetheless, the linguistic split was pronounced. Indeed, this election forevermore transformed Quebec politics. Quebec voted overwhelmingly Liberal (Opposition), as did French-Canadian ridings in other provinces. For the first time since Confederation, the francophones of Quebec elected no Conservative party member to a seat in parliament (ibid.: 143).

There was further evidence of linguistic divisions in the aftermath of conscription. Of the deserters from the military, nearly 60% were francophones (Petersen 1989: 564). Draft dodging was also believed to be primarily
a francophone phenomenon. One of Canada's most famous historical novels features a young francophone man whose unsuccessful evasion of the draft made him a martyr and a public figure in Quebec (MacLennan 1990 [1945]).

A major effect of the Canadian conscription crisis of 1917 was the deepening of the rift between francophones and anglophones. The government's imposition of conscription, in spite of their opposition, infuriated much of the francophone community. The francophone campaign against conscription and evidence of francophone draft evasion and desertion infuriated anglophones who felt the francophones were not doing their share in the war effort. In the view of each group, the other had broken the policy bargain. This reinforced the lack of trust already existing and made future dealings even more difficult.

Australia

The Australian government sought to introduce overseas conscription during World War I but was thwarted in its endeavors. Limited overseas conscription was introduced toward the end of World War II. Indeed, Australia was the only one of the Anglo-Saxon democracies that did not institute conscription during the Great War. It was also the only country that held direct, popular referenda on the question.

The Australian colonies had a citizen soldier tradition based on units of volunteers, who for the most part were to be mustered only on the threat of invasion of their own particular colony (Wilcox 1994). By the late 1880s, with the advent of federation, there began to be discussion of a combined defense force. The Boer War raised the issue of the role of Australia and the other dominions in the defense of the Empire. The six colonies sent a total of 16,175 men, but this was not a particularly strong response given the available population and in comparison to the response of New Zealand (Grey 1990: 56–57).

Australia was not exempt from the concerns about preparedness that infected Britain, most of Europe, North America, and New Zealand at the turn of the century. What distinguished Australia, however, was the source of the leadership for compulsory military training. Among those most responsible for the passage of "boy conscription" was William Morris Hughes, an Australian Labor Party MP in 1909 who would be prime minister during
World War I. Historians disagree about the reasons for Hughes's support of boy conscription. Jeffrey Grey, for example, claims:

Hughes' motivation was not militaristic; his suspicion of permanent standing forces conformed with good socialist principle. He saw universal service as a means of avoiding the propagation of militarism and the threat that armed forces might be used against the workers, while providing for the defense of the nation with minimal disruption to business and civil life. (1:78)

On the other hand, K. S. Inglis argues that Hughes's underlying aim was to preserve the racial purity of white Australia (1968: 23–24). What is uncontested is the essential role Hughes played in convincing Labor members to incorporate and support compulsory military training in 1909 and again in the Defence Act of 1911.

The scheme was neither universally applied nor universally complied with. Innumerable exemptions, including for those who lived far from the drill halls, meant large numbers of young men were not compelled to train. Many others failed to register. Between 1911 and 1915, there were approximately 34,000 prosecutions and more than 7,000 detentions, meaning a prosecution rate of about 5% (Barrett 1979: 206). Even so, as Barrett (1979) convincingly argues, there was fairly widespread support and—at the least—acquiescence with the scheme.

As the war in Europe became imminent, Australia had an increasing number of young men who had been trained for military service and who were subject to conscription for defense of Australian territory but not for overseas duty. The Australian government followed the lead of the New Zealand and Canadian governments in offering a contingent of troops for the Imperial Forces. By the provisions of the Defence Act, these had to be volunteers.

By October 1915 the experience of Gallipoli and the sinking of the Lusitania confirmed the intensity and likely long duration of the war. At this point, Hughes took over the leadership of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and became prime minister. As attorney-general, Hughes had implemented the War Census Act of July 1915, which was Australia's registry of the fit and eligible. This was followed by a questionnaire sent to 60,000 eligibles to
determine who was ready to enlist, when, and if not, why not. As in all the other countries in this study, potential volunteers were subjected to moral suasion, including a white-feather campaign, and bureaucratic pressure. As in the other cases, the government deemed that volunteering was an inefficient and inadequate means of mobilizing manpower and led to inequality of sacrifice. Hughes sought conscription as the solution.

The War Precautions Act enabled the prime minister to institute conscription if he could get a majority in both the Senate and House. He could not. Although the head of a Labor government, his party was split over the issue of conscription, and anticonscription Labor senators had enough votes to block a majority. Hughes decided to go to the people with a referendum. On 28 October 1916, the electorate was asked, “Are you in favour of the Government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the time of the term of this war, outside the Commonwealth, as it now has in regard to military service within the Commonwealth?” The only other such referendum on policy in Australian history was the second vote on 20 December 1917. This one asked: “Are you in favour of the proposal of the Commonwealth Government for reinforcing the Australian Imperial Forces overseas?”

Neither referendum carried. The “no” votes on the second were greater than on the first. In both cases, Hughes campaigned hard. He even had sufficient confidence before the first referendum to call up the home forces and to attempt to disenfranchise the men who did not respond to the call. In 1916 the vote was 1,087,557 votes for and 1,160,033 against, and in 1917 the results were 1,015,159 versus 1,181,747. Among the states, in 1916 it lost in New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia; in 1917 it lost in Victoria as well. The defeats of the plebiscites were hardly overwhelming. Nearly half the electorate signaled their support of both the war effort and conscription by voting “yes.”

Another indicator of strong support for the war effort among much of the population was the reelection of Hughes. In the interim between the two plebiscites, Hughes was expelled from the Labor party and formed the Nationalist party, but he still won the general election for his new government in 1917. Thus, one of the most interesting facts about the conscription referenda is that while they were defeated, Hughes was not. This suggests that a general election is not always a proxy vote for citizen attitudes on im-
portant policy questions. Propaganda in the period leading up to the referenda, even by some of those opposed to conscription, was disproportionately pro-war. There were numerous and large rallies on behalf of the recruits. Most important, approximately 40% of eligible white males joined the Australian Imperial Forces (A.I.F.). Why, then, did so many Australians vote against conscription?

There are a multitude of analyses of the defeat of the referenda. Among the most popular explanations are labor opposition and nationalist sentiment among Irish Catholics who opposed compulsion to fight in a war on behalf of Britain while it was repressing the Catholic Irish and denying them home rule. Withers's (1982) cliometric analysis finds that organized labor and Catholics did tend to vote “no,” but there is no statistical significance to the Catholic vote. Moreover, Irish Catholics and workers made up a significant proportion of the A.I.F.: Some 41% of the A.I.F. had been industrial employees and 22% laborers; 20% were Catholics, which was approximately the same percentage as in the population (Grey 1990: 91–92). On the other hand, primary producers, who were losing valuable manpower to the war effort, tended to vote in favor (Withers 1982: 43–45; Stock 1984) and to enlist earlier (McKernan 1980: 190; McQuilton 1987: 4–5). Thus a narrowly rational calculation of costs and benefits or a social structural explanation derived from material interests cannot adequately explain the composition of either the opposition or the volunteers.

A more compelling explanation is that the negative vote reflected a combination of antistatism, prolabor sympathies, and distrust of the Hughes government to implement conscription fairly. These values coincided with and were reinforced by the war weariness that began to set in around 1916 and was quite evident by 1917. Hughes’s recruitment efforts in the form of the War Census of 1915, the “Call to Arms” that same year, the centralization of the recruiting effort, war censorship, and the conscription plebiscites—all these had the effect of undermining the volunteer system (Robson 1970: ch. 4). At the beginning, the success of recruiting lay in state efforts to appeal to its citizens and to “snowball” recruiting, relatively spontaneous marches begun by a few men but intended to pick up additional recruits on the road to distant recruiting offices (Robson 1970: 57–58; McKernan 1984: 31–33). Increasing reliance on Commonwealth agencies muffled locally generated recruitment and raised fears of an increasingly powerful central state. The
Hughes government's anti-union reaction to the great strike of 1917 (McKer-
nan 1984: 46–47) and the revelations in 1916 and 1917 of the true costs of the
war (Robson 1970: 71–74) fueled distrust of Hughes and his government.
The general election indicated the population's confidence in the ability of
the prime minister to wage the war with enthusiasm; the referenda indicated
their lack of confidence in him to protect the rights of the citizenry. A sig-
nificant proportion of the Australian citizenry voted against conscription as
a means of taking a stand against government's increasingly heavy hand.

Analysis

What accounts for the differences among these countries? One possible ex-
planation is geopolitical. Perhaps the countries farthest away from the battle-
field were least likely to be able to mobilize their population to support
conscription. Another possible explanation is cultural. Perhaps the Australi-
ans are more independent than the Americans; the francophones and Irish
more contentious than most other ethnic, linguistic, and social groups; and
the New Zealanders more jingoistic than anyone else. Such explanations are
purely ad hoc; they simply do not fit the evidence, and they certainly contra-
dict each other. New Zealand and Australia were equally distant from the
conflict in Europe, but one implemented conscription while the other did
not. The frontier culture of the United States and the isolationist proclivities
of the citizenry would certainly make its population at least as likely as Aus-
tralia's to oppose conscription. If anything, the dominion status of Australia
and the strong identification with "King and Country" should have made its
cultural and ideological heritage a prop of conscription, as it seems to have
been in New Zealand and in anglophone Canada.

A more compelling explanation is that class, social, and religious cleav-
ages account for the strength of and variation in opposition. In the Anglo-
Saxon democracies, the major types of opponents fell into at least three
categories:

1. ideological groups, such as some of the left-wing political parties, anar-
chists, and pacifists, who felt the war was morally and politically wrong;
2. economic groups, such as some unions, working class organizations, and
certain farmers' lobbies, who believed that they would be the primary
losers from universal conscription;
3. religious, ethnic, and other cultural groups, such as the Irish in Britain or the francophones in Canada, who had lost confidence in government promises. For some members of the first group, contingent consent was impossible; for others it was possible only with a policy that permitted alternative service. For the second and third groups contingent consent was possible only if government actors provided sufficient assurances that they would receive benefits selectively promised to them.

There is considerable evidence of opposition by ideological groups in all of the Anglo-Saxon democracies. It is difficult to make estimates of their relative strength, but they were everywhere too small and politically weak to make much difference in the policy outcome.

There was more variation in the political clout of the organized working class. In 1913–14 the percentage of the labor force in unions was 25% in Australia, 22% in the United Kingdom, 15% in New Zealand, 7% in the United States, and 6% in Canada (Stephens 1979: 115). Australia led in unionization and was the first to have a labor party that formed governments, including the one running the country soon after the outset of the war. The British and especially the New Zealand government also experienced considerable working-class political activity. The United States and Canada were the laggards. The political organization of the working class was insignificant in those countries.

The other major variation was in ethnic cleavages. Both Britain and Canada had territorial regions that were distinctive from the rest of the population in religion, culture, and language. All five countries had large numbers of cultural minorities who could not make a territorially based claim but nonetheless were capable of some degree of solidary action.

Pronounced cleavages do not necessarily translate into the ability to transform grievances into political clout. Cleavages are explanatory only where there is not only a reason for opposition but also a capacity to act. The relative clout of oppositional economic and social groups goes a long way to explaining the intensity of the conflict over the introduction of conscription. The Irish in Britain, the francophones in Canada, and both the Irish and the working class in Australia all waged strong anticonscription campaigns.

The existence of opponents and their organizational capacity only provides part of the explanation of the genesis and relative effectiveness of the
campaigns. The model of contingent consent helps fill out the account by explicating the reasons for opposition to conscription and by suggesting the factors necessary for success in either vetoing the proposed policies or winning concessions sufficient to effect consent.

To understand who was likely to oppose conscription, we must turn to the historical relationship between the relevant groups of citizens and the states. In all the countries under study, segments of the organized working class expressed questions about whether this was a war on their behalf. For some, the first precondition of conscription had not been met; they remained unconvinced that the war was in defense of the nation. This perception also marked some of the cultural groups, most notably the Canadian francophones. In addition, all five countries had experienced waves of recent immigration, and some of these immigrants clearly did not define the war as their own. The Irish immigrants tended to place their allegiance to Ireland ahead of their allegiance to Britain. German immigrants were perceived as having split, unclear, or pro-Hun loyalties.

Distrust of government was another source of oppositional feeling. Both the British Irish and the Canadian francophones had long-standing grievances against the state that gave them little basis for confidence in promises of equitable treatment under conscription. In addition, there were the native populations of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as American blacks, who had cause for doubting their government’s promise-keeping. To the extent peoples from such groups were interested in joining the military, it was generally as a way to prove their loyalty and hopefully to gain fuller rights of citizenship. Some among them joined the opposition to conscription. This was particularly true of the significant numbers of Irish immigrants to both the United States and Australia.

Government actors could alleviate some of this distrust of government by creating institutional arrangements that made it difficult for them to break their promises. To the extent they could make their commitments credible, they were more likely to win support of their conscription programs. What this involved was concessions or benefits granted at the same time as the institution of conscription, or punitive measures that would transpire almost immediately upon the breaking of a promise. The key to credibility was a mechanism that enabled significant opponents, even if they made up the mi-
nority, to either veto a proposed policy or punish government actors who broke the terms of the consequent policy bargain.

Having the capacity to make demands and reasons to express them is still not a sufficient predictor of success. Success ultimately requires either the ability to impose costs sufficiently high that government must cede to the demands or institutional arrangements that facilitate the translation of demands into outcomes. The explanation for the exemption of the Irish from general British conscription is a straightforward story of costs and benefits to the British government as a consequence of the demonstrated organizational effectiveness of the Irish opposition. The Irish were at the point of rebellion. This gave them the clout to negotiate a distinct policy bargain.

The harder cases seem to be Australia and Canada. Both countries experienced serious public debate and legislative consideration. What fundamentally distinguishes the two countries—indeed, what makes Australia unique among all five of the Anglo-Saxon democracies—was that the opposition had institutional power; it could affect the process by which the conscription decision was made and not just rely on protest and threats of non-compliance.

Although the prime ministers of both Canada and Australia were keen to introduce conscription, Hughes found himself in a bind that Borden could avoid. Hughes was the leader of the Labor party, but his party opposed conscription for overseas duty. The only way Hughes could introduce conscription was by end-running the legislators and winning the approval of the electorate through a plebiscite. Thus, he found himself compelled to initiate two direct referenda on conscription and on which every citizen, including women, could vote. The locus of opposition in Canada, on the other hand, was in the minority party. Borden nonetheless felt some of the same pressures as Hughes to obtain a popular mandate, but he avoided a referendum. Instead, he defined a general election as a vote of confidence and then managed to ensure, through gerrymandering, that the election was in his favor. The Hughes government was also reelected during the course of the war, suggesting that if Hughes could have used a general election as a proxy vote on conscription the way Borden had, he might have been able to institute conscription.

The plebiscite was available as a political tool to the prime ministers
of both Canada and Australia, but only in Australia did the prime minister have to resort to it. The working class and Irish organizations in Australia represented a significant proportion of the electorate, but so, too, did the francophones. The difference was that the Australian Labor party provided the Australian opposition with a means to veto policies they strongly disliked or to enforce promises made in exchange for their acquiescence. The francophones neither had the institutional power that might ensure them an effective bargaining role nor perceived the existence of institutional arrangements that would make government commitments credible. Government actors could make promises of equitable treatment, but such promises often lacked credibility. There was no obvious punitive mechanism; the francophones never had enough votes to force a change in government on their own. In Australia, on the other hand, the most vociferous opponents of conscription, the working class and the Irish organizations, could not always constitute a plurality, but they were sufficiently numerous and dispersed throughout the country that they could use existing institutional arrangements effectively. The defeat of conscription for overseas duty ensured credibility of the commitment that Australian soldiers would be volunteers.

The other remaining question is why the United States and New Zealand were able to institute conscription with such relative ease. There was opposition in both countries and a significant working-class movement in New Zealand. In the United States, the opposition was heterogeneous and diffused and without significant organizational capacity or institutional clout to influence the definition of the policy bargain. The presidential system further reduced the capacity of opponents to affect the outcome, particularly given presidential wartime powers and popularity. In New Zealand, as in Britain, the parliamentary system encouraged negotiations in which organized labor could veto particularly hateful aspects of the policy and win relatively enforceable concessions that sealed its acceptance of the resulting conscription policy bargain.

These cases illustrate the importance of institutional arrangements in promoting contingent consent among those groups and actors whose initial position is one of skepticism or outright opposition to conscription; they required institutions that either ensured them a veto in the negotiations or a means to punish government actors who broke their promises, or both. Thus three features of the policy bargain influenced the extent and locus of con-
tingent consent: the actual content of the policy; the process of negotiating the bargain; and how much confidence citizens had that government would deliver on its promises to produce both the negotiated collective good and side payments. Citizen refusal to consent, whether collectively by means of political pressure and protest or individually by means of resistance or non-compliance, is a function of aversion toward the proposed collective good, effective exclusion from policy making, and perceptions of the noncredibility of government actors in keeping bargains.

Those individuals who perceived conscription as offending notions of justice were unwilling to give their contingent consent. This was the case even for some for whom the process of negotiation was acceptable. For example, conscientious objectors were not necessarily attacking the rules of governance; they were taking a moral stand against military service or the justice of the particular war (cf. Levi and DeTray 1993). Other citizens may have disapproved the policy but considered the process sufficiently fair. They gave their consent on the grounds that they owed obedience to the state once it issued an authoritative command or because their representatives had met the standards of procedural justice (Tyler 1990). Finally, consensual introduction of conscription depended on citizen confidence that government would deliver on its promises to produce the negotiated collective good and any side payments that were part of the terms of trade.

The establishment of conscription within democratic states provides an interesting set of cases in which to observe multigroup bargaining in the development of a policy bargain, the effect of existing institutional arrangements on the process of negotiation, the perception of the citizenry that the commitments of state officials are credible, and the resulting institutional arrangements of conscription. At issue are the conditions that make possible contingent consent to an expanded government role in a democracy. Neither the effective negotiation of a policy bargain to establish conscription nor the implementation of conscription is possible without a considerable degree of citizen approval and contingent consent. Not all members of the polity would necessarily perceive the policy bargain or government actions in the same way, however. We would expect support of conscription as a policy and possibly contingent consent to vary among groups and subgroups within the polity, and that is precisely what we found.
Conclusion

The institution of conscription in the Anglo-Saxon democracies during World War I represented a redesign of the democratic state and a redefinition of the obligations of citizenship. Voluntary citizen soldiers had been the mark of the military format of the Anglo-Saxon democracies. The Great War demonstrated the problems with voluntarism. It failed to produce enough enlistees or permit efficient mobilization of their labor. It led to unattractive and often inappropriate forms of moral suasion. It created bureaucratic mechanisms, such as the national registers, that may have discouraged as many volunteers as they encouraged. By publicizing the shortages in manpower, these censuses made evident the numbers who might be considered "shirkers." Such knowledge could make those who had enlisted, as well as those who had not, think twice about volunteering. If there were not to be enough men anyway, why make the sacrifice?

The voluntarism that characterized all the Anglo-Saxon democracies, except the United States, at the commencement of World War I relied on a large number of contingent consenters. Not all citizens chose to contingently consent, however; many preferred to free ride, and only a selective incentive such as coercion altered their calculations. At the same time, at least some of those who had not yet volunteered might have preferred to volunteer, but only with assurances that others were also going to participate. Finally, those who did volunteer increasingly had an interest in manpower reinforcements, on the one hand, and, possibly, legitimizing their own choice, on the other. Thus, many among them supported conscription, as the elections in Canada and the referenda in Australia demonstrate.

Conscription solved manpower allocation problems during the war and, in most cases, extended the reach of the national state forevermore. The institution of conscription creates as well as solves problems for democratic governments, however. A major argument for conscription was—and is—its equity. Within democracies there develops a new standard by which to evaluate the implementation of conscription: equality of sacrifice. To the extent that governments permit exemptions on nonuniversalistic grounds, they will experience an increase in refusal to consent. The pressure to do just that remains, especially during wars, such as Vietnam, that do not require total mobilization.
A related problem for democracies is the imposition of conscription without the approval of some of those it affects or despite the opposition of certain groups. This, in the long run, is a problematic strategy for democracies, as the cases of the Irish in Britain, the francophones in Canada, the aboriginals in Australia, and the blacks in the United States, among others, have demonstrated. Individuals excluded from the policy bargain, whose concerns have not been incorporated, or who have lost confidence in the levelness of the playing field will not give their contingent consent. They may be momentarily compliant due to the existence of coercion, but they are not contingently consenting.

Although conscription seems to be one of those kinds of governmental institutions that, once imposed, becomes a right of government and can be reimposed, the initial institution of conscription does not necessarily establish the policy bargain once and for all. All of the Anglo-Saxon democracies have reconsidered their military recruitment and training policies many times since World War I. Further overt conflict over conscription erupted in Canada during World War II and in Australia and the United States during the Vietnam war.

In the heterogeneous polities of most democratic states, the achievement of an acceptable policy bargain requires the creation of a shared community that overrides the particularistic social groupings with which many people identify. What this means in practice is the reduction of the availability and salience of information discrediting government’s trustworthiness or the benefits of the proposed policy bargain. To some extent, this occurs as a natural by-product of mass society. Cultural, economic, and ideological organizations begin to lose members or to be transformed into groupings that are more social than political in purpose. Yet, even in Britain, the oldest of the modern democracies, such ties tend to periodically redevelop political meaning. Among some groups, such as American blacks or francophone Canadians, it is not clear that they have ever receded.

Perhaps a more realistic and common goal of democratic government is the achievement of a policy bargain that recognizes the variety of interests and perspectives reflected in the polity. This implies, however, effectively different bargains for different groups. There are bound to be inequities in such bargains, inequities that will probably take on political salience over time. Pressure for renegotiation of the terms of these bargains is one likely
consequence. Another is considerable antagonism against government and among groups as each cites the others for a failure to contribute its fair share.

Notes

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1 Mass conscription is a feature of modern states, both democratic and nondemocratic. It stands in sharp contrast to the feudal servitude, impressment, and mercenarianism of the past (see, e.g., Thomson 1994). It requires a centralized state with sufficient resources and authority to mobilize a significant percentage of its eligible population. Historical military formats rested on the resources of individual lords or the monarch's personal estates. Large armies were confederations of small private armies. They were not the national armies of today. Mass conscription requires and helps to build a modern state; it does not require democracy: witness Napoleonic France or Frederick's Prussia.

2 I thank Sara Monoson for enabling me to see this point.

3 As we shall see, however, the definition of "war of defense" varied among countries and among groups within countries.

4 Contingent consent is related to my earlier conception of quasi-voluntary compliance (Levi 1988), but it encompasses behavior that is not legally obligated, as well as behavior that is.

5 As we shall see, both Australia and New Zealand imposed a form of military service before World War I, but they obligated citizens to serve only in defense of and within the country. Overseas duty was not obligatory.

6 I draw largely from the excellent account of the voluntary recruiting movement by Simkins 1988.

7 The origins of this campaign remain cloudy although there is reason to believe the campaign commenced in Folkstone in the early days of World War I at the initiative of an admiral (conversation with Peter Simkins).

8 The highest percentages, both under voluntary recruitment and during conscrip-
tion, were among those in commerce, entertainment, and the professions. This in part reflected patriotism, in part their flexible employment situations, in part their ability to attain commissions, and in part a government manpower strategy that made it increasingly difficult for men to leave industry for the army (Simkins 1988: 110; Winter 1985: 36–37, 41).

For a discussion of the events leading up to the formation of this Coalition government see Hazlehurst 1971.

This section is based almost entirely on Baker 1988.

Much of this section is drawn from Chambers 1987.

The discussion of the militia is largely drawn from Shy 1976; Chambers 1987: 14–19; and Mahon 1983.

When the war began, there were 15,000 men in 198 companies, of which 186 were on frontiers in the west (Symonds 1986: 155).

The section on Canada has largely been coauthored with Shane Fricks (see Levi and Fricks 1992).

The literature of the time discussed the francophones and anglophones as separate races.

For a detailed account of compulsory military training see Barrett 1979.

Grey calculates that only 2% of those registered failed to comply (1990: 81). The difference in the figures may be due to the fact that Barrett's 7,000 detentions include boys who were detained more than once.

Both referenda won among the soldiers overseas, but the vote was extraordinarily close. These soldiers were, after all, volunteers. Perhaps the opponents wished to glorify their own patriotism, perhaps they had an ideology against the compulsion of conscription, or perhaps they did not want to require anyone else to experience what they had experienced.


I am drawing here largely from a conversation with Francis G. Castles, as well as from information in his 1985 book.

See Petersen 1989 for a discussion of this phenomenon. Among other groups, he cites the Nisei Japanese in the United States in World War II, the blacks in Rhodesia in the 1970s and in South Africa today, and the Druse in Israel. There are several interesting accounts of Australian aboriginal involvement in the military (Hall 1989, Jordens 1989, Ball 1991). Enloe (1980: 190) discusses the Maori involvement in the New Zealand army.

During the conscription crisis of World War II, there was a plebiscite in Canada in which the votes for conscription won.

See Flathman (1972, esp. chap. 2), for a discussion of this argument.
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