

Chapter 6

Reserves Forces and the Privatization of the Military by the Nation State

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Abstract

This chapter examines the UK Reserve armed forces and their relationships to the sociology of military and security privatization. The basic features of the UK Reserves are introduced, and an overview provided of how current policies aimed at their transformation sit within the context of wider military, economic and social changes. Some key features of military and security privatization in the UK are summarized to provide contextual information. The data source and

methodological strategy ~~is~~are discussed. The chapter then considers features of Reservist participation which speak directly to the negotiations that Reservists conduct between their military participation and their lives as civilian employees and which speak to sociological ideas about the privatization of security. Reservists are considered in comparison with private military and security contractors for the insights this gives about the ways Reservists negotiate the contingencies of their military participation. The individualization which Reservists report is then explored. The chapter concludes with observations about the need to see the privatization of the military and security in terms which recognize the life-worlds of those involved in the process and who constitute part of the new security assemblage. We raise the issue of the potential problems of privatization as they pertain to military effectiveness, and consider the implications of individualization for wider military sociology.

1. Introduction

... so basically with the reserve forces you're working [as] almost an individualized private security sector organization or a hybrid version of it.²¹

In this chapter, we examine Reservists working in the UK armed forces. Our argument is that by examining Reservists and their experiences of military participation, we can generate insights into the sociology of privatized security. At first glance, this idea seems counter-intuitive. After all, by definition, Reservists are employed by armed forces, and as agents of the nation-state are most commonly viewed (as are their Regular counterparts) as public sector workers. They are

¹ All quotations are from interviews or focus groups with Reservists conducted by the research team, unless otherwise indicated. Square brackets are used to indicate our editing of quotations from interview transcripts for the purposes of clarity.

employed, funded, organized and deployed by a state institution, and as military personnel are identified within the long-standing Weberian notion of armed forces as the sole legitimate bearers of the right to execute lethal violence, doing so at the behest of and with the authority of the state. Yet as recent experience shows and as Anna Leander explores in the following chapter, this Weberian notion of state military forces is increasingly unstable because of the inexorable growth of the privatization of military and security functions and services by the state. This reflects more general and all-encompassing trends towards the privatization of public goods and services across ~~western~~ [Western](#) neoliberal economies and liberal democracies over the past three decades or more. Reservists themselves are simultaneously state employees (through their military participation) and civilian workers (who may work in the public, private or third sector). In this chapter, we are particularly interested in their experiences of negotiation between the two in terms of the conceptual insights to be gained about the sociology of the privatization of security at both the personal and organizational scales. We focus on two conceptual issues in particular. The first of these follows from a conceptualization of Reserves and Reservists as part of a wider security assemblage comprising Regular military personnel, Reservists and private military and security contractors (hereafter PMSCs). We ask what viewing Reservists in these terms helps us understand, in sociological terms, about the privatization of security. The second conceptual issue we explore concerns individualization as a sociological concept developed to understand personal, experiential responses to wider economic and governance changes under neoliberal regimes. We ask what a fuller understanding of individualization for Reservists might mean for current conceptual approaches within military sociology for understanding civil-military relationships, at the macro- and micro-scales.

In this chapter, we begin by introducing the Reserve forces in the UK, and note that current policies aimed at the transformation of the Reserves sit within the context of wider military, economic and social changes. We then summarize some of the key features of military and security privatization in the UK, to provide a more granular context for what follows. We introduce the research project on which this chapter draws, which although not focused explicitly from the outset on the Reserves in the context of military and security privatization, generated research findings which suggested a closer relationship between the two than we had originally supposed, and as our opening quotation suggests. We then turn to consider some features of Reservist participation which speak directly to the negotiations that Reservists conduct between their military participation and their lives as civilian employees and which speak to sociological ideas about the privatization of security. We consider Reservists in comparison with PMSCs for

the insights this gives us about the ways Reservists negotiate the contingencies of their military participation and include the contrasts and comparisons with Regulars. We then consider the individualization which Reservists report and which we identify, asking whether the identifiable shift away from collectivism has implications for the institutional-/organizational thesis so dominant in military sociology, and concluding by asking whether we can perhaps start to talk of an individualized mode of military organization as a means of understanding both military participation, and civil-military relationships.

2. The UK Armed Forces Reserves

Military reservists comprise an interesting group for the study of the military in sociological terms. As trans-migrants (Lomsky-Feder et al. 2008), caught in the iron triangle of the three greedy institutions of the military, the family and the employer (Edmunds et al. 2016), their positioning within military institutions is quite specific. For this reason, many tacit assumptions about the sociology of military forces become troubled when considered from the perspective of Reservists. Their social position as hybrid citizen-soldiers means that their relationships to processes such as militarization ~~is~~ are complex (Higate et al. under review). As simultaneously military personnel and civilians, their life-worlds problematize the ideas underpinning much work on civil-military relations, in turn rendering ideas of a civil-military binary increasingly obsolete and favoring a more porous and mutually-imbricated idea of civil-military entanglements (Sørensen and Ben-Ari 2018). As employees of state militaries and of non-military organizations, their experiences in their military and non-military workplaces and their responses to these undermine some of the most entrenched sociological orthodoxies about

military personnel in terms of the conceptualization of their social location, identities and subjectivities. The position of Reservists is possibly sufficiently complex to explain their exclusion from much sociological investigation of military forces. In turn, this means that they are a relatively under-researched group, with some notable exceptions (Bury 2016; Herron 2004; Musheno and Ross 2008; Griffith 2009, 2011).

In this chapter, we deal exclusively with the experience and wider sociological understanding of UK Reservists. Although some broad features of Reservist participation and experience transcend national boundaries (including those outlined in the citations above), because of the specific ties national armed forces have to nation states and to the social, political, economic and cultural contexts in which they operate, there is much within the Reservist experience that requires exploration and conceptualization on a national basis.

The period following the UK 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) has been one of significant change for the British Armed Forces (Ministry of Defence 2010; Edmunds et al. 2016). Following the experiences of engagement in two major ~~theatres~~theaters of operations (Iraq, Afghanistan) and on-going peace-support and UK civil-defense deployments, demands by the UK ~~Coalition~~coalition government for budgetary austerity following the 2008 financial crisis, and longer-running concerns about the role and utility of the ~~reserves~~Reserves (particularly within the British Army through the Territorial Army, its Reserve component), the UK ~~reserves~~Reserves were an obvious target for reform (Dandeker et al. 2011). The *Future Reserves 2020* (FR20) policy program set in motion a series of changes and transformations which included an expansion in Reserves numbers and a change in organization and manner of

integration with the regular forces (MoD 2013). Numbers would expand, for the Maritime Reserves to 3100, the Army Reserves (rebranded from the former Territorial Army) to 30,000 and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force to 1800 (MoD 2013). Within the overall FR20 program, the Army 2020 program proposed a reduction in the regular Army's strength to around 82,000 (British Army 2012), and the Naval Service and Royal Air Force also had personnel reductions, all through a series of redundancy programs. In 2012, the UK armed forces had a trained strength of about 170,000, with around 33,000 in the Naval Service, 96,000 in the British Army, and around 38,000 in the Royal Air Force (MoD 2012). Figures on the size of the UK ~~reserves~~ [Reserves](#) at this point in time indicate that the Territorial Army in 2012 was about 25,000, with around 2500 Naval ~~reserves~~ [Reserves](#) and around 1300 [Royal Air Force \(RAF\)](#) ~~reserves~~ [Reserves](#) (MoD 2012).² As of 1~~st~~ September 2017, there were 2670 trained Maritime ~~reservists~~ [Reservists](#) (Royal Naval Reserve plus Royal Marines Reserve), 27,010 trained Army Reservists and 2300 trained ~~Royal Air Force~~ [RAF](#) Reservists (MoD 2017). In comparison, as of 1~~st~~ September 2017, there were 29,080 trained regular personnel in the Maritime Service (Royal Navy, Royal Marines), 79,440 trained Regular Army, and 30,600 trained RAF personnel (MoD 2017).³ As the figures suggest, the Army Reserve dominates in discussion of the Reserves. Current policy and political debates about the Reserves center on recruitment, retention,

² The figure given in MoD (2012) for the Army ~~reserves~~ [Reserves](#) is 31,600, but this includes the University Officer Training Corps, which we have discounted, and Non-Regular Permanent Staff.

³ The meaning and implications of the distinctions between 'trained', 'trade-trained' and 'untrained' are beyond our scope in this chapter. Note simply that the figures are larger when untrained personnel are included. Note also that changes to the ways in which trained and untrained Army Reservists were classified in 2016 immediately gave the appearance of an increase in Reserves numbers. For more detail, see successive MoD monthly personnel reports available via the UK MoD website (MoD 2017).

capability and integration (CRFCA 2017), and these have been [the](#) issues of [Ministry of Defence](#) (MoD) concern since the inception of the FR20 program.⁴

There were also hopes that Reservists would embody (literally) a re-consolidation of the relationship between the UK armed forces and wider civil society, which was identified under the FR20 program as a necessary part of the transformations proposed (MoD 2013) and an issue of wider defense concern (see HCDC 2014). One of the perceived benefits of the FR20 reforms at their inception was cost reduction; a TA unit was seen as costing about 20% of an equivalent Regular unit when not deployed (MoD 2011).

Although in this [paper-chapter](#) we simply use the term ‘Reserves’, note that the term as used by the UK ~~Ministry of Defence~~ (MoD) includes several different categories of Reservists including Volunteer Reserves, High Readiness Reserves, reserves serving on Full Time Reserve Service and Additional Duties Commitments; and Sponsored Reservists (who are essentially civilians under contract to the Reserves for specific technical tasks). Our focus in this [paper-chapter](#) is essentially the Volunteer Reserves, who comprise the overwhelming majority of the Reserves population as a whole.

Under FR20, the professionalization of the rebranded Army Reserve and the greater integration proposed of Reserves units with Regular Army counterpart units; was in turn part of a stated

⁴ Note that the former Territorial Army had been much larger in the past than was the case by 2010, numbering around 72,500 in 1990 (MoD 2013). Similarly, the British Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy have also declined sharply in numbers in the three decades following the end of the Cold War.

conceptual shift under the rubric of the Whole Force Approach (MoD 2011; CHACR 2015–16) which suggested that military forces would henceforth be understood as working in partnership with both the private sector (primarily around military support and defense industrial and technological services) and wider civil society. A key logic established in the documentation setting out the Whole Force Approach was formal government and military organizational acceptance of the fact of integration between the armed forces as a state institution, the private sector as contracted providers of goods and services for state military purposes, and Reservists as individuals bringing with them not only their boost to personnel numbers but also their skills acquired and honed in the civilian labor force (CHACR 2015–16). But more significantly for our arguments in this chapter, the Whole Force Approach established very visibly the idea of government and military endorsement of the privatization of military capabilities as pertaining to personnel. This is important for the arguments of this chapter, because as the next section will show, although the privatization of military capabilities has a long history in the UK, its application to military personnel was put on a new footing by the reforms of the Reserves initiated from 2010 onwards.

3. Military and Security Privatization in the UK

As the various chapters in this book make clear, the privatization of military and security capabilities is an established and ever-growing feature of global military and security landscapes, eliciting considerable response from a range of disciplinary perspectives. The privatization of the military in UK contexts has to date been understood primarily with reference to the privatization of state-owned armaments and military engineering capabilities, a process on-going since the

early 1980s, and with reference to the privatization of military functions through the sub-contracting of service, logistics and support functions to private sector providers. Contracted individuals working in the private military and security industry have been the primary concern and focus of much existing work on military privatization, because of the issues around control, accountability, legal positioning and moral conformity (White 2016; Higate 2012; Leander 2010; Chisholm 2014; Krahmman 2003; Pattison 2014). Of specific interest here, given our observations about the Whole Force Concept, is a more critical variant of this literature which talks increasingly of global security assemblages to stress the lack of clear-cut distinctions between the private and public sectors with regards to the provision and application of military and security capabilities (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009). Conceptually, the idea of a post-Fordist military has also been suggested as an analytic frame to understand late twentieth and early twenty-first century military transformations in the UK context, and the outsourcing of military support services is a key component of this idea (King 2006). It is therefore very clear from existing empirical and conceptual literatures that the privatization of military capabilities is a feature of the UK military landscape.

As a prelude to our analysis of empirical data on Reservists and the privatization of security, we return to the two observations made in our introductory section about the conceptual insights that consideration of the Reserves brings to a sociological analysis of military privatization. These in turn underpin the analysis which follows.

Our first observation is about parallels between the Reservist and the [PMSC](#) ~~private military and security contractor~~ experience. It has long been recognized in the literature on [PMSCs](#) ~~private~~

~~military and security contractors~~ that their individualization as economic subjects is a feature of their work, with its emphasis on temporally limited, spatially defined contracts (Kinsey 2006), the valorization of existing experience and skills rendering them immediately employable and not reliant on investment through training (Brooks 2000), and their modes of professional operation and cultural socialization which emphasize individual motivation, identification and commitment over rationales for participation based on ideas of collectivity, service for a wider common good, or even national identification.⁵ ~~Private military and security contractors~~ [PMSCs](#) are individualized neoliberal subjects. We are curious about the similarities which exist between Reservists and contractors, and it is our contention that Reservists share with contractors many features of this neoliberal subjectivity. Following on from this, we can also question what an understanding of Reservists as neoliberal subjects brings to our understanding of the sociology of privatization. The idea of neoliberal subjectivity brings with it ideas about ideals of flexibility, personal responsibility, autonomy, self-monitoring and self-discipline. Our argument, set out in more detail below, is that the Reserves as neoliberal subjects are the ultimate expression of the devolution of state responsibility for armed forces personnel onto the individuals themselves, and indeed their families and employers, and is manifest through private military and security contracting.

⁵ It is beyond our scope here to consider the validity or otherwise of ideas of national identification as they pertain to the logics for military participation in the Regular forces, but we note, first, that these vary quite markedly cross military cultures (see, [e.g. for example](#) the presence of nationalist discourse in the identifications of US military personnel and its absence among ~~st~~ UK military personnel); and, second, that there may be collectivist logics to private military and security contractor participation which are less visibly articulated but which may still motivate participation.

The second conceptual insight that consideration of the Reserves brings to the sociological analysis of military privatization relates to the long-standing and well-understood debate within traditional military sociology, about whether military forces and their relationships with the civil society in which they are based are best understood through an institutional or an occupational model of military participation. Drawing initially on sociological analysis in the aftermath of the Second World War, institutional explanations for participation and civil-military relationships were subsequently reworked (particularly following the ~~US-US~~-Vietnam experience) to argue that military participation was better understood through an occupational model. The debate over the institutional/occupational model has played out over the last four decades, with various refinements during that time. Yet as Jenkins et al. (2011) observe, the idea of a military occupation as the preserve of state military employees has been problematized, increasingly, by the activities of governments following neo-liberal economic and political rationales. As is well documented and we note above, the rise of private military and security services and contractors for numerous security, training, humanitarian and service tasks; is commonly understood through these neoliberal logics. Jenkins et al. suggest, therefore, that

in terms of institutional and occupational models, the privatization of military force would appear to be the ultimate end-point of shifts since the Second World War towards military participation as ‘just another job’ (Jenkins et al. 2011: 41);

They go on to suggest that in the absence of fine-grained, individual and experience-based accounts of military membership, ‘the personal logics, motivations and rationales of those that join them and remain in military occupations are under explored’ (Ibid. p. 42). This would seem to us to be particularly the case with Reservists, who, as we have already noted, have not been

subject to the sociological scrutiny shared by their Regular counterparts. But furthermore, and as this chapter will explore, once those personal logics, motivations and experiences come to the fore, this in turn brings a further challenge to the occupational model of military participation. Not only does the outsourcing of military roles destabilize the categories of ‘civilian’ and ‘military’ and the changing contexts in which military occupational tasks are performed (Ibid. p. 46). In addition, the individualization of the economic subject inherent under neoliberal economic regimes (Beck 1992) and inherent to the privatization of security, in turn, can be seen as a feature of state militaries through the experiences of Reservists. In turn this leads us to question whether we should talk not of shifts from institutional to occupational models to understand military participation and civil-military relationships, but to consider individualized models and the transition to this. Consideration of individualization as a model for understanding military transformations and shifting civil-military relationships brings to the sociological understanding of military privatization an appreciation of the quite fundamental military transformations which are a necessary part of that analysis.

It should be noted that the privatization of the military in the UK has taken place in a wider context of economic, social and cultural transformation. The neoliberal economic policies and modes of governance set in motion with the election of a right-wing, radical Conservative government in the UK in 1979, and developed and refined under successive Conservative, New Labour, Conservative-Liberal Democrat ~~Coalition~~[coalition](#), and Conservative governments since that time have effected profound economic, social and cultural transformations. Key amongst these for the arguments which follow are the collapse of monolithic, unionized industrial and manufacturing sectors, the rise and rise of the service economy, the outsourcing of key state

functions and services (health, education, housing, transport, utilities, public security and safety) and the financialization of service provision; and the rise of more flexible labor markets. In respect of the latter, the casualization and increased demands for flexible working for those in employment have become the norm, and features include employer expectations about longer working hours, changeable patterns of shift working, the use of home-working; and the use of different instruments for contractual employment such as zero-hours contracts. These shifts have been instrumental to the production of the neoliberal subjectivities we mentioned [above](#). Unsurprisingly, they have also shaped the organization and delivery of military and security capabilities (and we note that although we do not compare and contrast the military experience with that of other public services, this would be an interesting exercise). We should also make explicit the point that this is the context in which Reservists work and live.

4. Keeping Enough in Reserve

Reservists, and their relationships to the sociology of privatized security, matter greatly. As West and Matthewman (2016: 495) observe, in their call for a strong program of sociological analysis of war, the military and civil society, ‘our studies should neither begin nor end at the barrack gates’. We concur that it is the integration of military and civilian institutions and practices which makes their study so significant, and as the above figures on the UK armed forces indicate, the Reserves matter a great deal to those integration practices.

This chapter draws on data collected and analyzed as part of the *Keeping Enough in Reserve* (KEiR) project conducted by the authors as one of four projects under the UK Economic and

Social Research Council (ESRC), Ministry of Defence and British ~~Army~~Army-funded Future Reserves Research Programme.⁶ The KEiR project examined Reservists' negotiation of civilian employment and Reservist participation, looking at experiences across the Army Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. At the heart of the project were 54 one-to-one semi-structured research interviews conducted using a common interview schedule with individual Reservists from across the three armed forces and from specific branches within each armed force, in two different locations of the UK. Interviews lasted on average 1.5 hours. Repeat interviews were conducted up to 12 months after original interview with 25 individuals who could be contacted and were willing to take part, to provide a longitudinal element. In addition, ~~9~~nine focus groups were conducted across our two research localities, which brought together Reservists, Regulars or groups including both. All the interviews were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. The transcripts were cleaned, coded, and ~~analysed~~analyzed. The coding and analysis drew on the principles of grounded theory (Straus and Corbin 1990). The primary aim of the interviews was to explore with our respondents their reported life-worlds (Schutz 1970) as hybrid citizen-soldiers. The interview process and the analysis of data were understood as collaborative, situated activities, where the initial development of theoretical and other analytic insights is seen as coconstructed by interviewer and interviewee within the locally emergent interaction of the interview (see Jenkins et al. 2008). The idea of privatization emerged as a theme during a number of interviews, and interviewees were thus prompted to consider the issue as part of the encounter (although this had not been part of the original research remit). The data which follows is taken

⁶ This research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and British Army, grant reference: ES/L012944/1. Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) approval was granted, application reference 615/MODREC/15.

from those interviews. To preserve anonymity and confidentiality, all personal identifying information has been removed from the quotations used in this chapter and no quotations are attributed to any specific service or unit. The quotations have been edited for clarity, indicated by square brackets in the text. The quotations are not in most cases mapped on to specific military functions (e.g., driving, logistics, desk-based administration, medical assistance) to preserve anonymity, and we note that some of the observations from interviews that we use below may have greater or less resonance depending ~~of~~on the core function of that particular Reservist.

In the sections which follow, we explore a number of facets of the issue of the Reserves and privatization, looking at Reservist perceptions of their negotiation of military participation and civilian employment and their arguments about the benefits of this for the state. As we then go on to show in the two subsequent sections of this chapter, these benefits show parallels with the benefits accrued by the state and the individual through the use of PMSCs, and indicate how military participation is shaped by an individualization which in turn is driving transformation in state military organization.

5. Reservist Negotiations, Military Benefits

In this section we explore a number of facets of the Reservist experience as they pertain to the negotiation of military participation and civilian employment, and what this then means for a sociology of military privatization. As we have already noted, although Reservists are state military participants, they participate as individuals who are, for the majority of their daily lives, civilian employees. The anticipated participation for the majority of the Volunteer Reserve (see

above), although non-compulsory and varied by ~~Service~~-service and specialization, ~~are~~-is for weekly participation for one evening (twice a month), plus weekend training exercises (once a month) and yearly two-week exercises, plus training courses and adventurous training—although individuals do more, and many much less. The expectation is that Reservists will generate their primary income from their civilian employment, and over three-quarters are in paid employment (MoD 2016). The negotiations Reservists undertake are therefore complex in terms of their daily lives (and note that we present here a necessarily limited picture of these work-military negotiations; and indeed the totality of work-military-family-social negotiations). What we seek to draw out are the ways that some of these negotiations are beneficial to the armed forces; and to link this to privatization.

As we noted above, one of the core rationales for the reform of the Reserves was the benefit in financial terms anticipated for the UK armed forces and thus the UK defense budget. Cost savings are most evident through salaries; although paid, Reservists do not receive a full salary as Regulars do. With the exception of deployment, their paid hours may be quite low. As one of our respondents noted;

... that's where they're going to save their money 'cause two and half days' worth per person ... and that might be once a month, as opposed to five days a week.

Reservists are only paid for their attendance at training events, drill nights or when deployed on operations. The UK military pay in segments of quarter days (~~two~~2 hours). The pay for Reservists includes an 'X Factor' of 5% to cover working beyond an ~~eight~~8-hour day, compared to 10% for Regulars. There is also the possibility of obtaining an annual bounty contingent on

attaining the minimum commitment of 27 days per year, of just under £450 (with increases according to length of service). Hence the total employment costs for a Reservist are lower than those for a Regular. Additionally, and in comparison with Regulars, there is no permanent accommodation entitlement for Reservists (again, saving costs), and healthcare is provided and funded through the National Health Service (NHS) as for any civilian (again, saving costs). With the exception of deployment, the expansion of the Reserves and reduction of Regular forces therefore (in theory at least) presents the opportunity for financial savings to the Ministry of Defence.

A second core rationale for the expansion of the Reserves was the idea of utilizing skills available in the civilian workforce for military purposes. Some of these skill-sets include those acquired through professional-level training and qualification (e.g. in medicine ~~for example~~), but others such as the use of Reservists with high-level IT experience in cyber-warfare, or of Reservists with training and expertise in telecommunications infrastructure in signaling, have also been seen as desirable (MoD 2013). The point here is that the process of negotiating military participation and civilian employment by Reservists brings distinct benefits to the armed forces in the acquisition of specialist skills at no (or minimal) cost; the training is provided and funded outside the armed forces.

Our interview data also indicated that Reservists' negotiations between military and civilian workplaces bring additional, small-scale (sometimes very prosaic) benefits to the armed forces. For example, we were told of instances where Reservists had access to equipment or systems through their civilian employment, to which the armed forces would then get de facto access;

specialist project support software was mentioned in this regard. We also learned of cases where civilian employers might inadvertently or unwittingly subsidize the armed forces through small-scale activities which go un-noticed. As one interviewee related:

... at work I may have, like, four windows open [on my pc], working on two for [my employer] and two for the Reserves on [my employer's] time. But don't tell them that. But it's manageable if you know how to organize it properly and organize yourself.

(Time-management is of course a key Reservist skill too.) We were also told of cases where even if equipment or systems were available at a military base, it may be simpler to undertake a task at work:

[...] you'd have to travel into here as well so, you know, where at home it's just press and print [or in] your lunch hour when you've got a spare five minutes, of planning ahead [rather than] having to make it into a massive exercise.

We were also told about (and saw use of, ourselves) the ways that communications systems accessed and used by an individual in their own home or via a workplace would often be preferred as more sophisticated and up to date in comparison with more antiquated or poorly maintained military systems. Access to and the reliability of email was a case in point. In many ways, through countless small examples, it appeared that armed forces ~~was~~ were the beneficiary of, and indeed reliant upon, the resources of the individual in their civilian working and social lives.

Furthermore, because of the quite limited amount of time available to Reservists on a weekly basis when officially on duty during drill nights (two hours, perhaps, maybe three), there was a practicality and efficiency to many of these negotiation practices for Reservists.

I printed that [document] out at home ... that's me just being like, you know, a snappy person prepared for whatever I've got to do, that's what I need to do, I think.

In practice, Reservists regularly work outside of paid hours using their own equipment without being reimbursed and in effect subsidizing their participation through their own private resources and equipment including the use of personal computers, home office facilities, electricity, high-speed internet connections and so forth. As Nippert-Eng (1996) points out, activities such as this have the effect of blurring the distinction between 'work' and 'home'. Reservists also provide their time, 'so you end up, you know, sending out communications from home in your time'. Although Regulars may subsidize the military with their own resources and un-enumerated time to an extent (and of course other occupational groups subsidize their employers in very similar fashions—university academics are a prime example here), it is the degree to which Reservists undertake this subsidy which was notable to us as researchers. Although individually small, these examples do of course combine to suggest something rather more notable around the transfer of resources to the military via individual Reservists' negotiations around their military and employment commitments.

Another resource over which there is considerable negotiation by the individual Reservist, to the military's ultimate benefit, is physical fitness. Reservists (as do Regulars) have to have a basic level of physical health and fitness for both selection and retention. Although some fitness-

maintenance activities are part of Reserves training, due to limited time during drill nights, military training and exercises (and unlike Regulars), participating in a coherent physical fitness program during Reserves time is impossible for most Reservists. Fitness therefore has to be maintained in their own time (and this may also require their payment of gym membership fees or similar). The necessity of this extra activity is recognized in some units by the organization and resourcing of physical training sessions for those able to attend, but not all. It is also worth noting ~~is~~-that ~~whilst~~-while physical training undertaken within military contexts is covered under military insurance liabilities, this is not the case for injuries incurred outside of military time and space. For physical training, one respondent noted that:

Nobody minds, you know, putting the time in, and being unpaid for that and doing [...] things [with costs] coming out of your own pocket.

It was pointed out to us by interviewees that their subsidy of the costs of physical training was a means by which they could improve their fitness and thus the quality of their and other Reservists' participation, as well as pass requisite fitness tests, but 'within reason'.

Reservists also noted that they brought broader experience and understanding as civilians, and these were seen as informing and benefitting military practices and activities. For example, a Reservist with a police background noted of their military work:

I think the work I produced was probably about the same standard as a Regular can produce, [...] maybe it was better in some ways because it was informed by my sort of civilian understanding of the world, my background in psychology

and the various things that came into the particular task and my [...] civilian background helped.

Across our interviews with Reservists, we observe a pattern of observations about resources (material, financial, temporal) brought by individuals from their civilian employment and civilian lives to their military participation and thus ultimately for military benefit. This stands in (often quite marked) contrast to much of the discourse on the expansion and transformation of the Reserves, which suggests that benefits accrue for the individual and their employer through Reservist participation. This idea is articulated in much of the policy documentation about the Reserves; and extends to initiatives such as the Defence Relationship Management and Defence Employer Recognition schemes. Yet it appears that these benefits to individuals and civilian employers are overstated by the military in comparison to the benefits that Reservists and de facto their employers bring to the military.

We could conceive of this flow of benefits to the military as a flow from the individual and the private or other public sector to the public service of defense. However, the picture is more complex. In drawing on the additional inputs of Reservists, the armed forces are acting like many other private sector employers as increasingly reliant on the commitments and contributions of employees working within and disciplined by the requirements of neoliberal modes of employment. Furthermore, as is often noted about privatization more generally, the practice of hollowing out of state functions produces corporate (usually private sector) appropriation of benefits in terms of financial and other gains; and the socialization of the costs to individuals, groups and organizations outside the corporate structure. Our point ultimately is that there is a

sociological complexity to privatization in military contexts, hinted at in the idea of security assemblages, in which Reservists as ostensibly public sector workers play a key role.

6. PMSC Parallels

Our next lens on the Reserves and privatization of the military allows us to look at the Reserves in comparison and contrast to those ultimately utterly privatized military actors working beyond the state institution of the military—the ~~private military and security contractors~~ [PMSCs](#). The comparisons and contrasts between Reservists and PMSCs involve complexities on two counts. One of these is the fact that a very large proportion of the UK citizens working in the private military and security industry have training and experience as former British military personnel. Those state military origins to a professional career as private contractor may be distant in time and space from work undertaken in the present, but they are highly significant for the provision of skills, aptitude for, and understanding of the nature of private military and security work. The other complexity is conceptual and follows on from this fact. Because military training is indispensable to a career as PMSC, arguably the contractor industry represents a significant transfer of resources from the public sector to private business through investment in the training of these individuals as military personnel and the subsequent transfer of these skills and experience to the private sector ex-service personnel work within the security industry. The private security industry is a commercial business sector run by private corporations for financial gain. From the very outset, then, we have to be alert to the fact that the PMSC industry constitutes part of the machinery through which the execution of lethal force is out-sourced from the state, part of the wider security assemblage.

A number of the attributes that we identified above as the product of Reservist negotiations between military and civilian labor, are also attributes that are foundational to the PMSC experience. Contractors bring professional skills and expertise that are required for military tasks, and (notwithstanding our comment above about their military origins) these skills and experience have been provided and maintained externally. Contractors may bring basic equipment. They will only be paid for the work that they do. They are responsible for their own fitness levels, maintained at their own cost in their own time. There may also be parallels in terms of motivations for participation. Although PMSCs have often been understood as motivated purely by financial incentives, research on these individuals reveals greater complexities to this, including (see Malesvic, this volume) perceived support for their own nation state and its allies. The following quotation, from a Reservist, was a response to a question directly about comparisons with PMSCs:

Yes money's important but also doing something that I think is good for me in terms of it gives me good skills, it gives me good opportunities, but also it gives me, you know—the desire to put something back into society is probably a great motivator.

There are, then, some basic points where comparisons and contrasts between Reservists and PMSCs might be possible. Furthermore, there are also issues dealt with by both that are helpful to consider in teasing out how the UK Reserves can be understood in terms of the sociology of privatized security.

One of these is in the nature of the voluntary participation emblematic of both Reservists and PMSCs. The UK armed forces are an all-volunteer force. Placing aside questions about how social inequalities in effect structure military recruitment (for some, depending on their socio-economic background, enlistment is a more freely-made choice than for others), participation in the Regulars or the Reserves is entirely voluntary, and there is no conscription in the UK.

Regular personnel work within structures and organizational hierarchies which detail and demand participation in activities and the performance of tasks at specified times and places. For Reservists, although ostensibly this is the case,

[...] it's not really mandatory for us, [...] not really, you could do as little, you can literally do as little as you want ...

Although efforts to change this, through initiatives such as the use of mandatory training days to enable Reservists to gain a Certificate of Efficiency necessary to collect their annual bonus, nevertheless it is the case that the extent of participation is an individual choice. As with military contractors, there is agency around participation which is qualitatively different to that of Regular personnel.

The voluntary nature of participation, shared by PMSCs and Reservists, is also evident around deployment. A military contractor's deployment is entirely voluntary; an individual can choose whether or not to take up a particular employment contract which involves deployment.

Reservists' deployments are similarly voluntary; although Reservist deployment may ostensibly be compulsory, it is de facto voluntary, in the sense that Reservists report that they volunteer for compulsory deployment. Indeed, the argument that a deployment is compulsory rather than voluntary is reported as a possible strategy for facilitating deployment in the face of objections

from civilian employers and family members (see also Wood 2013, on this point). Although the original FR20 plans for the transformation of the Reserves envisaged Reserves units that could be deployable, *en masse*, the reality of the on-going transformations of the Voluntary Reserve is that individuals continue to be deployed on an individual basis. In contrast, Regular personnel have no choice around deployment (the only exception being where specific personal or family issues support a case for exemption); and will deploy usually together with a unit. In this respect, the individualized participation of both PMSCs and Reservists becomes evident, and we return to this in our next section.

Another point of comparison between PMSCs and Reservists is around the idea that both are, in some ways, self-employed. Indeed, a frequent motif in our interviews with Reservists was the parallels between Reserves participation and self-employment because of the regulations around payment for attendance. For example, this was evident in the comment that

[...] people say ‘Oh you know, it is part-time’. It is not, it is self-employed. If you don’t turn in [i.e. attend] you don’t get paid and it is as simple as that.

Another noted that he was

taking this weekend off to have some time with our lass [i.e. female partner]. So, it is that element of choice as well, that [of a] self-employed soldier.

Whereas Regulars may be considered to represent the epitome of state employment, in this respect Reservists are more akin to PMSCs working on contracts which define them as self-employed for the purposes of contractual engagement and taxation, with the element of individual, personal choice that comes with it. Arguably this perception of being self-employed

is also held by the military itself; much promotional material focuses upon the choices available to Reservists regarding their participation and thus resultant income. Reservist recognition of the parallels with the PMSC employment position and associated requirements for self-care was evident:

It's like a civvie [civilian]—like a civvie worker for the military, yeah.

Indeed, the role of the reservist to be deployed as and when required is not dissimilar to the business model for the deployment of contractors, with companies holding contractor names on their books for recruitment (and thus payment) as and when required. So to conclude, if we consider Reservists not as part-time Regular personnel but as self-employed military workers, which the comparisons with PMSCs suggest we can, we can then make a further point about the Reserves and the sociology of military privatization. This is that the expansion of self-employment across the wider civilian labor market in the UK (ONS 2016), emblematic in many ways of the flexible labor markets of neoliberal economies, has reached that very epitome of state employment, the armed forces.

Our final point about the comparisons and contrasts between private contractors and Reservists and what this tells us about the sociology of military privatization concerns the nature of the bounded communities of responsibility which they inhabit and the stark contrasts with those of Regular personnel. Regular personnel traditionally work as a unit or sub-unit with a defined, shared identity, usually live in a fixed locale (often accompanied by their family) for a set period of time before moving again, and work within a set of cultural expectations which sees the bond of the unit as a marker of professional competence (see King 2013). Reservists, because of the bonds of employment and of family life lived under a different set of expectations about location

and mobility, are more individualized. They have highly differentiated and distributed work and living arrangements relative to each other, and come together only to participate in Reserves work (notwithstanding the socialization that some interviewees reported). Like private contractors, Reservists live individual lives until the requirements of their military role bring them to work with others. They are not members of a bounded community in the ways experienced by Regulars. Their primary communities of accountability are civilian, and comprise diffuse and varied practices, different for each individual. Reservists and contractors are autonomous individuals making decisions to temporarily participate in military communities which come together at designated times for designated purposes. Regulars, who may have been trained collectively, will undertake team-based working within a geographically bounded space in which a communal culture and communal resources will be drawn upon for the development of the social bonds which constitute unit cohesion. Reservists and contractors need, for reasons of operational effectiveness, to develop these bonds of cohesion. They do so over a more limited time-scale, and, because of the absence of a pre-existing bounded identifiable community of responsibility, do so through a process of continual work. Arguably one of the challenges identified in assessments of the broader civilian labor market, that of continual adaptation and change as a personal responsibility within the conditions created by the flexible labor market, is faced directly by Reservists as it is by contractors. The sociology of privatized security, when considered in the context of the Reserves, is therefore an issue of the sociology of new models of employment and the demands this makes on employees as flexible, individualized, self-employed workers. Our final point here is that whereas Regular personnel tend to live and be embedded in closed or semi-permeable military communities in housing provided through the armed forces, Reservists and contractors tend to live lives embedded in heterogeneous civilian

communities of privatized individuals, which in turn have potentially very little knowledge of, or even empathy towards, military work. Although again the FR20 policy documentation and discourse lauds precisely this location in civilian communities as a potential strategy for closer civil-military integration, Reservists themselves report the lack of social understanding from their wider communities of work and life as bringing with it problems and issues of its own (see also Higate et al., in review).

As we have suggested above, the idea of neoliberal subjectivity brings with it ideas about ideals of flexibility, personal responsibility, autonomy, self-monitoring and self-discipline as a capacity of workers in neoliberal economies and contexts. Both PMSCs and Reservists, as neoliberal subjects, are the ultimate expression of the devolution, potentially, of state responsibility for armed forces personnel onto the individuals themselves, and indeed their families and employers. Most crucially, viewing Reservists as comparable to PMSCs prompts us to consider individualization as not just a feature of the employment of both, as we [have outlined](#) above, but also in conceptual terms as profoundly significant for understanding the very nature of military employment, and to this we now turn.

7. Individualization

In this section, we take up the idea suggested at various points so far, about the individualization of military experience represented by Reservists, and consider this in both empirical and conceptual terms. Our argument here is that cultural practices around employment models through which Reservists undertake their military participation, which emphasize the role,

responsibilities and significance of the individual, and which have themselves evolved and developed through various privatization processes within neoliberal states and their labor markets, are in turn driving innovation and change in state structures such as the armed forces. In some ways, this is not a process chain unique to the military—we see this daily when working in the contemporary UK university. What *is* distinctive to the military are the ways that individualization plays out in a social formation which is almost by definition collective in its make-up and ethos, and which through its history has emphasized the needs of the collective over that of the individual. What is also distinctive is the question about the ultimate end result of processes of individualization in military contexts and the possibility that they ultimately might undermine the operational capabilities of the armed forces.

The idea of individualization within Reserves service was raised in interviews as a feature of participation, something built around the time commitments Reservist participation demands. In some ways, these are relatively minimal, typically attendance at some drill nights, at training six weekends a year and two weeks over the summer:

[two] and a half hours every other week eh, I mean the vast majority of the time you're a civilian and you're an individual.

This has significance for the nature of participation (as well as the cost of Reserves, as we indicated above). Training weekends can involve social activities, building

esprit to corps so, you know, a bit of camaraderie which you only get through spending time together and this is why they spend time together.

But the reality is that

unless you're doing a course together it, it's very slow to build up these relationships and it so [...] it's not really the Tuesday nights or the training weekends as such that do it, because there quite short lived so easily forgotten.

Given that (despite FR2020 plans for Reserves deployment as units) deployments are usually on an individual basis, as we have noted above with respect to PMSCs, considerable work is then required by deployed groups to develop the unit cohesion required for effective operations. Individualization in military participation is contrasted with the communal or collective ethos more readily developed in Regular armed forces working within bounded communities of responsibility which we highlighted above. Reservists are aware of this, evident because

it does seem that the Reserves is becoming more sort of privatized [...] individual people, bringing their own skills to the table and doing more work as an individual rather than as a unit. Because I think they understand that two weeks on a Tuesday, it simply isn't enough time to do anything meaningful [...] I would say that there is an emphasis on doing more by yourself rather than relying on the Army reserves to do it for you.

The point here is to note that in the weekly and other periodic commitments undertaken, Reservist participation is highly individualized in the sociological sense (see Beck 1992).

This individualization has been identified widely, within the sociological literature, as a consequence of wider socio-economic change in neoliberal economies, labor markets and modes of governance. The idea of the neoliberal subject as emergent in response to economic, social and political changes has most usually been seen as happening in tandem with the collapse of

collectivist models of social formation built around the welfare states that emerged following the end of the Second World War (and for a good summary, see Türken et al. 2016).

Individualization is associated with a range of features, behaviors and responses; for example, shifting work patterns blurring the boundaries of home and work-life (which we ~~have identify~~ identified above as being to the armed forces' advantage) are an effect of the increased emphasis on the individual as a self-governing, self-regulating worker within employment contexts. There are many other features too, of course.

Broadly speaking, the individualization evident in the Reserves reflects wider social shifts evident more broadly through social formations, and evident also within the armed forces themselves. Anthony Beevor (1991), for example, identifies an emergent individualism in attitudes amongst recruits to the British ~~armed-Armed forces-Forces~~ from the early 1980s onwards, a decade dominated by Thatcherite economic policies and their associated consequences for social understandings of the defects of collectivist modes of working and the endorsement of the rights and responsibilities of the individual. These ideas play out across the Reserves, visibly, to the extent that as one respondent noted, participation on a regular basis in Reserves activities was contingent on individual motivation:

You've got 82,000 [Regulars], and 32,000 who are these privatized individuals, they are private individuals who you are then going to phone up and say, 'Can you make it in?'

This is not to suggest that the individualization evident in the Reserves is somehow a character flaw of this group. Rather it is to highlight that as a consequence of labor market and employment changes (which have contributed in no small amount to the individualization

evident in the attitudes of workers), Reservists have to manage competing demands. These include the ability to plan and set aside time free from work, such as the negotiation of shift patterns and working practices in labor markets which demand flexibility from workers. These may be unpredictable, or may change month on month.

We have already noted how deployment tends to be an individual rather than unit experience for Reservists, and although ostensibly 'compulsory', in fact it is negotiated at an individual level by Reservists alert to the specificities of their working and home lives and the fit (or otherwise) of a period of deployment within that. The nature of compulsory call-up for deployment as a collective activity belies its individualized nature; Reservists have more agency as individuals than might be suggested by official military documentation.

It is sneaky, 'cause they have you volunteer to be compulsory deployed and it's made to look as if you've been compulsory called up. Essentially pretending that the Reservist is less privatized than they are to family and employers.

The details of individual negotiations aside, the point is that the management of the deployment process is one that rests on an assumption about the responsibility that an individual holds. In contrast with Regular personnel, where the expectation is that an individual will have no agency in determining whether or not deployment takes place, for the Reservist, the individualization identifiable more broadly and socially is enacted at the personal level in accordance with the idea of the autonomous, self-managing neoliberal subject.

Return from deployment for Reservists is also an individual experience, again reflecting the individualization which Reservists as a group embody (and again a point of comparison with PMSCs; see White 2017). Post-deployment return for Reservists is marked by return to a civilian world of a civilian employer and a home life lived in (usually) broadly civilian spaces. This may well be one where understanding of the deployment experience is not shared and which may not be supportive of that experience. Lacking the dense social bonds of Regular personnel, and although we would not claim that Regulars' returnee responses are necessarily homogenous, there is an individualization to the experience of return which is specific to Reservists. It can also be problematic because of this, as accounts of return make clear (see Wood 2013).

Our final point about the military specificity of individualization in relation to the Reserves follows from the observation that a significant proportion of the recruitment pool to the Reserves following the FR20 reforms is comprised of former Regular personnel (although accurate figures on exact numbers are not available). Reservists commented that ~~whilst~~ while they could appreciate the skills and experience that ex-Regulars brought to the Reserves as Reservists, they were often skeptical of their ability or intentions to integrate fully within the Reserves. Ironically, this was perhaps due to the individualized actions of former Regulars, leaving Regular service and all the communality that this specific social formation entails. Ex-Regulars reported that the enticement for Reserves services was largely financial, ~~whilst~~ while there is little indication that Reservists coming directly from the civilian world were motivated to join purely for financial reasons. Ex-Regulars joining through the new recruitment incentives could, if they had left the Army within the last 6 years, get up to £10,000 of additional bonuses, with Regulars leaving the Army also eligible via a direct transfer. For Royal Navy Reservists, Project Firefly ensured a

relatively seamless transfer for those leaving in the previous two years, and for RAF ex-Regulars, benefits on transfer were payable for those who had left in the previous 12 months.⁷ These individuals were frequently perceived by Reservists as less integrated, more individualized, and as performing at the minimum level in order to receive their financial reward, such that as one Reservist commented:

they're just there for a bit of cash [then] 'see you later', you know, 'I'll do what I've got to do, bare minimum, and out of the door, really'.

Individualization is, then, not just a capacity of Reservists joining from the civilian world with no prior military experience, but is a potential feature of all Reservists.

The individualized, privatized contribution of Reservists can be positive. Reservists reported the enthusiasm which they brought to their military tasks in contrast (as they saw it) with Regulars, and what they saw as their effectiveness as military personnel (individually and in groups) was seen in part as being explained by that.

I mean, it's one of the reasons the regulars dislike you when you turn up at the unit, because you turn up with this individualistic approach and they don't have that individualistic approach, they work on 'you're told what to do and you get on with it'.

⁷ For the Royal Navy, see <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/royal-naval-reserves/project-firefly> (last checked 06-July-2017) . For the RAF, see <https://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/lifestyle-benefits/ex-regular-to-reserve/> (last checked 06-July-2017).

Reservists noted that they would ask questions and make suggestions that could prove beneficial to the (military) problem at hand, and draw from their wider personal knowledge and expertise in civilian life to do so. Furthermore, they (like PMSCs) had an agency which had to be taken into account to a greater degree than that of Regulars because

if you piss someone off, next time you've got jobs to do they just won't come in.

So, you've got to, it's a lot more like a civilian company in that, in that it works more on mutual respect than it does on the sort of hard and fast rank system.

This agency is context bound and not purely structurally determined, and increasingly it is enhanced by an expanded use of information and communication technologies, especially social networking, to empower individuals through networking and coordination of actions. It is of course also being increasingly employed by the military itself—often in response to these emergent private networks.

8. Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, we have examined the Reserve forces in the UK in terms of what the Reservist experience can tell us about the sociology of military and security privatization. We have done this by looking at the negotiations that Reservists make between their military participation and lives as civilian employees, focusing on the transfer of benefits from civilian and personal lives to the armed forces through the engagement of Reservists. We have argued they are emblematic of the strategies used increasingly by workers across the flexible labor markets of neoliberal economic regimes. We examined the comparisons and contrasts between the labor market engagements of PMSCs and those of Reservists and Regulars, arguing that Reservists have far

more in common with privatized, individualized labor market engagements of contractors than Regulars. We then took forward these observations about individualization to consider how this plays out in the experiences of Reservists.

Our concluding observations concern the insights this analysis brings for sociological understandings of the privatization of security. Our first point is that military and security privatization has to be conceived of as more than just a structural phenomenon involving the transfer of financial resources and the organization of functions. A necessary part of the picture is the combined effect of countless individual negotiations which reflect people's engagements with the structural forces that shape economic and social life, and which also constitute part of privatization. This analysis also reinforces arguments about the need to see military privatization not in binary terms (public/private), but rather as the product and capacity of a security assemblage (as the Whole Force Approach shows). Within this assemblage, the life-worlds of individual participants maintain their significance for our understanding of that assemblage's effects.

Our second point ~~is~~ concerns ~~that~~ assemblage's effects—~~i.e.~~ that is, the capacity of nation states to execute the threat of lethal force and deploy violence in pursuit of (usually) foreign policy goals. We have noted that policy changes prompting Reserves transformations included ideas about greater efficiency in the use of the Reserves, and we have also noted Reservists own views on their efficiency. We should also remember that a great many arguments produced by successive UK governments about the privatization of public goods and services in general have been based on ideas about the greater efficiency of private sector providers, relative to state

provision. Yet we should also remember that such arguments are essentially ideological, prompted by the need to justify the marketization and financialization of public assets for corporate and private individual financial profit. So the security assemblage emblematic of privatization rests ultimately on the contingencies and circumstances that accompany market-based provisioning, in this case around security and military capability. That this is inherently unstable and possibly ultimately dangerous for the state's ability to provide for its populace an effective defense force is a point worth remembering. That privatization as a process is proving problematic for many areas of defense is becoming evident across a number of defense issues, not least the sub-contracted organization of recruitment, particularly of the Reserves, as recent reports imply (CRFCA 2017; Francois 2017). It is also a potential issue for the defense estate and for military housing (see Watt 2017).

Our final point concerns the insights that a consideration of the sociology of military privatization brings to military sociology itself. The move from collectivist towards more individualist identities within military forces in Western nation states has long been recognized within military sociology, with Moskos (1977) setting out the shift from institutional to occupational modes of understanding military participation. Reservists present an interesting case study of individuals who are grounded in an individualistic civil society yet who participate in an occupation renowned for its collectivism. We raise the question (at this point unanswerable) about the implications of this shift for the ways we conceptualize military participation and civil-military relationships. It is possible that we can consider military forces in terms which necessarily have to prioritize individualized modes of participation to such an extent that we have to conceptualize civil-military relationships not in terms of institutional or

occupational understandings about the role of armed forces and people within it, but in terms of individualized modes of understanding. This in turn raises questions at the micro-level about the implications for military participation as being understood no longer as about service for the nation-state, or even service to the military collective (see Woodward 2008), but purely about the individualized gains available to the disciplined and self-disciplining neoliberal subject. As current recruitment campaigns indicate, this may well be the case.

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