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For Queen and Country?:

National Frames of Reference in the Talk of Soldiers in England.

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RUNNING HEAD: For Queen and Country?

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Abstract

Social scientists frequently use the iconic figure of the soldier who fights and dies for the nation to exemplify the power of processes of national identification. However, little work has considered how soldiers themselves orient to the possibility of being motivated by a desire to 'serve the country'. The present study explored this through a series of interviews with members of the British Army and Territorial Army. While in explicit talk about 'the country' the soldiers typically downplayed the importance of 'serving the country' as motivation, in discussing the prospect of a European army the national basis of armies was taken for granted. The findings are discussed in terms of the problematic nature of displays of English 'patriotism' or 'pride'. It is argued that the relationship between national identity and military service, often assumed to be straightforward in social scientific texts, is oriented to as a delicate issue by soldiers themselves.

Key Words: ARMED FORCES; ENGLAND; EUROPE; MILITARY SERVICE; NATIONAL IDENTITY; SOLDIERS

For Queen and Country?: National Frames of Reference in the Talk of Soldiers in England.

In recent years there has been a growing body of work on national identity in the UK. Many authors, particularly those working in social psychology and sociology, have conducted empirical work exploring UK national identities. Despite the many important insights that this work has generated there are a number of issues which have not been explored. This has resulted in several key constructs being taken for granted. For example, whereas some authors, primarily social psychologists, use the term *national identity* to refer to the individual's sense of attachment to, or identification with, the nation (e.g. Cinnirella, 1997; Jetten, Postmes & McAuliffe, 2002; Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996; Mummendey, Klink & Brown, 2001; Rutland & Cinnirella, 2000), others, primarily sociologists, use the term to refer to a population's conception of what allows someone to qualify as a 'national' of a particular country (e.g. Bechhofer, McCrone, Kiely & Stewart, 1999; Jones & Smith, 2001; Kiely, Bechhofer, Stewart & McCrone, 2001).

Another assumption relates to a particular form of utility accounting (c.f. Potter & Mulkay, 1982) prevalent in texts on national identity. This involves enlisting the reader with rhetorical images of war. It is frequently suggested that one of the reasons why the study of national identity (and related constructs such as nationalism) is so important is because of the role it plays in warfare (e.g. Caputi, 1996; Keane, 1995). For example, Billig (1995) opens his book *Banal Nationalism* with reference to the Battle of Hastings, World War Two, the Falklands War and the Gulf War of 1991 in order to emphasize that modern warfare is usually undertaken 'in the name of the nation' (p. 1).

Within such accounts, one group is frequently constructed as the exemplar *par excellence* of the lengths to which people may go in the name of the nation - the soldiers who

fight, and indeed sacrifice themselves, for the nation. For example, Salazar (1998) opens a chapter on national identity by proclaiming '[o]f all the variants of social identity, national identity is perhaps the one that has had the most dramatic impact on historical events' (p. 114). Salazar mobilizes the soldier to further his argument, suggesting that '[n]ational identity may … come into conflict with human identity, as would be the case with a soldier who refused to comply with the order to kill someone on the basis of their national label' (p. 123). Similarly Davis (1999, p. 26), argues for the importance of studying the individual's attachment to the national group by referring to, 'the sacrifice, creation, and destruction that have been undertaken by many on behalf of their nations'. Haselar (1996, p. 98), in his exploration of the challenges posed by globalization and European integration to England and Britain, refers to the millions who 'have apparently displayed their allegiance by making serious sacrifices for their country, including a willingness to make the ultimate one', and the back cover of the second edition of Anderson's (1991) influential *Imagined Communities* asks '[w]hat makes people love and die for nations, as well as hate and kill in their name?'

Our aim is not to suggest that mobilizing the figure of the sacrificial soldier is in any way misguided, but rather to suggest that the commonplace nature of these references sits somewhat strangely alongside the observation that remarkably little research on nationalism has ever, in fact, considered members of the armed services and, conversely, few studies of military personnel have considered issues pertaining to nationalism. For example, Hockey's (1986) study of 'the routine, everyday world of private soldiers' (p. 1) based on observational research with the British army in 1979-80, examines the interrelation between official and unofficial patterns of behaviour and considers questions of 'motivation'. However at no point does Hockey find it necessary to discuss the possibility of, for example, being

motivated by a desire to 'serve the country'. In contrast, Faris' (1995) study of service men and women in the USA focussed specifically on the role of 'patriotism' in decisions to join the military, and the potentially fundamental shift in the nature of military service from being primarily motivated by a desire to serve the country to being motivated by factors such as pay and conditions. In open-ended interviews, many of Faris' participants openly invoked 'serving the country' in accounting for their decision to join the military. For example:

> I was never told that I would join the military, but it was just general family conversations around, you know, 'It's everybody's obligation to serve their country in some way, shape or form.'
>
> (Participant in Faris, 1995, p. 416)

> When I was in high school I imagined serving my country as a public servant, in state government or the FBI or CIA.
>
> (*ibid*, p. 417)

The differences in focus between the two studies may be due to a number of factors, not least the *a priori* interests of the researcher. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that this difference may, at least in part, reflect differences in the forms of accounting typically used by Faris's US service men and women and Hockey's British soldiers. However, there is currently little work that addresses the question of the ways and extent to which members of the armed services in any country do represent their activity as motivated by 'patriotic' concerns. Rather, a national consciousness and 'patriotic' motivation are often projected into

the mind of the soldier by both politicians and social scientists. For example, Stern's (1995) account of nationalist mobilization explores the ways in which political leaders construct the interests of the nation as synonymous with the interests of other groups, such as the family. However, attention is not paid to the possibility that such constructions are evident in the talk of those who are mobilized (i.e. soldiers).

In order to explore the articulation of national frames of reference in soldiers' own talk about military service, a different methodology to that usually used in social psychological research on national identity is required. Typically, such research involves the asking of direct questions pertaining to national identity in order to assess a participant's identification with the nation (e.g. Brown & Haeger, 1999; Cinnirella, 1997; Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996; Rutland & Cinnirella, 2000). Central to this is the assumption that participants themselves have sufficient access to the psychological processes of national identity to be able to report them faithfully. The present study takes a different approach, with an emphasis on the discourse of the research participants' themselves. Crucially, this discourse is not treated as indicative of some underlying level of national identity, but instead the way in which issues of 'nation' and 'country' are oriented to are analysed as conversational practices. Such an attention to the details of people's talk has already provided valuable insights in the study of national identity. For example, Condor (2000) showed how a sample of England-born participants denied the significance of national identity while simultaneously taking a national frame of reference for granted.

The present study explores the relevance of, and meanings associated with *nation* and *country* among soldiers in Britain, through a qualitative analysis of a series of interviews conducted with England-born members of the British Army and Territorial Army (TA). The

aim is to explore these soldiers' commonsense constructions of serving in the armed forces and to explore how and when a national frame is articulated.

Method

Participants

One-on-one qualitative interviews were conducted with 16 soldiers in Summer 2002. Nine of the participants were full-time soldiers in the British Army, and seven were members of the TA, the British Army's reserve force. All of the participants were white men, and ranged in age from 18 to 54 years (M = 33). In terms of ranks the sample consisted of 5 Privates, 2 Lance Corporals, 1 Corporal, 4 Sergeants, 1 2nd Lieutenant, 2 Warrant Officers Class 2 (WO2) and 1 Major. The length of service of the participants ranged from 9 months to 37 years (M = 13.5 years)[2]. Participants were recruited through small army establishments and interviewed on the premises. All of the participants were from the north of England. Fourteen of the participants were based in the north-west at the time of the study, with the other two being based in the north-east. At the time of the interviews, several of the participants had recently learned that they were to be sent to Afghanistan where British troops were stationed in the aftermath of the conflict of late 2001.

Procedure

The interviews were carried out while the soldiers were at their place of work. Respondents were told that the interviews concerned identity in the armed forces. The

[2] One participant had served for 10 years in the RAF before joining the TA. This was included when calculating the mean length of service.

interviews were semi-structured, with the interviewer having a list of topics which were to be covered, but steering conversations towards these topics in a variety of ways. Respondents were invited to talk around issues pertaining to reasons for joining the armed services, national identity and perceptions of armed service and the armed services in general. Where possible an effort was made to allow topics introduced by participants to be followed through. If *nation* or *country* was not invoked by a participant, they were then asked more direct questions concerning this subject. The length of the interviews ranged from 10 to 50 minutes. Interviews were transcribed for content and basic interactional features such as pauses, although the length of these was not measured (for transcription conventions see Appendix).

Data coding and analysis

The transcripts were read to identify when and how participants invoked *nation* or *country*, and the way in which these were constructed. Concomitantly those contexts in which these terms were not invoked were also noted with the aim of identifying regularities in invocations and constructions across cases. Deviant cases were focused on in order to ensure the reliability of the findings such that the interpretation accounted for instances which did not fit the prevailing pattern.

Analysis

Initial exploration of the data pointed to the presence of an interactional dilemma (c.f. Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley, 1988), indicated by a common feature of these soldiers' accounts, whereby an element of ‘serving the country’ was acknowledged,

but then swiftly qualified or de-emphasized. Our analysis will begin by exploring the dilemma which lies behind this form of accounting, and considering the various ways in which it could be managed by the participants. We will then consider the possibility that this dilemma may be context-contingent. Specifically, we will compare forms of accounting which are apparent when 'the country' represents the explicit topic of a respondent's account, compared to the way in which national talk is accomplished when the soldiers talk about Europe and the possibility of a European army.

'I'm a very patriotic bloke y'know…'

It was clear that this sample of soldiers found talk about the role of 'serving the country' as motivation in the armed forces problematic, and few acknowledged it as a motivating factor until it was introduced by the interviewer. Indeed only one participant spontaneously referred to any form of 'patriotic' motivation in his account of why he joined up. Closer examination of this participant's reply is suggestive of the dilemma faced by soldiers:

Extract 1[3]:

1	I:	why did you join up?
2	Ben:	well er, there was a friend of mine told me about it, y'know I was quite interested in it er, and
3		I'd actually signed up for the regulars, a bit back,
4	I:	right
5	Ben:	and er, thought well yeh, I fancy it obviously I've, got er, children so I didn't want to er, you
6		know have too much of my time taken away and this was a good way of er actually, y'know
7		getting into it.

[3] All identifying information in the data, including names and places, have been altered.

8	I:	sure yeh
9	Ben:	y'know
10	I:	so where do you see it kind of leading then?
11	Ben:	well I mean, now as, as it is y'know I mean to me it's just erm, it's a good hobby, pastime
12		thing,
13	I:	yeh
14	Ben:	I mean th- there's other reasons for me doing it obviously you know I mean erm I'm a very
15		patriotic bloke y'know,
16	I:	right
17	Ben:	I like me country
18	I:	right
19	Ben:	y'know stuff like that so would be prepa- prepared to er, fight but, not only that do er, I enjoy
20		it a lot as well.

(Ben, TA Private, aged 25)

Ben initially positions himself as a father in order to account for his not being in the regular army (lines 5-6). When asked where he sees his membership of the TA 'leading' (line 10) he responds 'to me it's just erm, it's a good hobby, pastime thing' (lines 11-12). This follows from his assuming the role of 'father', and serves to subordinate his membership of the TA to his children. However, the characterization of the TA as a 'hobby' and a 'pastime', and the use of the word 'just' (Lee, 1987) risk trivializing the TA, which is attended to by his declaration of being 'a very patriotic bloke' (lines 14-15). The use of 'obviously you know' (line 14) suggests that the speaker assumes the interviewer understands this to be the case – that it is taken for granted. The need to state the obvious thus arises in order to avoid the possibility of being seen as trivializing the TA. However, after elaborating the initial declaration of patriotism Ben adds the caveat 'but, not only that do er, I enjoy it a lot as well'

(lines 19-20). This downgrades the importance of 'patriotic' motivation as not being the only reason why he continues to serve in the TA.

This sequence is instructive in two senses. Firstly, it raises the possibility of 'patriotic' motivation to join the armed services as a form of common knowledge (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Edwards, 1997). Thus the need to introduce 'patriotism' only arose when the previous gloss of TA service raised the possibility that it was not taken seriously enough. Secondly, the qualification of 'patriotic' motivation suggests that such statements may be potentially problematic in themselves. The way in which Ben mobilizes patriotism and then orients to it once mobilized suggests that perhaps the feeling of being 'a very patriotic bloke', while possibly taken for granted, is not something which can be said without the need for qualification. This becomes clear when examining soldiers' responses to direct questions about 'serving the country' as motivation.

Friends, regions, regiments

When responding to direct questions on the role of 'serving the country' in the armed services the participants typically briefly acknowledged its role before either heavily qualifying it or moving swiftly on. For example:

Extract 2:

((Previous discussion concerning regimental loyalty))

1	I:	sure., is there a sense of loyalty as well as to the, the cap badge is there a loyalty to the, the
2		country as a whole if you like that you’re doing something for?
3	Gary:	yeh, [definitely]
4	I:	[for your] country?
5	Gary:	yeh, I- I believe there is., I mean o- on that as well I think it sets you in good stead
6	I:	mm

7 Gary: for future employment y'know whether you stay in the army for, four years or whether you
8 stay in the army for twenty-two or even further.
9 I: yeh
10 Gary: y'know but at end of t'day some stage of the army er your career you've got to get out.
11 I: sure
12 Gary: whether you leave early or whether you decide to stay on.

(Gary, Sergeant, aged 33)

Gary enthusiastically responds that loyalty to the country is 'definitely' important in serving in the army (line 3). However after a request for clarification from the interviewer (line 4) he repeats part of his previous answer before moving away from talk about 'your country' to focus instead on the future employment prospects of soldiers (lines 5-12).

Extract three exemplifies a common strategy for de-emphasizing the role of 'serving the country':

Extract 3:

1 I: have you kind of come to see, erm your country in a different way since er, in the last twenty
2 years?
3 Charlie: yes probably but, I would think that, there's more of erm, shall we say, team spirit a- actually
4 not, i- i- if it did happen, to try er, to keep the, the platoons or or the the company y'know
5 there's a sense of belonging and I would think that would be more stronger than, sort of, er I
6 would think that speaking for most a- y'know the king and country's, in the past now I think it
7 was more a belonging to a, to the unit …

(Charlie, TA WO2, aged 46)

Charlie employs a 'yes, but' formulation (Holtgraves, 1997; Pomerantz, 1984) in order to provide a token answer and then move away from the interviewer's question about 'your

country' (line 3). He then de-emphasizes the role of 'king and country' in the armed forces *per se* rather than providing an account specifically oriented to the question of whether he sees his country differently as a result of his 20 years in the TA. In doing so he emphasizes the importance of other group loyalties such as the 'team', the Platoon, the Company, and the Unit. He then suggests that 'king and country' was of more importance in the past, constructing consenting others to bolster his argument on line six when he claims to be 'speaking for most' (Potter, 1996). The use of the cliché 'king and country' (line 6) also places national motivation firmly in the past.

The emphasizing of other groups was used by eight participants in avoiding talk about 'country'. Regional and regimental identities were particularly common, with five participants using the category 'friends' or 'mates' in their accounts, for example:

Extract 4:

1	I:	was there, did you ever or was it part of your reasons for joining up that wanting to, go out
2		and serve the country if you like?
3	Eric:	er, to a degree yeh but, as w- as we say when you're in the army y'know what I mean people
4		go y'know serve the country and that
5	I:	yeh
6	Eric:	but in the end of the day y- you're looking after your frie- cos you're in it like, our our
7		battalion is a family regiment, we're all from the Wigan Warrington, St. Helens area
8	I:	sure
9	Eric:	so we're all from the, so you serve- you're looking after your mates that's what it is.
10	I:	yeh
11	Eric:	so y- you are doing for c- the country looking after the country
12	I:	yeh
13	Eric:	but at the end of it when it comes down to it you're looking at pe- you're looking out for your
14		best mate who's next to you.

(Eric, Sergeant, aged 28)

Dilemmatic themes are clearly present in this extract. Eric acknowledges that a desire to serve his country was one of his reasons for joining up 'to a degree' (line 3) and then uses a 'yes, but' formulation to make a contrast between the perceived importance of 'serving the country' and the reality that at 'the end of the day' (line 6) it is loyalty to friends which is more important. This is explained in terms of family, regimental and regional identities (line 7), and after a couple of false starts, is glossed as 'looking after your mates' (line 9). Eric then restates this (lines 11-14), incorporating a notion of 'looking after the country' into his characterization of armed service (line 11) but establishing a bottom line that 'at the end of it when it comes down to it' it is your 'best mate' who you are 'looking out for' if 'anything happens' (lines 13-14). While the speaker does not entirely dismiss the role of 'the country', it is de-emphasized at the expense of other identities, which are bound up with the real motivating factor – one's friends.

'It's not a buzz word…'

While the soldiers were generally rather reluctant to discuss national motivation, it was clear that the majority of them (N=13) attached a certain amount of opprobrium to explicit displays of 'national pride' and 'patriotism':

Extract 5:

1	I:	is- is-, is it not a big consideration in people's minds then to go out and and I dunno and be
2		patriotic or whatever?, do you think that's something that that doesn't, happen so much?
3	Dave:	erm, I'd say you've got, you've probably still got the same amount of people today as what
4		you had, back say Second World War who are patriotic,
5	I:	right

Dave: i- it's just that they don't, mention it.

I: right

Dave: it's not an in-word it's not a buzz word is it.

I: okay

Dave: y'know., erm, if the worst was ever com- come to the worst, and it was y'know sort of like people shooting bullets at us,

I: yeh

Dave: erm, I would say nine out of ten f- nine out of ten of us wouldn't be doing it,

I: right

Dave: for patriotic reasons

I: okay

Dave: we'd probably be doing it because it was it was our mates that were getting shot at,

I: okay

Dave: or, our mates were thinking that we were getting shot at

I: right

Dave: mm

I: yeh

Dave: and it's, it's funny, that some people'll say oh yeh I'm u- y'know beat me chest and all that go like Tarzan

I: mm

Dave: y'know, jingoism and patriotism like y'know, but erm, if they were to, really go out into a shooting war I don't think you'd find that many of them would erm,

I: right

Dave: would last the erm, the course

I: okay

Dave: you probably y- you'll more find out that the person that is extraordinarily quiet,

I: right

Dave: 'll be the one, that'll erm, see it through to the end.

34 I: right

35 Dave: I suppose it's strength of character innit?

(Dave, TA Lance Corporal, aged 42)

Again, there is no straightforward denial of 'patriotism', instead Dave refers to its expression as being out of fashion (lines 3-8). He then goes on to suggest that in a war, the majority of soldiers would not be fighting for patriotic reasons, but because 'our mates … were getting shot at' (line 17). On line 23 he begins to elaborate on this by suggesting that the people who do display 'patriotism' (and 'jingoism') would not 'last the course' in a war (line 29), and furthermore that the quiet soldier who does not display these sentiments would 'see it through to the end' (line 33). He sums this up by suggesting that 'it's strength of character' (line 35). Thus people who display patriotism are not only jingoistic but are not strong characters. The message is that expressions of patriotism are indicative of a poor soldier.

Exactly why displays of pride or patriotism may be considered opprobrious is made clear in the following extract:

Extract 6:

1 Andy: I'm a very proud Englishman.

2 I: yeh

3 Andy: but I'd be offended if anybody called me a racist.

(Andy, TA Corporal, aged 41)

The expression of *English* pride is immediately followed by a denial of racism. This is particularly intriguing as there is no overt accusation of racism, rather it is unstated and the possibility oriented to by the participant himself (c.f. Hewitt & Stokes, 1975; see also Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Van Dijk, 1987). It appears that the very assertion of *English* pride

leaves open the possibility that the speaker may be racist. This association of displays of *English* pride with prejudice, particularly racism, amongst England-born folk has been explored before (Condor, 1996, 2000). However, soldiers appear to be caught in a dilemma not faced by civilians. On the one hand they cannot escape acknowledging that serving in the armed forces involves an obligation to 'the country'. However, at the opposing pole of the dilemma they are faced with a large amount of opprobrium attached to displays of *English* pride. They therefore need to manage the dilemma such that they are not seen to be denying that they are 'serving the country' whilst ensuring that this acknowledgement is not hearable as potentially racist 'patriotic' pride.

However, while the dilemma is clearly observable in overt talk about 'serving the country', in other contexts it vanishes, leaving instead a set of taken for granted assumptions about nations and armies. The particular context in which we will explore this is that of talking about European integration and the prospect of a European army.

'That would be the worst thing ever happened': A European Army?

The majority of participants offered broadly negative arguments concerning the prospect of increased European integration, and particularly of a European army (N=10). The arguments offered against a European army fell into three groups. Firstly, five participants referred to a 'loss of identity':

Extract 7:

Ben: which, y'know you tend to lose y- it's like sort of sense of identity, which is possibly one one of the reasons why, I am patriotic that way cos, y'know Britons do have a, a good sense of identity th- y'know you mean, that is your identity and, if you were then to go into like, a European army,

I: yeh

Ben: y'know you would completely lose your sense of identity w-, y'know altogether.

(Ben, TA Private, aged 25)

Four participants referred to the possibility of conflict between different groups:

Extract 8:

Andy: … where you've got two groups of people who have different vested interests you're never gonna get agreements.

I: mm

Andy: never.

I: mm

Andy: and one side always tries to, prevaricate their views over the side, to suit their own, aims.

I: yeh

Andy: and we're as probably as bad as the French or Germans and everybody else for that.

I: right

Andy: well that's just human nature innit?

(Andy, TA Corporal, aged 41)

And three participants argued that a European army would result in a lowering of standards:

Extract 9:

John: … that would be the worst thing ever happened because you can't have, b- British army is is I mean I'm biased because I'm in it but the British army is the most highly trained professional army in the world,

I: mm

John: erm, and the Europeans, I mean the French are, fairly fairly well trai- well the French are w- i- it's a good army is the French army,

I: mm

John: but that you get them people like th- the Danes and y'know the the den- y'know Danish people and Dutch and the and the, Germans and Italians and they're just absolutely crap and er, there's no discipline.

(John, TA 2nd Lieutenant, aged 26)

The soldiers seem to have no problems in associating armies with 'countries' in this context. Indeed they all argue for the maintenance of the status quo. Armies should remain attached to extant states because Europe would either result in a loss of identity, conflict between pre-existing ('natural') groups, or a lowering of the standards of the British army. Europe is constructed such that it would take away 'our' identity (Ben), or would be unable to take away existing group loyalties sufficiently to prevent them causing problems (Andy), or would result in 'us' having to lower 'our' standards to 'their' level (John).

However, this was not the only construction of Europe available to the participants. Three of the soldiers constructed Europe not as a potential threat, but as a potentially positive collection of co-operative nations. When constructed in this way a European army was looked on more favourably. The difference between the two constructions is exemplified in the following extract:

Extract 10:

((Previous discussion has been about the UN))

I: how do you, feel about erm, one of the things that was publicized recently was this idea of a European army, which maybe takes that, a stage further from the United Nations whereas rather than just working with other armed forces, they, I don't know if they're actually talking about it but, er certainly the media were suggesting that it might er end up in just a European army, where everybody was, European, if you like.

Gary: yeh., it's somet like the Euro money coming in isn't it it's

I: yeh

Gary: it's something you're gonna have your own individuality I- I believe you're still gonna be the British army as such but if you're deployed they would deploy you as one big unit.

I: yeh

Gary: as a one- er, so

I: how [((inaudible))]

Gary: [er], I think it could work

I: mm

Gary: but, I think it could take away your identity

I: right

Gary: and I don't think that would be a good thing.

I: right

Gary: y'know it's bad enough to take, the pound off us

I: sure

Gary: without us having to

I: sure

Gary: y'know, lose, hundreds and hundreds of years of history

I: sure

Gary: because they haven't got any.

I: sure eh heh

Gary: y'know, and they're all bitter and twisted. but er, but I don't think, it'd work in the long run., I can see the thinking behind it, because of, how stretched, armies are in

I: mm

Gary: with all the various commitments we've got on in the world

I: yeh

Gary: y'know we've got soldiers all over the place, so have other countries, and we're not as big as some others but we always seem to have troops there as well.

I: right

Gary: y'know so we'll really struggle.

36 I: yeh

37 Gary: but er, I can understand it that way

38 I: yeh

39 Gary: if it was in a UN type role

40 I: right

41 Gary: then it might be a good idea.

(Gary, Sergeant, aged 33)

Gary begins by rejecting the interviewer's construction of a European army where 'everybody was European' (line 5) by asserting that 'you're still gonna be the British army' (lines 8-9). He then suggests cautiously that 'I think it could work' (line 13) before stating that if it was to 'take away your identity' (line 15) it would not be a 'good thing' (line 17). At this point he has shifted from a construction of the European army as involving a separate British army which 'could work', to one that involves a homogenizing loss of identity which would not be good. Gary then refers to the pound being taken 'off us' and the potential loss of 'hundreds and hundreds of years of history' (lines 19-23). He then concedes that he 'can see the thinking behind it' (line 28) as a potential solution to logistical problems. However, in making this concession, his construction of the European army has shifted again to one of 'a UN type role' which 'might be a good idea' (lines 39-41). Gary's position is clear: If a European army is to be similar to the UN (i.e. an organization of nations) then it may be a 'good thing', however if it were to 'take away your identity' (i.e. replace existing *British* identity with European identity) it would not be such a 'good thing'. Existing identities and the national basis of armies are thus taken for granted (Billig, 1995). It seems that the soldiers' dilemma which was present when discussing the possibility of being motivated by a desire to 'serve the country' does not trouble the participants in this context. Instead the link

between extant states and armies provides a rhetorical bedrock from which to argue about the European army.

Discussion

The present study explored some of the ways in which a sample of England-born soldiers in the British Army and Territorial Army talk about national motivation and its role in armed service. Instead of the straightforward relationship between national identity, patriotic motivation, and military service which is assumed in many social scientific texts, the explicit articulation of such a relationship was oriented to as a delicate topic by soldiers themselves.

The reason why overt talk about 'serving the country' seemed to be accountable for these soldiers may be found in Condor's (1996, 2000, in press) studies of non-military England-born people's talk. In overt talk about 'this country' Condor's respondents engaged in a variety of identity management strategies in order to avoid the possibility of appearing to be prejudiced. Some respondents denied the personal significance of national identity, while others expressed a degree of national shame. Even declarations of national pride were frequently heavily qualified. This led Condor (2000, p. 193) to suggest that 'respondents were concerned that to be heard to talk about 'this country' at all, or to adopt an explicitly national footing, might leave them open to the charge of 'typical' Anglo-British nationalism.'

In the context of the interviews in the present research, the overt possibility that 'serving the country' was the prime motivation for service was resisted by the soldiers. However, dilemmatic themes were present in that it remained an available trope with which to characterize military service which could be invoked if necessary, and which was rarely

actively dismissed. Indeed, as members of a state force, there are institutional discourses which make the outright denial of 'serving the country' problematic. For example, one of the aims of the Ministry of Defence (M.O.D.) is to 'provide the defence capabilities needed … to ensure the security and defence of the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories' (M.O.D., 2003). This places soldiers in a dilemma whereby they need to de-emphasize or qualify the importance of 'serving the country' as motivation in the army, while at the same time acknowledging that they do have a role to play with respect to 'the country'. While certain institutional discourses may make it difficult for soldiers to dismiss 'serving the country' outright, others may themselves downplay the 'national' aspect of service. For instance, the availability of regimental and regional identities as tropes with which to account for military motivation may be due to the emphasis placed upon them in official army discourse. It is frequently remarked that the regiment is the primary focus of loyalty in the British army (e.g. Barker, 1983; Strachan, 2000) and these often have a specific regional attachment. The importance of institutional discourses of regiment and region in accounting for military service is something which deserves consideration, although the possibility that such discourses may implicitly assume a banal 'national' element should not be neglected (Billig, 1995). Future research would do well to explore the role of such institutional discourses in the talk of soldiers, particularly the possibility that official discourses may themselves afford a de-emphasis of the role of 'patriotic' motivation to serve in the armed forces, while still assuming a banally nationalist frame.

Although the relatively small sample size requires that any conclusions which can be drawn are necessarily provisional, our analysis points to the importance of contextual factors in influencing the extent to which, and ways in which, participation in the British army is

framed as a 'national' matter. While it is worth emphasizing that these expressions were obtained in an interview setting, and we would not necessarily expect the same characterizations of military service to occur in, for example, battlefield or barrack-room talk, it is nevertheless striking that the same contextual shift was observed across what was in many respects a fairly heterogeneous sample.

This finding is consistent with the predictions of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) insofar as the introduction of an intergroup context (Europe) may result in national identity becoming more salient which in turn leads to attempts to differentiate the ingroup from relevant outgroups. While this is in many ways a satisfactory account of the contextual shift observed in our analysis, what is of particular interest is the specific content of the soldiers' talk which involved clearly dilemmatic themes concerning 'patriotic' motivation in one context which then vanished with the unproblematic adoption of a 'national' frame of reference in another. Implicit in this contextual shift is the switch from 'country' being the explicit topic of conversation, to its use to manage discourses of Europe. In other words, it goes from constituting a dilemma to be managed, to being a discursive resource with which to manage talk about 'Europe'.

If it is accepted, as suggested above, that the dilemma of national motivation emanates from the opprobrium normatively attached to displays of 'national' pride in England, then the contextual shift raises issues about the way in which research on national identity, and indeed social scientific research in general, is conducted. Much research on national identity assumes that the simplest way to gain access to national identity is to ask people about it. Even researchers who express concerns about the term 'national identity' may still ask direct questions about 'nation' or 'country'. For example, in an EU-wide study

of attitudes towards the Euro, Müller-Peters et al (1998, p. 671) assert that as 'there is considerable variation in individual interpretations of the meanings of terms such as "identity" or "national pride", they were not used in the wording of the relevant [national identity] items.' Examples of the wording of the items nevertheless indicate that respondents were being asked direct questions about nationhood: 'I feel attached to (COUNTRY) and its people' (*ibid*, capitals in original). Despite the wariness, the assumption is still made that in order to find out about people's national identity we need only ask them.

Researchers have typically favoured asking questions about national identity *in principle* rather than look at how 'nation', 'country' and related terms are used *in practice*. This assumes that people are both willing and able to reflect and report on their identification with the nation, whereas it may be the case that people may deny the relevance or significance of national identity while still banally assuming a national frame of reference (Condor, 2000). The present study suggests that an interesting distinction can be made between these forms of account, in this context at least, since the dilemma which was present in discussing the possibility of accounting for personal motivation in terms of 'serving the country' (*in principle*) was not present when discussing the prospect of a European army (*in practice*).

The findings also suggest that rather than simply making assumptions about what motivates soldiers to serve in the army we should examine the context in which their motivations are articulated, and the form these articulations take. While it may be tempting to presume that soldiers in state armies must be motivated to some extent by processes of 'national' identification, we are missing part of the story unless we examine how soldiers themselves orient to this suggestion. This allows us to explore how invocations of 'serving

the country' are used to perform particular functions at particular times. For example, a newspaper report of a recent call for British soldiers to receive a pay rise by a senior army official involved an explicit reference to 'country': 'The military's demands will force the Government to choose between its increasingly shaky position on public sector pay and rejecting the claims of tens of thousands of poorly-paid troops about to risk their lives fighting for their country' (The Sunday Telegraph, 29th December 2002). The absence of a straightforward discourse of 'serving the country' amongst the present group of soldiers makes such declarations all the more striking. By invoking 'country' in reporting a call for a pay rise, the 'country' is reminded of the specific role of soldiers in relation to the 'country'. In this context, the construction of military service as about 'looking after your mates' would not have the same rhetorical force as an appeal to 'country'.

While the soldier who fights, kills and dies for the nation provides a powerful rhetorical justification for the study of general processes of national identification, it tells us nothing of the commonsense ways in which the role of 'serving the country' in military service is conceptualized by soldiers themselves. Indeed, what counts as 'the country' to soldiers is also taken for granted in such formulations. For example, in extract 6 (above), Andy declares that he is a 'very proud Englishman', but of course he is part of the *British* army. This conflation of England and Britain in soldiers' talk would benefit from further research, particularly if, for example, Scottish soldiers were also interviewed as it would be expected that they would be less likely to conflate 'England' and 'Britain'.

The search for general rules and processes of identification can lead all too easily to the neglect of the particular dilemmas of commonsense faced by different 'national' groups, and indeed by subsections of 'national' groups, such as soldiers. The present study alerts us

to the need, not only of studying the commonsense of others, but to continually question that which we ourselves take for granted in our research.

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions (adapted from Potter, 1996)

[ ]	square brackets indicate overlapping speech.
yeh?	question marks indicate a 'questioning' intonation, rather than a grammatical question as such.
((inaudible))	double brackets indicate comments from the transcriber.
...	three periods indicate that some words have been omitted from the extract.
bu-	hyphens mark a cut-off of the preceding sound.
yeh.	full stops indicate a 'stopping' intonation.
er, so	a comma indicates a pause.
eh heh	laughter.

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