# The Character and Origins of Military Attitudes on the Use of Force[*]

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**Abstract**

Do military and civilian attitudes on the use of force differ and, if so, why? Past scholarship is divided not only on whether decision-makers with military experience are more hawkish but also in whether differences stem from organizational selection or socialization. In this research note, we contribute to these debates through a unique opportunity to survey military officers at time of organizational selection – and compare incoming military respondents with a nationally representative sample as well as respondents at various stages of military experience. We find that future military elites are more hawkish than civilians and that gap is evident upon arrival. In addition, we find that hawkish attitudes attenuate over time but the magnitude of change is insufficient to offset the initial difference. The results suggest that preexisting foreign policy attitudes may shape who selects into military experience as much as military experience shapes the attitudes of those that do.

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A conventional wisdom holds that past experience in military organizations is likely to affect an individual's foreign policy attitudes, particularly regarding the use of force. International relations (IR) scholars suggest these effects are sufficiently large so as to generate a gap in the beliefs and behaviors of elite decision-makers with and without military experience—be they bureaucrats inside military organizations (Huntington, 1957; Narang and Talmadge, 2018), senior military advisers (White, 2017, 2020), or even political leaders (Weeks, 2014; Horowitz and Stam, 2014; Fuhrmann and Horowitz, 2015; Horowitz et al., 2018).

Despite a generally held view that elites with military experience possess distinct foreign policy attitudes, existing research offers contradictory theoretical expectations in two ways. First, the field disputes *how* military attitudes on the use of force are different. Some suggest that those with military experience hold foreign policy attitudes less permissive of the use of force (Gelpi and Feaver, 2002). Huntington (1957, p. 69-70) advanced the view that military elites are more conservative in their support for military action. Others argue the opposite, suggesting that elites with military experience hold beliefs more permissive of interstate violence (Weeks, 2014; Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, 2015), particularly when they lack combat experience (Horowitz and Stam, 2014).[1] Second, the reasons *why* military elites exhibit attitudinal differences on the use of force are similarly contested. One camp emphasizes socialization, noting that military organizations have functional incentives to improve performance by exposing members to common experiences that alter member attitudes—often in short order.[2] Another camp emphasizes selection. As an interview-based study of US soldiers during the Cold War describes, relatively little "rubs off" during military training and "much of what *appears* to be the product of the training is, more accurately, a function of what the trainee himself brought into that environment" (Karsten, 1978, p. 21).

Identifying the relative importance of selection and socialization helps clarify the microfoundations of prominent studies linking elite behavior to military backgrounds (Weeks, 2014; Horowitz and Stam, 2014). For instance, is the hawkish behavior of generals such as Douglas MacArthur or leaders such as Muammar Qaddafi attributable to hawkish attitudes that induced them to select into military service, that they formed during military service, or some interaction of the two? While elite military attitudes have long been an object of empirical inquiry (Holsti, 1999; Feaver and Gelpi, 2004), their study faces a significant limitation: surveys of military elites observe their foreign policy attitudes well into

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[1]Others find that US military elites are more likely to endorse using force for traditional security goals, such as coping with China (Feaver and Gelpi, 2004) or during debates over escalating ongoing conflicts (Betts, 1977).

[2]See Snyder (1989, p. 28-9); Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik (2015, p. 985).

their careers. These approaches struggle to empirically adjudicate between socialization and selection mechanisms, which could exert reinforcing or countervailing effects independent of one another. Studies in military sociology often feature comparatively small samples of non-elite military individuals and address attitudes towards the use of force in ways that limit comparability to measures employed in political science.

In this research note, we contribute to these debates by developing a theoretical framework that situates the potentially reinforcing or countervailing effects of selection and socialization. We then study a sample that allows us to directly investigate the interconnected questions of the nature and origin of military attitudes on force. First, seizing access to incoming US military officer candidates at West Point on an unprecedented scale, we conduct a survey of these future military officers *before* and *after* they undergo potentially attitude-shaping experiences early in their careers, paired with a simultaneous survey administered to a nationally representative sample of US adults. In the first wave of the study, respondents completed the surveys on the cadets' first full day of basic training. The design enables us to compare civilian and military responses at time of organizational entry, directly measuring selection effects—a descriptive inference unobservable in existing surveys of military elites. Inferences drawn from this sample are especially valuable, though subject to generalizability considerations that we grapple with below. Incoming officers have elevated prospects for subsequently serving in elite roles throughout the military bureaucracy, including its senior-most positions, as graduates have constituted as many as 85% and currently constitute 75% of four-star generals. Second, we adopt multiple approaches to estimate the effects of several socialization experiences that occur during an individual's organizational membership. A difference-in-differences analysis of the two survey waves provides an estimate of socialization effects associated with one of the most common cross-national experiences in military service: basic training. Additional statistical tests compare military attitudes at the time of entry to those with multiple years of military education at West Point as well as with individuals who have up to several decades of additional training and operational experience.

We find that incoming officers arrive with substantially more hawkish attitudes compared to civilians, offering strong evidence of an attitudinal gap attributable to selection into military service. Evidence for the selection mechanism is robust across specifications controlling for, and matching on, a range of political, economic, and demographic confounders. Importantly, we also find evidence of partially offsetting socialization effects. While basic training produces no substantive change in attitudes on using force, we show that extensive military training at a service academy mollifies the hawkish attitudes

observed at time of entry. Thus, cadets consistently hold more hawkish attitudes than civilians. This attitudinal gap is widest at time of selection and diminishes with years of military training.

Our study makes several contributions. First, the strong evidence for the selection mechanism suggests that foreign policy attitudes come at least in part *before* experiences in the causal chain (Hatemi and McDermott, 2016; Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017). Preexisting attitudes affect the experiences individuals opt into, which helps explain the attitudinal clustering documented in military organizations but which IR scholars often emphasize emerges due to socializing experiences (Van Evera, 1984; Posen, 1986; Snyder, 1989). This result highlights the enduring importance of policy choices regulating military service such as conscription (Erikson and Stoker, 2011; Davenport, 2015). Military organizations that rely on individuals selecting into them are likely to attract those with more hawkish attitudes. This dynamic shifts the societal costs of conflict (Caverley, 2014; Kreps, 2018), causing those most inclined to support military conflict to be the ones shouldering more of those costs. Second, our finding that extensive military training partly *dampens* hawkishness suggests that socialization, at least those socializing experiences we observe, has limited ability to explain hawkishness documented among military elites in past studies (Holsti, 1999; Feaver and Gelpi, 2004; Horowitz and Stam, 2014). Moreover, these socialization effects require time to emerge: the panel analysis reveals no difference in foreign policy attitudes before and after basic training. It is not simply the case that, as some argue, "Military organizations can routinely take groups of young people and change their preferences in relatively short periods of time" (Rosen, 2005, p. 16). The research note thus provides microfoundations of how selection and socialization interact and underpin theorized connections between military service and foreign policy attitudes.

## A Framework for Elite Military Attitudes

Do military and civilian attitudes on the use of force differ in aggregate? Past scholarship provides two perspectives on this question. On the one hand, several canonical works predict prudence, or conservatism, within military institutions. Huntington (1957, p. 69-70) famously argues that being the most "familiar" with it, military actors are "the strongest voice against immediate involvement in war." That is, current or past proximity to war costs should render individuals *more* sensitive to marginal increases in expected casualty levels than comparable civilians who do not suffer war's highest consequences (Erikson and Stoker, 2011). Gelpi and Feaver (2002) find the US was less likely to initiate militarized disputes in periods with high veteran representation in the executive and legislative branches.

On the other hand, cross-national analyses find that more military representation in elite political bodies, such as cabinets and politburos, is associated with more frequent initiation and escalation of conflict (Sechser, 2004; Weeks, 2012). In addition, a body of survey research finds that individuals with military experience generally express more support for the use of force (Karsten, 1978; Dempsey, 2009; Klingler and Chatagnier, 2014; Kriner and Shen, 2016). Military elites similarly tend to possess more hawkish dispositions (Holsti, 1999), although with considerable nuance. US military elites are more likely to endorse using force for traditional security goals, such as coping with China (Feaver and Gelpi, 2004) or during debates over escalating ongoing conflicts (Betts, 1977).

Two candidate mechanisms—selection and socialization—might explain *why* either type of attitudinal gap arises. To clarify how these two mechanisms potentially interact, we develop a simple theoretical framework that situates contentions from the existing literature and develop testable implications from this framework. Figure 1 depicts various possible combinations and outcomes of the mechanisms. As shown, selection and socialization mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. While one could produce no effects, meaning all attitudinal gaps are attributable to the other, it is easy to imagine both are operative. Selection and socialization could reinforce (the right two outcomes) or counteract (the left two outcomes) one another. Moreover, if both are operative, their effects need not be of equal magnitude. Their relative effect sizes are important for apportioning importance if they reinforce each other and determining net effects if they counteract each other.

Figure 1: Potential Effects of Military Selection and Socialization
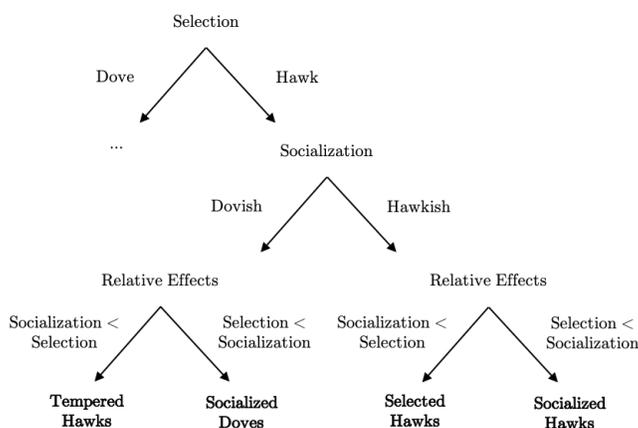


The first candidate mechanism for attitudinal gaps, well established in military sociology and depicted by the top node of Figure 1, is selection into the organization (Bachman et al. 2000; Krebs 2004, p.

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94-9). Individuals select into military organizations for a variety of non-random reasons, ranging across family background, race, socio-economic status, party identity, career alternatives, and social networks (Kleykamp, 2006; Dempsey, 2009; Elder Jr et al., 2010). While the bulk of this research emphasizes demographic factors shaping incentives to select into military organizations, some recent work has begun to look at the way that personality shapes these decisions as well (Miles and Haider-Markel, 2019).

Pre-existing attitudes on the use of force are another salient potential basis for selection into the military. As Hatemi and McDermott (2016, p. 345) summarize of the idea more broadly, "it is clear that attitudes and ideologies shape life experiences." Consider an individual's choice to select into military employment in a society without military conscription. An individual possesses some prior disposition regarding the use of military force (i.e., the individual holds hawkish or dovish dispositions) and some prior knowledge about the types of tasks associated with military careers. Specifically, the military fights a nation's wars and thus accepting military employment means an increased probability of direct or indirect exposure to and participation in violence. Individuals expressing attitudes more permissive of the use of military force should, in general, be more permissive of their own occupational participation in the application of that force.[3] Based on these simple considerations, those *more* permissive of the use of force should be more likely to opt into military organizations. Individuals with strong aversions to military conflict (i.e., doves) are less likely to choose an occupation demanding them to perform tasks that they do not support.[4] Our argument is not that economic or demographic factors play no role in an individual's choice to accept military employment. They likely do. Rather, we argue that both material and dispositional considerations factor into employment decisions. Institutional selection by the military could reinforce the described effects. A first hypothesis follows from the overall selection mechanism line of reasoning.

**H1**: Hawks are more likely to select into military experience than doves.

A second candidate mechanism is socialization, defined as the "process by which people learn to adopt the norms, values, attitudes and behaviors accepted and practiced by the ongoing system" (Sigal, 2006). The literature on socialization broadly emphasizes that organizations are social environments that may shape the attitudes and preferences of newcomers, including "inductees into a military" (Johnston, 2014, p. 21). Military organizations may shape member attitudes and preferences through exposing

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[3]The selection decision itself may similarly prompt individuals to increase support for the use of force as means of minimizing cognitive dissonance (Jennings and Markus, 1977). We return to this possibility in the results presentation.

[4]While possible, there are few reasons to expect those largely opposed to using force to opt into military service. Accordingly, we save space and do not include that full pathway in Figure 1.

them to new information or through social pressures to conform to organizational culture (Kier, 1997; Ruffa, 2018). For example, Legro (1995, p. 235) describes that "lessons for soldiers" within military organizations are "clear and immediate: conform or forget about career advancement."

Socialization could shape member attitudes in either a more or less hawkish direction. Prominent IR studies emphasize that military officers might be "socialized to see military force as standard operating procedure" or otherwise see the world as more threatening and hostile Weeks (2014, p. 24). After all, military experience "generates expertise in the use of violence," which can "crowd out other potential solutions for dealing with military challenges, leading to a perceptual bias in favor of using military force" (Horowitz and Stam, 2014, p. 532). In examining European militaries prior to World War I, for example, Snyder (1989, p. 28-9) found that officers were "over-socialized" because "professional training and duties of soldiers force them to focus on threat to the state's security and on the conflictual side of international relations." Similarly, Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik (2015, p. 985) argues that soldiers "experience intense socialization intended to increase their aggression toward rivals" and "make them more comfortable with the use of force." Our second hypothesis reflects the perspective that socializing experiences increase hawkishness among future military elites.

**H2**: Socialization increases hawkishness among individuals with military experience.

Yet, socialization might also produce the opposite effect, making individuals less hawkish over time. For example, Gelpi and Feaver (2002, p. 791-2) find the United States has been less likely to initiate militarized disputes in periods with high veteran representation in the executive and legislative branches – a finding attributed to "socializing experience" in the military. Evidence from Uganda (Hoover Green, 2016) shows that socialization may promote battlefield restraint through internalization of norms regarding civilian protection. Our final hypothesis reflects the alternative perspective that socializing experiences decrease hawkishness among future military elites.

**H3**: Socialization decreases hawkishness among individuals with military experience.

Selection and socialization mechanisms can both be operative, as Figure 1 makes clear. If they are, the relative effects of each becomes especially important for pinning down the sources of a civil-military attitudinal gap on the use of force. Moreover, because socialization subsumes a variety of experiences, it is conceivable these experiences have disparate effects, which is a possibility we explore and disentangle below.

Research Design: Surveying Future Military Elites

Our study consisted of two principal parts. First, we fielded a two-wave survey on two populations: incoming officer candidates at the US Military Academy (USMA) and US adults administered through Survey Sampling International (SSI). We administered the first wave to new cadets (n=1,242) on their first full day of basic training in early July 2017. We fielded the same survey on a nationally representative sample of US adults (n=1,811) through SSI within one week before and after the West Point implementation. The second survey wave went to the same USMA and SSI respondents, beginning the day after new cadets were accepted into the student body in late August 2017. Of those re-contacted, a total of 1,115 completed the second survey wave (USMA n=250; SSI n=865). We address attrition below and in the Supporting Information (SI). Second, during the second wave, we expanded the sample to all four USMA classes (n=918). The survey instrument, provided in the SI, collects a battery of demographic characteristics. It then measures the core dependent variable: respondent approval of use of US military troops in six hypothetical scenarios drawn from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) using a 7-point Likert scale. The scenarios were: to ensure the supply of oil; to destroy a terrorist camp; to intervene in a region where there is a genocide or civil war; to assist the spread of democracy; to protect American allies under attack by foreign nations; and to help the United Nations uphold international law.

Choosing West Point as the sample population provides a number of research advantages. First, West Point cadets are high probability candidates for future membership in the US military elite, as promotion rates to general officer are historically much higher than other officer promotion pathways. As shown in Figure 2, while West Point graduates have on average between 1990 and 2016 constituted only 19% of the overall US military officer corps, they have historically constituted as many as 85% and currently constitute 75% of four-star generals.[5] We estimate that over 50% of all three- and four-star generals since World War II were West Point graduates—with peak levels approaching 100% in the late-1960s.[6] Surveying West Point cadets provides an opportunity to observe the attitudes of individuals likely to fill senior military positions in the future—such as the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, Chief of Staff of the Army, or combatant commanders (e.g., US Central Command)—but *prior* to their socialization experiences.

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[5]Data obtained from the US Department of the Army.

[6]Authors calculations based on Moore and Trout (1978, p. 465) and data obtained from the US Department of the Army. Calculations omit years 1975 to 1989, for which we were unable to obtain data.

Second, cadets graduate from West Point as junior officers, which have suffered casualty rates comparable to enlisted personnel in recent US conflicts. Between September 2001 and July 2015, there were 2,180 combat-related Army casualties with the rank of lieutenant or captain.[7] Of these, 267 were killed in action, died of wounds, died while captured, or are missing.[8] Across ranks, we estimate that West Point graduates comprised approximately 22% of these deaths.[9] Clearly, and sadly, the sample population is highly exposed to war's deadly cost. If cost exposure does foster military conservatism as Huntington contends, we would expect to more accurately observe these effects in a sample of West Point cadets than a sample of military officers unexposed to the physical and psychological toll of combat.

Figure 2: Elite Ranks Filled by
US Military Academy Graduates, 1990-2016
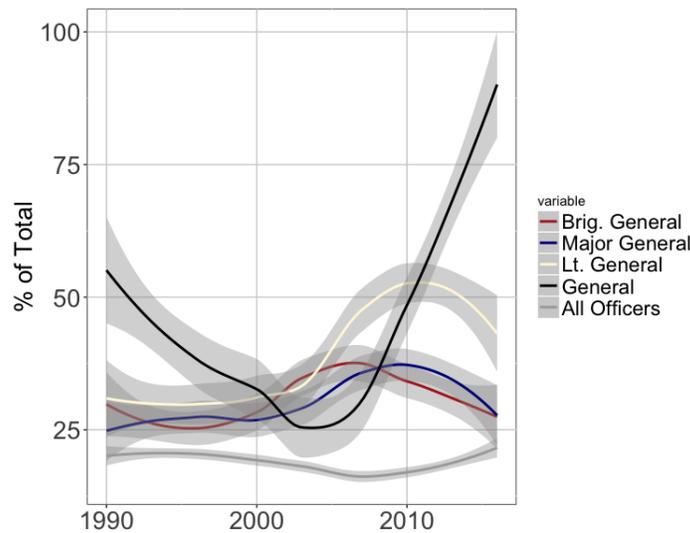


*Note: lines are loess curves and shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals.*

Third, our panel was fielded at the beginning and end of a military training program formally titled Cadet Basic Training, which mirrors basic training experiences associated with military induction and combat training across the U.S. Military. Daily activities include hand-to-hand combat, firing weapons with live ammunition, using grenades, bayonet training in which cadets simulate stabbing adversary

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[7]This constituted 5.4% of all combat-related Army casualties sustained during Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Freedom's Sentinel. Over the same time period, junior Army officers constituted 8.7% of active duty personnel. Authors calculations based on data available from US Department of Defense annual personnel reports.

[8]Data obtained through FOIA 14-F-1512 from the US Defense Manpower Data Center.

[9]96 West Point graduates died in military operations between September 2001 and July 2015, of which 60 were active duty junior officers. Data obtained from the US Military Academy Association of Graduates and FOIA 15-F-0012 from the US Defense Manpower Data Center.

soldiers, and small unit combat simulations in which the simulate killing adversary units.[10] There is also strong evidence to validate the assumption that that individuals opting in to military service have access to information on the types of tasks military organizations perform. General knowledge that military organizations fight wars aside, materials from the West Point Admissions Office, for example, clearly validate this assumption. Cadets will acquire "the skills necessary to fight and win our nation's wars" through exercises emphasizing "combat-focused physical training," "rifle marksmanship," "hand-to-hand combat," and "small unit tactics" that "introduce cadets to the essence of our Army—winning the close ground fight."[11]

However, several limitations of the sample may limit the generalizability of the findings. First, the period of socialization we observe with panel data is comparatively short and socialization may require more time to exert effects—although see Rosen (2005) and Legro (1995) above. To address longer social-ization periods, our analysis also compares attitudes between West Point cohorts, between those with and without prior military service preceding their arrival at West Point, as well as military elites years into the career. Moreover, we see a trade-off between widening the temporal scope and external valid-ity. Basic training is perhaps the most common experience associated with military membership across the military branches, as well as other militaries. A measurement specific to this common experience promises one of the most externally valid quantities of interest.

Second, military "socialization" is a broad term, which aggregates numerous experiences associated with organizational membership that might nudge attitudes in different ways at different times. This study yields insights on several of those experience: basic training, extended education at a service academy, and years of military service. We grant, however, that the experience of military training and indoctrination at professional military education institutions, such as West Point, might have different effects than the experience of garrison life or unsimulated combat (Horowitz and Stam, 2014; Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, 2015).[12] The innovation of our study is a research design that isolates the effects of the first and most common of these experiences. Future research, including with the same panel of respondents, can extend our design to measure attitudinal change after follow-on experiences, most notably following combat exposure.

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[10]For a detailed account of Cadet Basic Training, see Lipsky (2004).

[11]*US Military Academy Admissions Catalog*, pp. 37, 39.

[12]Only seven incoming cadets and 39 SSI respondents possessed combat experience.

SELECTION RESULTS: HAWKISH UPON ARRIVAL

We find that elites selecting into military organizations hold systematically different attitudes on using force compared to civilians—and this difference is evident upon arrival. Those already more supportive of employing force are more likely to opt into a career that specializes in it. *Force Support*, the main outcome variable, measures respondent approval for using US troops in each of the six hypothetical scenarios. Higher values (max.=7, min.=1) indicate greater support. Figure 3's left panel displays mean support levels, excluding all respondents with prior military service, across the hypothetical cases. Cadets (grey diamonds) arrive at basic training expressing greater support for using force in all conflict scenarios except for securing the flow of oil as compared to the full civilian sample (solid black circles) and the sample of civilians under 23 years old (empty black circles). The plot only includes respondents who also completed the second wave survey, though results are similar when including all first wave respondents.
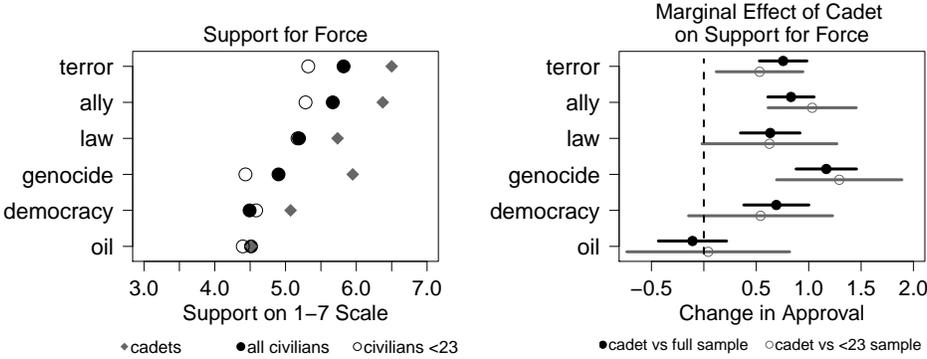


Figure 3: *Left panel*: Mean support for use of force among those who completed both survey waves, excludes all respondents with prior military service. *Right panel*: Marginal effect of switching from nationally representative survey respondent to incoming cadet respondent on support for using force. Based on specifications including controls for party ID, news consumption, income, gender, age, race and ethnicity, and veteran status. Bars show 95% confidence intervals.

Regressions with control variables ensure the result is not wholly attributable to demographic differences between the two samples (see SI Table A1). Controls account for a variety of demographic factors commonly linked to selection into military service. These include party ID, news consumption, income, gender, age, race and ethnicity, and veteran status—which may also affect attitudes on the use force. All models employ ordinary least squares (OLS) given the linear outcome measures. *Cadet* is a binary indicator for whether the respondent is in the USMA or SSI sample. Figure 3's right panel depicts the

results in black bars. Cadets convey greater support for using force across a wide variety of contexts. These attitudinal differences are present in five of the six conflict scenarios and statistically significant at the 99% level despite using the reduced sample of only those completing both survey waves. This remains true after adjusting p-values for multiple testing. Shifting the respondent from a civilian to an incoming cadet consistently increases support for using force. For all except the oil scenario, the associated increase is between 0.6 and 1.2 on a 7-point scale, which represents a 13% to 28% relative increase versus civilian support levels.

The results strongly support H1 which contends that individuals selecting into the military are more hawkish. This provides the most systematic evidence to date on the importance of selection considerations. In the framework of Figure 1, we find clear evidence for the right pathway from the initial selection node.

Though some may harbor concerns about the comparability of future military officers to civilians generally, we believe analyses across the broad cross-section of civilians provides the most direct approach to descriptively assess civil-military attitudinal gaps. For example, while matching may improve covariate balance, the theoretical premise of the selection mechanism *is* that those opting into service are systematically different. Nevertheless, our findings persist across numerous specifications that match along demographic differences at time of organizational selection. *Age* is the most salient difference and takes on values in the SSI sample for which there is no overlap among the incoming cadets (maximum age equals 22), thus introducing a risk of relying on extreme counterfactuals (King and Zeng, 2006). We address the concern by pruning the sample to include only civilian respondents younger than 23. Grey bars in Figure 3's right panel plots the marginal effects using this restricted subsample, which limits the precision of the estimates. Additionally, we employ genetic matching and produce large covariate balance improvements on party ID, income, and gender (SI Table A1 Model 8 and SI Table A7) (Diamond and Sekhon, 2013).

Other robustness tests demonstrate the stability of the results. These models respectively drop all control variables except for *Veteran*, excludes veterans entirely from the analysis, include all first wave survey respondents rather than only those completing both waves, broaden the conception of *Veteran* status to include those who attended the US Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS), and account for whether cadets have immediate *family members* in the military which may have previously socialized cadets (SI Tables A2-A6). Below we address the possibility that new cadets express hawkish views as a form of anticipatory socialization, believing it to be the appropriate attitudes to hold as a

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cadet.

## Socialization Results: Military Education Attenuates Hawkishness

Incoming military elites exhibit greater hawkishness compared to civilians upon entry into military organizations. Do socializing experiences alter relative attitudinal differences? We assess this across three experiences which progressively expand the time and intensity of socialization: (1) basic training, (2) additional military education, and (3) years of active military service.

First, to evaluate the effect of basic training, we construct an outcome measure *Change in Force Support*, which reflects the difference between an individual's wave two and wave one responses ($y_{i2} - y_{i1}$, where $i$ indexes individuals and the second subscript indicates survey wave). *Cadet* is the main explanatory variable which represents the socializing experiences of basic training which civilians do not undergo. Basic training entails hand-to-hand combat, firing weapons with live ammunition, using grenades, and small unit combat simulations, among other experiences. Models drop respondents who have already been socialized through prior military experience. We exclude covariates because those that are time-invariant would be differenced out while others may vary as a consequence of basic training and thus introduce post-treatment bias (King and Zeng, 2006).

We find that basic training, a nearly ubiquitous experience of professionalized militaries which includes numerous martial activities as described earlier, has no substantively meaningful effect on attitudes in the sample. Contrary to existing research noted above, if military socialization occurs, it requires a longer time horizon. The left panel of Figure 4 shows that cadet attitudes did not substantively change over the course of basic training as compared to civilian attitudes (SI Table A8). Cadets arrived more hawkish and remained equally so. Beyond falling short of statistical significance at conventional levels, the substantive effects are miniscule. To simplify the results presentation, we employ principal component analysis (PCA) to construct a single metric capturing overall willingness to use force. Higher values of the PCA measure indicate greater support for using force (mean=0.1, std. dev.=2.3). Figure 4's right panel plots the mean PCA scores for each sample for each survey wave including only respondents who completed both waves of the survey and excluding any with prior military service which would muddy the socialization analysis. As the parallel lines indicate, there is a nearly identical attitudinal gap before and after basic training. Contrary to H2 and H3, the cadets' essentially constant relative hawkishness across survey waves suggests the socializing experiences embedded in basic training do not alter attitudes on using force.
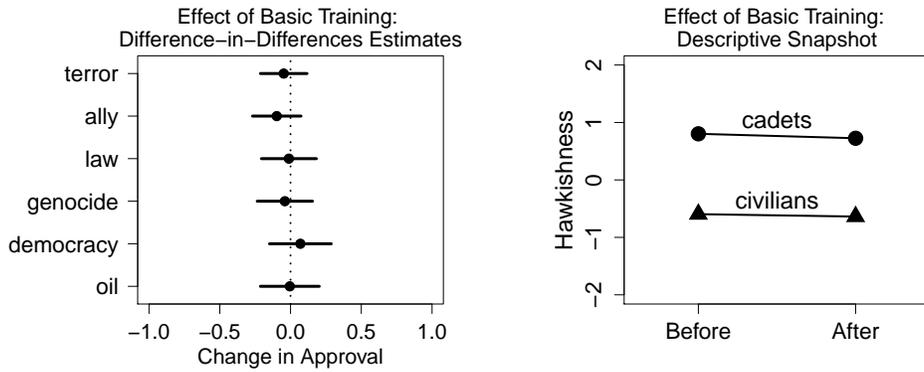
Figure 4: *Left panel*: Difference-in-differences estimates for effect of socialization experiences of basic training on attitudes toward the use of force. Bars show 95% confidence intervals. *Right panel*: Mean PCA hawkishness score for each sample for each wave.

The limited impact of basic training on cadet attitudes persists across a variety of alternative models. Specifications address attrition across survey waves by employing inverse probability weighting based on the observed correlates of completing both survey waves (Blattman, 2009). While this approach cannot address unobserved characteristics that jointly affect attrition and susceptibility to socialization, it does preclude several possibilities. Notably, there is no evidence that differential attrition related to initial hawkishness accounts for the dearth of socialization effects. Results are similarly robust to additional checks that repeat the pruning and matching approaches used in the selection analysis as well as excluding both veterans and cadets who attended USMAPS who may already be socialized (see Table A8 Model 8 and Tables A9-A11 for results and additional discussion).

Second, to expand the temporal scope of socialization experiences, we compare the incoming cadets to those across all years at USMA. The left panel of Figure 5 plots the marginal effect of shifting from the civilian sample to each of the four classes at USMA using the aggregated PCA hawkishness measure (SI Table A12). We find that cadets across all classes are more hawkish than civilians, which further challenges theories of military conservatism on the use of force. More saliently for the hypotheses, we show a decline in overall hawkishness each year (the difference between first and fourth years is statistically significant at the 95% level). The civil-military attitudinal gap shrinks by roughly 50% between a cadet's first year and fourth year. Socialization experiences at West Point are thus associated with attitudinal shifts—but in a *mollifying* direction consistent with H3 and opposite H2. This may be a feature of unique characteristics of a West Point education, such as extensive professional training

on morality and ethics in war. It could also result from increased temporal proximity to bearing costs after graduation.[13] Crucially though, the four years of dovish socialization effects are insufficient to override the hawkishness gap evident upon selection. Thus, the combination of strong hawkish selection effects and modest dovish socialization effects is most consistent with the Tempered Hawks outcome in Figure 1.
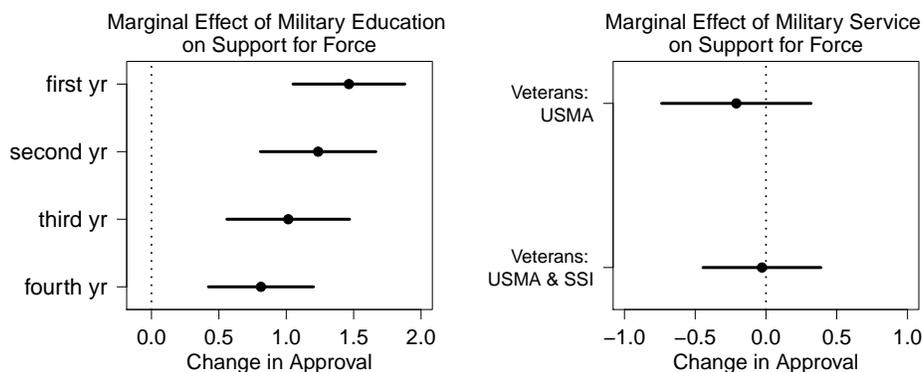


Figure 5: *Left panel*: Marginal effect of additional years of military education compared to civilian baseline. Higher value indicates more hawkishness; bars show 95% confidence intervals. *Right panel*: Marginal effect of active military service compared to incoming cadets with no prior service.

Third, we further expand the scope of socialization to include experience in operational military units in several ways. One approach capitalizes upon heterogeneous individual experiences within our USMA and SSI samples. Among the USMA sample, 65 cadets spent up to 4 years serving in active or reserve units before arriving at USMA. The SSI sample includes 144 individuals with up to 29 years of military experience. The top bars Figure 5's right panel (Table A13) compares the attitudes of incoming cadets without prior military service experiences to surveyed individuals with it using the aggregate PCA hawkishness score. It shows that regardless of whether incoming cadets had military experience, they held similarly hawkish attitudes upon arrival, showing minimal effects of socialization via service. This result also helps address possible anticipatory socialization whereby new cadets convey elevated hawkishness because they perceive it appropriate to do so. Presumably those new cadets with years of prior service would feel less acute pressure to inflate their hawkishness. The lack of substantive attitudinal differences between the two groups, however, casts doubt on the anticipatory socialization

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[13]We also cannot rule out cohort effects, although find them likely minimal as the observed cohorts entered USMA during a period—2014 to 2017—in which US force levels deployed to combat missions remained relatively stable according to data from US Department of Defense Personnel Office. The linearity of effects also provides reason to believe additional education drives the change in attitudes.

possibility. The lower bar of Figure 5 plots the marginal effect of shifting from a cadet with no prior service experience to an individual with prior service experience whether a fellow cadet or SSI respondent. Even using this pool of individuals with decades of military service, attitudes on the use of force are remarkably similar among those who selected into the military.

Another approach accounts for the possibility that the experience of *commanding* troops provides the cornerstone socializing experience for military elites, an argument consistent with Huntington's notion of the prudent officer with cost-sensitive attitudes on the use of force. While the ideal analysis might include resurveying our panel in a decade, we turn to an alternative data source in the interim: the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS) survey of civilian and military elites. Military elites in that sample consist of officers a decade or more into their careers. Civilian elites are drawn from *Who's Who in America*, the State Department, and other sources (Feaver and Gelpi, 2004). Consistent with the differences identified in the USMA panel, the TISS survey finds military elites express greater support for the use of force than their civilian counterparts on a 4-point scale where higher values represent more hawkish attitudes.[14] The mean among civilian elites is 2.7 ($n = 893$) while among military elites it is 3.0 ($n = 729$), indicating a marginal difference of 0.3 ($\pm$ 0.1 at the 95% confidence level). Holsti (1999) documents a similar attitudinal gap between civilian and military elites. In survey waves administered every four years between 1976 and 1996, military elites scored consistently higher on militant internationalism than their civilian counterparts. Thus, extensive military service is not associated with a relative reluctance to employ force as compared to civilians. Rather, the attitudinal bent among incoming military elites is similarly evident years into their careers. The comparisons in this paragraph merit cautious interpretation. While both studies similarly leverage comparisons between civilian and military individuals belonging to similar cohorts, it is worth noting the extensive time lapsed between these surveys and our own which admittedly complicates extrapolations between the two.

In sum, across the socialization experiences of basic training, extended service academy education, and years of military service (for a subset of the sample), we consistently find that (1) military individuals are more hawkish than civilians and (2) contrary to H2, no evidence that socialization produces hawkish effects. We do find some evidence of socialization effects whereby extensive service academy training dampens hawkishness (consistent with H3), but not so much as to override the large attitudinal gap evident at time of selection.

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[14]The most comparable TISS prompt states "The US should take all steps including the use of force to prevent aggression by any expansionist power." Questions addressing the threat environment, importance of military tools, or ideal foreign policy are less comparable for our purposes (see Feaver and Gelpi 2004).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

By studying the arc of military elites' development, this research note disentangles the sources of the attitudinal gap in which those with military experience hold more hawkish foreign policy attitudes. It illuminates the central importance of selection for explaining this gap, providing further evidence that attitudes often *precede* experiences. It also shows that certain socializing experiences—specifically, years of training at a service academy—alter attitudes on the use of force, but in a fashion that cannot explain why those with military experience express more permissive views on the use of force. We now address issues of generalizability and future research before highlighting the study's contributions.

The findings, and limits to their generalizability, point to fruitful paths for future research. We find that various socializing experiences produce disparate effects with some activities dampening hawkish attitudes while others have little influence at all. A key experience that this study does not capture is that of combat service. While past work studies the effects of combat on attitudes (Jennings and Markus, 1977; Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, 2015; DiCicco and Fordham, 2018), combat is typically bundled with additional socialization, such as basic training. New studies may attempt to disentangle these myriad experiences with repeated measurements before and after each additional socialization opportunity. Studying the generalizability of our results—particularly across service branches and cross-nationally—offers another pathway for additional research. Whether those selecting into, say, the US Air Force differ at time of entry to those selecting into the Army is ultimately an empirical question. Theoretically, we expect the selection mechanism to remain operative as the potential application of violence is a widely-known possibility for those entering any branch of service. However, those selecting into the Army despite its typically more proximate exposure to violence, may hold especially hawkish preferences. Cross-nationally, this study's results are plausibly representative for democratic states without conscription. The same basic selection considerations apply, though perhaps less acutely in states less prone to using force. The null effect from basic training is also likely to hold given the similarity of experiences—notably the preliminary exposure to the means of violence—across professionalized militaries. Scholars could profitably test these contentions.

This study makes several contributions to the IR literature. First, our results qualify the microfoundations of theories linking military experience to leader behavior. Consider world leaders that prominent studies (Weeks 2014, p. 24; Horowitz and Stam 2014, p. 532) suggest initiated armed conflicts due to their military experiences: Wilhelm II, Franco, Nasser, Pinochet, Galtieri, Suharto, Qaddafi, or Hussein. A common theme connects these individuals: each *selected* into service. In fact, roughly 55%

of world leaders with military experience selected into military education (Horowitz and Stam, 2014). For example, Nasser applied to the Obassia Military Academy twice, after being rejected his first attempt (Aburish, 2004, p. 15). Pinochet applied three times before gaining admission into the military (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000, p. 11-3). Franco chose to enter a military academy at the age of fourteen despite strong parental objections (Payne and Palacios, 2014, p. 11-2). These salient examples suggest that selection mechanisms may account for more of the attitudinal gap than existing accounts acknowledge.[15] This complements a wave of behavioral work in IR highlighting how individual attitudes come at least in part *before* experiences in the causal chain (Hatemi and McDermott, 2016; Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer and Renshon, 2018).

Second, the length of time in military organizations matters substantially. Our panel study illustrates that short life interventions, such as basic training, are insufficient to yield any observable change in foreign policy attitudes. This is important in the study of IR because the posited effects of military experience are implicitly assumed to occur quite quickly (e.g. Rosen 2005; Legro 1995 above). But over 20% of heads of state with military experience served for four years or less. Of the 17 US presidents with prior military experience since 1875, 10 served for less than the length of a college education.[16] As Horowitz and Stam (2014, p. 555) argue in the case of one leader with three years of military experience, "It is the George W. Bushes of the world [...] who are statistically more likely to engage in militarized behavior in office."

Third, we find that some peacetime military experiences—not just combat—may dampen, rather that create more hawkish attitudes. From the perspective of *process*, this supports the canonical view that military experience can foster more prudent leaders in certain institutional contexts (Huntington, 1957). However, from the perspective of *outcome*, our findings suggest that no observed change is sufficiently large to offset the initial hawkishness gap. Military officers with at least a decade of organizational experience exhibit an attitudinal gap that is substantively similar to the gap found on the first day of basic training.

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