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## The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation: A Reexamination

Josh Sanborn

Sir George Buchanan, Great Britain's ambassador to Russia during World War I, published his widely read memoirs in 1923. In those pages, he provided an influential account of the response of the Russian people to Germany's declaration of war:

During those wonderful early August days Russia seemed to have been completely transformed. The German Ambassador had predicted that the declaration of war would provoke a revolution. He had even declined to listen to a friend who had advised him, on the eve of his departure, to send his collection of art to the Hermitage for safe keeping, as the Hermitage would, he foretold, be one of the first buildings to be sacked. Unfortunately for him, the only act of mob violence throughout the whole Russian Empire was the wholesale looting of the German Embassy on August 4. Instead of provoking a revolution, the war forged a new bond between Sovereign and people. The workmen proclaimed a truce to strikes, and the various political parties laid aside their grievances.<sup>1</sup>

Buchanan's assessment of Russia's response to the war was seconded by his compatriot Sir Alfred Knox, Britain's military attaché in Russia:

Mobilisation went smoothly and the number of men called up in comparison with the partial mobilisation of 1904 caused general astonishment. The spirit of the people appeared excellent. All the wine shops were closed and there was no drunkenness—a striking contrast to the scenes witnessed in 1904. Wives and mothers with children accompanied the reservists from point to point, deferring the hour of parting, and one saw cruel scenes, but the women cried silently and there were no hysterics. The men generally were quiet and grave, but parties cheered one another as they met in the street. The war was undoubtedly popular with the

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1. Sir George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories* (Boston, 1923), 1:213.

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middle classes, and even the strikers, who Russians believed had been subsidised with German money, at once on mobilisation returned to work.<sup>2</sup>

Both of these men placed Russia's experience firmly within the dominant European paradigm of the Great War. The Russian throngs cheering their soldiers on to victory fit quite nicely with the image of Europe marching proudly, innocently, and unanimously to war in 1914. This picture of glorious enthusiasm made the ensuing horror and social collapse all the more dramatic. World War I became Act V of the "long" European nineteenth century, turning morality play into tragedy.

Buchanan and Knox also provided the general outline of the western account of "Russia's" response to the declaration of World War I.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, we have Buchanan's description of unity, the "bond between Sovereign and people" that supposedly existed throughout the land in this moment of crisis. On the other, we have Knox's slightly more subtle analysis, which contrasted the war's popularity in urban areas with the "quiet and grave" response in rural ones.

This composite description of urban patriotic enthusiasm and rural resignation has dominated nearly every account written since, as writers focusing on urban areas have sought to explain the end to the 1914 strikes, while those looking at the countryside have usually fallen back on the assumption that obtuse Russian peasants, locked in primitive localism, had no conception of the nation as a whole and could not begin to comprehend the events that were taking them from their dirty huts.<sup>4</sup> Thus Richard Pipes claimed that during World War I the *muzhik* (peasant man) had little sense of "Russianness." He thought of himself not as a "Russkii," but as a "Viatskii" or "Tulskii"—that is, a native of Viatka or Tula province—and as long as the enemy did not threaten his home territory, he had no quarrel with him.<sup>5</sup>

In these accounts, Russia entered the war with a burst of patriotism that masked the ultimately fatal flaws of class division in the cities and brutish ignorance in the countryside. When the war turned sour and the patriotism dwindled, those flaws became apparent, leading to the collapse of the old regime.

2. Sir Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914–1917* (London, 1921), 1:39.

3. These are not the only foreign observer sources that have been widely cited in the western literature. Other influential works include Maurice Paleologue, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, vol. 1 (London, 1923), and Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy: A Study of the Evidence* (London, 1939).

4. See, for instance, Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1917," *Slavic Review* 23, no. 4 (December 1964): 619–42 and *Slavic Review* 24, no. 1 (March 1965): 1–22; W. Bruce Lincoln, *Passage through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution, 1914–1918* (New York, 1986), 41–45; Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York, 1990), 203–10; Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924* (London, 1996), 251–52; Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York, 1994), 31; Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March–April 1917)* (Princeton, 1980), 76–77.

5. Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, 203.

This picture was bolstered by influential accounts by Russian émigrés. Pipes, in the passage printed above, was quoting General Nikolai Golovin, who in turn was citing General Iurii Danilov. Both Danilov and Golovin were reformist General Staff officers who were involved in the military preparations for World War I and survived the war to write accounts of why the war had been lost. Both ultimately turned to the explanation that Russian peasants, the bulk of the soldiers, had been insufficiently imbued with national consciousness and hence were not the citizen-soldiers that armies required to win modern wars. This was a soothing justification, for it shifted blame away from military leaders and patriotic progressive politicians onto the legacy of Russian backwardness and onto those conservative political figures who had resisted the modernizing nation-building effort spearheaded by military reformers like Golovin and Danilov prior to the war.<sup>6</sup>

The mixture of foreign observations and reformist justifications combined to produce a historiographical juggernaut in western scholarly circles that began soon after the war and continues to hold sway today. There are two basic problems with the standard interpretation. The first is empirical: practitioners of the dominant model have simply not bothered to research the actions and thoughts of reservists and their families in 1914. The fact that historians have not used one of their stocks-in-trade is baffling, for though library shelves are not overflowing with Russian World War I memoirs, letters, and diaries, many such sources have been published and are available both in Russia and abroad.<sup>7</sup> Archival sources such as police reports, manuscripts of personal narratives, and letters of normal soldiers and rural families to state institutions have also been almost completely ignored. As a result, certain major events, such as the 1914 draft riot in Barnaul that claimed as many lives as the 1863 draft riot in New York City, are virtually unknown to western readers, despite the fact that the Barnaul uprising was mentioned in nearly every Russian military account of the war.<sup>8</sup>

6. Pavel Miliukov indicted Russian peasants for a lack of patriotism in nearly the same words that Golovin and Danilov did. See Paul Miliukov, *Political Memoirs, 1905–1917*, ed. Arthur P. Mendel, trans. Carl Goldberg (Ann Arbor, 1967), 300.

7. For an excellent bibliography of such sources, along with Russian-language secondary sources, see *Pervaiia mirovaia voina: Ukazatel' literatury 1914–1993* (Moscow, 1994). Additional mention should be made of a handful of primary sources written by soldiers that are not covered in this bibliography and are not normally cited by historians. I. M. Gordienko, *Iz boevogo proshlogo, 1914–1918 gg.* (Moscow, 1957); V. I. Gurko, *War and Revolution in Russia, 1914–1917* (New York, 1919); A. A. Ignatyev, *A Subaltern in Old Russia*, trans. Ivor Montagu (London, 1944); Vladimir S. Littauer, *Russian Hussar: A Story of the Imperial Cavalry, 1911–1920*, reprint ed. (Shippensburg, Penn., 1993); E. A. Vertinskii, *Pamiatnye dni: Iz vospominanii gvardeiskikh strelkov* (Tallinn, 1932); A. Vavilov, *Zapiski soldata Vavilova* (Moscow, 1927); Boleslav Vevern, *6-ia batariia, 1914–1917 gg. Povest o vremeni velikago sluzheniia rodine* (Paris, 1938).

8. Lieutenant-General Nicholas N. Golovin(e), *The Russian Army in the World War* (New Haven, 1931), 204; Golovin, *Voennye usiliia Rossii v mirovoi voine* (Paris, 1939), 2:121; Iurii N. Danilov, *Rossiiia v mirovoi voine, 1914–1915 gg.* (Berlin, 1924), 111; Sergei Dobrolski, *Die Mobilmachung der russischen Armee 1914* (Berlin, 1922), 33.

The omission of draft riots is minor, though, compared to the more basic conceptual problem of the literature on the social response to mobilization. Historians have sought an answer to an impossible question: how did Russia respond to the war? Even in its less egregious (and more pernicious) manifestation, scholars have had few qualms about seeking to discover what “peasants,” “workers,” or the “middle classes” thought about the war. In both guises, these questions, by presupposing unitary social groups, have rather naturally lent themselves to monolithic answers.

The Soviet historiography on the 1914 mobilization depended on different sources and used a different interpretive framework than the western historiography did, but in the end it too failed to provide a convincing analysis of public activity and public attitudes upon the outbreak of the war. In contrast to western scholars, many Soviet historians included accounts of draft riots and popular unhappiness with the war in their narratives, but their fixation with labeling violent outbursts against the state as either “revolutionary” or “anarchic” blinded them to the quite novel modes of rhetoric and practice used by the demonstrators, both patriotic and unpatriotic, who surged into the streets during the massive upheaval that followed Germany’s declaration of war on Russia.

The earliest Soviet interpretation of the mobilization relied on the proposition that Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks were the only ones to truly understand the nature of the war and the opportunity it presented for liberation. Other socialist parties were condemned for their blind patriotism, while regular peasants and workers were pitied for the fact that they had been duped by their tsarist masters. In the first systematic scholarly work devoted to the war, for instance, A. M. Zaionchkovskii claimed that the patriotic front presented by all other opposition parties “allowed the tsarist government to mobilize painlessly and then to drive millions of nearly unarmed men to slaughter over the course of the next three years.”<sup>9</sup>

This position was tempered in the early 1960s by the introduction of evidence of unrest during the war. D. V. Verzhkhovskii and V. F. Liakhov cited the draft riots as evidence that Russian workers had been the only ones in Europe to resist their government’s attempts to “hide the true goals of the war” and had “actively demonstrated against it.” The Bolsheviks, they claimed, had been the only political party to heed the voice of the working class.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, A. M. Anfimov, writing about the response to the war in the countryside, also noted unrest, but he argued that peasant unhappiness could only take the form of an “anarchic and uncoordinated struggle.”<sup>11</sup> In the multivolume history of the war published in 1975, these analyses were combined in the claim that, though the Russian bourgeoisie had responded to the war with enthusiasm, both workers and poor peasants protested the war in “all the major cities of Russia” but had failed

9. A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Mirovaia voina 1914–1918*, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1931 [1924]), 14.

10. D. V. Verzhkhovskii and V. F. Liakhov, *Pervaia mirovaia voina, 1914–1918 gg.: Voennno-istoricheskii ocherk* (Moscow, 1964), 39–40.

11. A. M. Anfimov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–1917 g.)* (Moscow, 1962), 347–48.

to make an impact on policy because the outbursts were “anarchic attempts of the populace” to stop the war.<sup>12</sup> Revolution awaited the organizing hand of the Bolsheviks.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the upsurge in interest in World War I and the reevaluation of Russia's past that has occurred since the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of Russian archives, post-1991 analyses of 1914 have been quite traditional, both in Russia and abroad. Thus one Russian author, throwing off the yoke of Bolshevik interpretations of popular mood, parroted Buchanan's “patriotic” position in a 1994 article:

World War I . . . what do we know about it? A few phrases from school primers, “annexationist,” “imperialist,” “crisis of elites,” “revolutionary situation.” The war is perceived as a prologue to two revolutions—February and October—and, by comparison with them, the events are barely important and even less significant. But that is how it is for us, the offspring, schooled not in the history of the Fatherland, but in the history of the revolutionary movement. For contemporaries it was different, and now that we are opening the yellowed archival folders, we learn with surprise that among the people [*narod*] it was called a Fatherland war and that the patriotic spirit in Russia in the first two years was unusually high.<sup>14</sup>

Hubertus Jahn, in his fine 1996 study of patriotic culture during the war, also arrived at the conclusion that there was an “initial outburst of flag-waving enthusiasm” that soon dissipated. Despite this outburst, Jahn argued, “Russia was not a nation during World War I” because Russians only understood whom they were fighting and not who they were.<sup>15</sup>

The problems that plagued earlier accounts of the war have not gone away. Scholars still rely on thin source bases when considering the 1914 mobilization and consider only parts of the public's response without placing manifestations of patriotism and dissent within a broader political context. Given the richness of that source base and the scale of the events that took place in 1914, it is impossible to describe and to analyze the World War I mobilizations in a single article. Instead, it is my desire in this article to provide a brief catalog of the many responses to the outbreak of the war and to argue that historians need to reconceptualize their notions of political community and political action in late imperial Russia in order to make sense of those responses.

## **The Mobilization of 1914**

The declaration of mobilization and war in July 1914 brought about three basic responses from the Russian populace. The first was by far the most

12. I. I. Rostunov, ed., *Istoriia pervoi mirovoi voyny, 1914–1918* (Moscow, 1975), 1:228.

13. Some authors, however, remained unaffected by this attempt to portray the laboring masses of Russia as instinctively opposed to imperialist wars and continued to assert the standard position that the outbreak of war had intoxicated all of Europe and that “hurrah-patriotism” reigned throughout Russia as surely as it did in England. See, for instance, Nikolai Iakovlev, *1 avgusta 1914*, 3d ed. (Moscow, 1993 [1974]), 28–29.

14. Elena Seniavskaia, “Kornet bezhit na voynu,” *Pogranichnik*, no. 3 (March 1994): 61.

15. Hubertus F. Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca, 1996), 171–73.



prevalent: a private response to the danger and disruption of the war. Most men spent the one-day grace period before they were due to appear arranging for ways to fulfill their obligations in their absence and spending time with their families. The most common sound in Russia was that of men, women, and children weeping. The other common sound was silence, not the “eternal silence” of the Russian countryside that Russian urbanites, too deaf to rural noises to know the difference, generally heard, but a stunned silence.<sup>16</sup> Rural men themselves recalled the eeriness of buzzing villages falling silent as families quietly grieved.<sup>17</sup>

A typical situation was described by a noncommissioned officer in his unpublished memoirs written as he lay in a military hospital in early 1915.<sup>18</sup> Ivan Kuchernigo lived in a village near the district center of Aleshka and received the news as most rural Russians did, at a village assembly:

On 17 July, a policeman who had never been to our village before arrived and went door to door calling everyone to a meeting, and so I went.

“What’s going on?” the peasants asked each other, but no one responded because no one knew what was going on, and how could we have known . . . ?

Suddenly, the village elder appeared and made a sign with his hand to be quiet. Everyone became silent, straining their ears and wanting to hear exactly what our elder would say . . .

“Here’s what’s afoot boys! An enemy has turned up! He has attacked our Mother Russia [*Matushku Rossiinu*], and our Father-Tsar needs our help, our enemy for now is Germany.”

“It’s the Germans! The Germans!” spread through the crowd . . .

“Quiet! Quiet!” boomed the voice of the elder. “OK boys, in order not to lose time messing with lists, whoever feels healthy and able to serve the Fatherland should all show up at 9 o’clock on the 18th in the office of the District Military Commander in Aleshka, and I advise you to bring with you two pairs of underwear, and they’ll give you everything else there, just do it quick.”

At this point, the crowd dispersed to their huts, “forgetting about their field work.” The heartbreaking family scenes he described in his village were played out all over Russia:

My God, how many tears were spilled when we had to go. My five-year-old daughter sat in my arms and, pressing against me, said “Daddy, why are you going? Why are you leaving us? Who’s going to earn money and get bread for us?” Her little arms clasped me about the neck and tightly, tightly hugged me. I heard the beating of her little heart, and heard her lips begin to kiss my neck. I couldn’t answer her questions, and couldn’t hold back my own tears, and just answered “I’ll be home soon, baby.”

16. The quote that the Russian countryside responded to the declaration of war with “eternal silence” comes from Kadet leader Pavel Miliukov, *Political Memoirs*, 300.

17. O. I. Gorodovikov, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1957), 34.

18. “Zapisi starshogo unter-ofitsera kom. 253 pekhotnogo Cherekopnogo polka Ivan Vasil’evich Kuchernigo,” Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 6281, op. 1, d. 178, ll. 1–3.

Throughout the village the only thing you could hear were prayers, and curses thrown at the Germans.

Khristina Semina, living in an area of Transcaucasia populated mostly by Armenians and Azeris, had similar recollections of the general response to the news that war had been declared:

Among the Armenians the whole family lived only on the labor of the male. . . . Therefore, when it was demanded that husbands, fathers, and brothers go to the induction point and they said that it was war—there arose such crying and wailing among the women and children that it immediately became horrible. The din of this weeping prevailed throughout the city both night and day.

The sorrow was not, of course, limited to Armenians. Semina herself was overcome by tears and could not stop crying as her husband both prepared to leave and brought home tales of the “awful scenes” that were occurring at the induction point as families were split apart.<sup>19</sup> The same sounds resonated in Anna Akhmatova’s ears. “Soldiers’ wives are sobbing for the boys,” she wrote on 20 July 1914, “the weeping of widows is ringing throughout the countryside.”<sup>20</sup>

The second response has received far more attention than it deserves in proportion to its prevalence. This was vocal public support. It has received undue attention because a disproportionate number of people who got their remembrances of Russia’s response to war published witnessed that response on Palace Square in St. Petersburg, the site of a truly substantial patriotic demonstration of about a quarter of a million people, moving and singing in unison in response to the tsar. Needless to say, the scale of the event and the presence of the Petersburg elite made the demonstration atypical, but the obvious emotional power of the moment overwhelmed almost everyone there and skewed their vision of the declaration of war.<sup>21</sup>

That said, there can be no doubt that a great many patriotic demonstrations occurred throughout the country. Throughout the realm, provincial officials arranged for patriotic demonstrations to be held as men marched off to war, and these seem to have been fairly well attended. Again Kuchernigo best described the scene that occurred in many local towns where reservists congregated:

What crowds of people! It was hard to get through the streets. They were carrying portraits of the emperor decorated with flags. The noise was such that it was hard to understand anything. Some sang “God Save the Tsar,” others yelled “Long Live the Tsar and the People [*narod*],” and others

19. Khristina D. Semina, *Tragediia russkoi armii pervoi velikoi voiny 1914–1918 gg.: Zapiski sestry miloserdii kavkazskogo fronta* (New Mexico, 1963), 1:11.

20. Anna Akhmatova, “Iiul’ 1914,” in *Primate etot dar . . . : Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow, 1995), 171.

21. In addition to Buchanan, see Paleologue, *An Ambassador’s Memoirs*, 46–52; Pares, *Fall of the Russian Monarchy*, 187–89; M. V. Rodzianko, *Krushenie imperii i Gosudarstvennaia Duma i fevral’skaia 1917 goda revoliutsiia* (Valley Cottage, N.Y., 1986), 100–107.



yelled "Down with the Germans, death, death to the Germans!" "Long live the Invincible Russian Army! Hoorah! Hoorah! Hoorah!"<sup>22</sup>

Mariia Bochkareva, living in Siberia at the time, remembered the days of mobilization as an "elevating, glorious, unforgettable moment," a feeling that many Russians who joined in the patriotic demonstrations must have experienced as well.<sup>23</sup> It was an intoxicating experience to participate in the life and activities of a large community, and that feeling of transcendence was eagerly sought around the empire.

These demonstrations did not, however, necessarily mean that there was support for the war itself. Most Russians harbored few illusions that they would gain any particular benefit from a military victory. War had always meant sacrifice and loss, and there was no reason to believe that this one would turn out any differently. As we will see below, there was a significant outpouring of distaste for the war itself from the very beginning in the form of riots, but other forms of resistance were also present from the outset. In Riga, alongside the portraits of the tsar, workers and reservists flew banners proclaiming "down with the war!"<sup>24</sup> Less showy resistance began in earnest as well. At one district office during the first week of mobilization, of the approximately 2,000 men who had initially shown up, over 200 promptly disappeared.<sup>25</sup>

Even given these caveats, there can be no doubt that there was a significant minority of the population that was enthusiastic about the war in 1914. Part of this enthusiasm was expressed by young men who rushed to district military offices to volunteer after the war broke out, despite the fact that volunteering for service was an option available only to those men who were neither in active forces, nor the reserves, nor the first tier militia.<sup>26</sup> This was an occurrence that completely took state and military men by surprise. Indeed, as General Vladimir Sukhomlinov, the war minister, admitted a few days after mobilization began, they had simply not foreseen the possibility of men volunteering during wartime.<sup>27</sup> It was not until 23 July that the rules governing the induction of volunteers were approved by the tsar and not until 28 July that they were distributed.<sup>28</sup> By that time, the confusion surrounding volunteering was already apparent. Angry telegrams decrying the inactivity of district military commanders, patriotic telegrams

22. "Zapisi starshego unter-ofitsera kom. 253 pekhotnogo Cherekopnogo polka Ivan Vasil'evich Kuchernigo," GARF, f. 6281, op. 1, d. 178, l. 4–4ob.

23. Maria Botchkareva [Mariia Bochkareva], *Yashka: My Life as Peasant, Officer and Exile*, as set down by Isaac Don Levine (New York, 1919), 64.

24. A. Pireiko, *V tylu i na fronte imperialisticheskoi voiny: Vospominaniia riadovogo* (Leningrad, 1926), 9.

25. GARF, f. 1745, op. 1, d. 58, ll. 370–421 (daily reports of Plotsk district military commander, 17 July through 26 July 1914).

26. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (RGVIA), f. 2000, op. 3, d. 2647, l. 1 (letter from Nikolai Ianushkevich to chief of the Main Staff, 18 July 1914).

27. RGVIA, f. 400, op. 19, d. 86, l. 8 (Sukhomlinov report, 22 July 1914).

28. "Pravila o prieme v voennoe vremia okhotnikov na sluzhbu v sukhoputnye voiska." Approved by the tsar, signed by Sukhomlinov, *ibid.*, l. 10; distributed as "Prikaz po voennomu vedomstvu no. 454," 28 July 1914, *ibid.*, ll. 34–35.

offering services, and frustrated notes from local officials asking for guidance flowed into central military offices.<sup>29</sup>

The rules finally sent out initially forbade enlisting men younger than 18 or older than 43 (rules that were soon bent or broken), and since all men already obligated to serve were not allowed to volunteer, the pool of possible volunteers was quite restricted. The majority came from men in the second tier militia, men with student deferrals, or men of ethnicities not yet drafted. Unfortunately, no statistics about the number of men enrolled as volunteers appear to be available, but the “significant influx” was great enough to cause logistical difficulties only in the Caucasus, where the Muslim population paid a tax in lieu of military service.<sup>30</sup> Though the volunteer rush was therefore probably fairly small in numerical terms, and we cannot assume in any case that all volunteers were inspired by “hurrah-patriotic” motives, it is clear that there were people scattered throughout the empire who genuinely responded in a patriotic way and thirsted to fight in the war, from Siberian women like Mariia Bochkareva, to underage Jewish boys, to the sons of prominent politicians like Mikhail Rodzianko and Aleksandr Krivoshein.<sup>31</sup>

The final response to the declaration of war is one that has had far less coverage than it deserves. This was active public opposition. Throughout Russia, the declaration of war sparked off draft riots, some of them enormous and serious. These riots, as I noted above, do not fit well with the existing historical paradigm of 1914. Compare Buchanan’s claim that the “only act of mob violence” throughout Russia was targeted at the German Embassy with the following telegram sent from Tomsk during the mobilization period:

Reservists are producing disorder almost everywhere in Tomsk province: in Novonikolaevsk [present-day Novosibirsk] a mob of reservists sacked stores and began to sack the bazaar, the disorders were stopped with the assistance of [army troops]. . . . The mobs threw stones at them, one rifleman was wounded with bullets, as a result of which the troops opened fire . . . two were killed, two were seriously wounded. In light of these disorders the horse requisition committee stopped its work. Reservists smashed liquor stores in the villages of Iudikh, Tiumentsev, and Klochki in Barnaul district, reservists demanded provisions from county authori-

29. See, for instance, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 2647, l. 16 (telegram from “volunteers under the leadership of P. Shaposhnikov” to Sukhomlinov, 23 July 1917); *ibid.*, l. 30 (letter from N. Bogomolov to the Mobilization Department, 22 July 1914); *ibid.*, l. 15 (telegram from chairman of the Kostroma draft board to the war minister, 22 July 1914); RGVIA, f. 400, op. 19, d. 86, l. 38 (telegram from General Ebelov [Odessa] to chief of Main Staff, 27 July 1914).

30. RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 1159, l. 6 (letter from Pension and Service Department of the Main Staff to the Mobilization Department of the General Staff, 15 August 1914).

31. Botchkareva [Bochkareva], *Yashka*, 64; RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 2, d. 28, l. 53 (petition to the tsar from 11-year-old Vulf Iankel’ son of Riga, n.d.); for Rodzianko’s request to enlist his son despite the fact that he had failed his medical exam (and approval of request), see RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 2608, l. 85 (report from Sukhomlinov to the tsar, 21 July 1914); for Krivoshein children, see *ibid.*, l. 88.

ties in Iudikh, they deserted in Tiumentsev and drove away the police chief in Iudikh.<sup>32</sup>

As we can see from this account and the accounts below, Knox's belief that "all the wine shops were closed and there was no drunkenness" was simply false. Instead, extant sources show that one of the most popular activities of the rioters was to loot liquor stores.<sup>33</sup> Military officials, desperately wishing to preserve their heady vision of popular support for the war as hostilities began, quickly latched onto the liquor factor as the sole reason that the "disorders" occurred. "Liquor," one official bravely declared after the 1914 riots had cooled, "was the source of all misfortune."<sup>34</sup>

The rampages for liquor were understandable, perhaps even predictable. Induction into the active forces had long been an occasion for drunkenness on the part of young Russian men and was a cultural ritual in many places across the empire. Some villages even upheld a tradition of paying for the vodka that young conscripts consumed.<sup>35</sup> Needless to say, this ritual was frowned upon by military officials seeking a quick and efficient mobilization, and they successfully argued that liquor sales should be cut off during the mobilization period. The obvious solution from the perspective of reservists was simply to break open the closed stores, and in locations where local officials neglected to heed the warnings of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and failed to provide police protection for the stores, it was a solution that was carried out. In the city of Lugansk, riots began with an attack on liquor stores; the crowd then proceeded to loot food and clothing stores before breaking windows in private residences "with shouts of 'hurrah!'"<sup>36</sup>

But the closing of liquor stores and the effects of drunkenness after the stores were looted cannot be taken as the sole explanation for these widespread riots. As we saw in the telegram from Tomsk, far more was occurring than simple raids for vodka. Reservists were also protesting the lack of provisions, the requisitioning of their horses, and the war itself. This multiplicity of factors was in evidence around the empire. In Ekaterinoslav, the riot was sparked, not by a run on the liquor store, but by the un-

32. Telegram from Tomsk province included in "O bezporiadkakh na sbornykh punktakh vo vremia mobilizatsii," report from department of police to the MVD Conscription Administration, 1914, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv, St. Petersburg (RGIA), f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1729, l. 26.

33. For an analysis of the July riots in the context of liquor disturbances, see William Arthur McKee, "Taming the Green Serpent: Alcoholism, Autocracy, and Russian Society, 1881–1914" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), esp. 525–32.

34. RGVA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 1196, l. 93 (telegram of the governor-general of the Steppe district to Sukhomlinov, 18 August 1914). All liquor stores were required by law to remain closed during the mobilization period, a law that generally appears to have been enforced. See also Golovin, *Russian Army*, 204, for a similar interpretation of the riots.

35. RGVA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 18, l. 6–6ob. (report of commander of Kazan' military district to the war minister, 8 January 1910).

36. RGVA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 1154, ll. 242–43 (report of the chief of the Lugansk garrison to the war minister, 24 July 1914).

furling of a patriotic flag and an attempt to start a prowar demonstration by members of the Black Hundreds, at which point reservists set upon the man who had produced the flag while others threw bricks at policemen, touching off a brawl that ended only when police fired into the crowd, killing one and wounding seven. In the Belebeevskii district of Ufa province, the riots began with the looting of bread stores and finished with an attack on liquor stores. In the city of Birsk (again in Ufa province), liquor played no part in the riot. Reservists "dispersed the police and destroyed the induction center, thanks to which the medical examinations and formation of units to send to the front had to stop."<sup>37</sup>

In most places, rioters included an attack on liquor stores in the context of other activities. In Barnaul, rioters seized control of the city for a time, torching houses, stores, and a liquor warehouse, prompting a full-scale flight by local residents. More than one hundred men would die in battles between reservists and police before order was restored.<sup>38</sup> The battle in Barnaul was the largest of its kind, but there were gunfights and numerous episodes of stone throwing throughout the empire, activities that should have given pause to officials who blamed everything on the booze. Many of the rioters were deadly serious, willing to die even before the liquor started flowing. In all, people were wounded and killed in draft rioting in the provinces of Astrakhan', Vitebsk, Vologda, Viatka, Ekaterinoslav, Novgorod, Penza, Perm', Podol'sk, Samara, Saratov, Simbirsk, Tambov, Tobol'sk, Tomsk, Ufa, and the Region of the Don Host. These riots left 51 state officials wounded and 9 dead, while 136 rioters were wounded and 216 killed.<sup>39</sup>

The only satisfactory model for explaining most of these riots, therefore, is to recognize that though the word *mob* is a singular noun in Russian (*tolpa*) as well as English, in fact a riot is a set of activities, not a single one. Once the balance of power is tipped and the forces of traditional authority are visibly inferior, it opens a space for all kinds of activities. Some men attack the police, others steal bread, others get drunk, and many take part in all of the above.

Using this framework, we can usefully indicate the several factors behind the draft riots of 1914. One, to be sure, was a desire to get drunk. Another was to demand sufficient provisions for themselves and obtain the goods promised to their families. Yet another reason, clearly, was to show displeasure with the war and do everything possible to delay or derail the process of being sent to the front. Military officials preferred to explain the riots purely in terms of the first factor, but this explanation became less and less plausible as the war went on. When the second tier of the militia was called up in September 1915 and riots exploded again, the fiction

37. RGVA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 1154, ll. 238–41 (report of commander of Kazan' military district to war minister, 24 July 1914).

38. Accounts of these events are collected in RGIA, f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1729.

39. "Svedeniia o chisle lits, postradavshikh vo vremia byvshikh v iule mobilizatsiui 1914 g. bezporiadkov v nekotorykh mestnostiakh imperii," RGIA, f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1729, ll. 129–30.

that rioting reservists wanted nothing more than booze proved impossible to maintain.<sup>40</sup>

Just as explanations that "Russia" responded monolithically to the war are unconvincing, so are attempts to understand the response by using broad social categories like "worker," "peasant," or "elite." Within each of these groups, there was noticeable differentiation. For, at the same time that many young elites with legal deferrals and exemptions flocked to conscription offices to volunteer for service, a significant portion of their compatriots who were due to appear spent July pulling strings to obtain a reprieve. Sergei Dobrorol'skii, the head of the mobilization department, read "all kinds of requests and petitions" from young men from "our cultured society and from the midst of the bourgeoisie." "They pressed every possible button," and, he resignedly admitted, for the most part succeeded in their attempts.<sup>41</sup>

The divergence of opinion within social groups extended all the way down the social ladder. At the same time that some workers in Riga and St. Petersburg were raising banners stating "down with the war," workers in Tula were actively chasing down Tolstoians posting antiwar leaflets around town and threatening them with mob justice.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, in villages and small towns across the empire, proud patriotic citizens were turning in their neighbors for avoiding the draft and deserting the army. The volume of these denunciations had reached such "enormous" proportions by 1915 that A. A. Polivanov, the war minister, began to suspect that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was being insufficiently attentive to the problem of draft evasion and wrote the minister of internal affairs to protest.<sup>43</sup>

These civilian complaints were broadly framed and were often sent to specific central state institutions. They were not the parochial spasms of ignorant peasants. Nor were they only targeted at specific individuals; they were often critical of state policy as well. One group of rural dwellers wrote to the Duma urging that policemen be drafted before only sons were. "The peasantry," they claimed, "sees that the motherland groans under the burdens of war. And the peasantry is ready to bear . . . the horrible sacrifice of war, but it appeals to the . . . State Duma and requests that fairness be seen in everything. . . . It is necessary that everyone, regardless of class or property qualifications, defend the motherland. With that fairness, victory over the enemy will be guaranteed."<sup>44</sup> These anonymous authors claimed to speak for the whole peasantry. One other rural dweller wrote in even

40. For a summary of the 1915 riots, see "Perechen' 'besporiadkov,' uchinennykh ratnikami 2-go razriada prizyva 5 sentiabria 1915 g., sostavlennyi v departamente politzii," secret, 2 November 1915, RGIA, f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1729, ll. 131–81.

41. Cited in Golovin, *Voennye usilia*, 2:121.

42. See account of the conflict between workers and Tolstoians in Tula in the court proceedings against the Tolstoians in Gosudarstvennyi muzei istorii religii (GMIR), f. 13, op. 1, d. 376.

43. RGVA, f. 2000, op. 3, d. 1196, l. 91 (letter from Polivanov to Shcherbatov, 5 August 1915).

44. RGIA, f. 1278, op. 5, d. 1193, l. 106–106ob. (letter from "The peasantry" to the State Duma, 5 August 1915).



more grandiose terms that he knew that the “*whole people* is terribly unhappy with conscription policy because it is unequally applied and not everyone has to serve.”<sup>45</sup> The authors of these letters were using a new political framework by demanding equality for all citizens and by making political claims on the basis of representing “the people.” That framework, as we will see below, was national in form and in content.

### The Question of the Russian Nation

The argument outlined above has been “deconstructive.” I have argued that the common assumptions about the behavior of Russians upon the outbreak of war in 1914 are problematic, if not untenable. “Peasants,” “workers,” and “elite” did not act monolithically. Neither, of course, did “Russia.” But deconstruction is not enough, for the evidence supports a more “constructive” analysis of political community and political behavior in Russia in 1914. More specifically, the reaction of reservists and their families to the outbreak of the war allows us to ask rather different questions about the formation of the Russian nation than were possible to ask within the old historical paradigm.

The first question to ask is one most recently addressed by David Moon: did peasants become Russian citizens in the waning years of Romanov rule?<sup>46</sup> Both the question and Moon’s analysis deserve a detailed response. Moon says that peasants did not become citizens prior to 1917, claiming that since the Russian state “had not (yet) devoured its peasants . . . these peasants had not become Russian citizens.”<sup>47</sup> The basis of Moon’s argument is an extensive and erudite comparison between the situation in “constitutional Russia” (ca. 1905–1917) and that of the French Third Republic described by Eugen Weber in his celebrated book *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*.<sup>48</sup> The crux of the problem of nationhood for Moon is not whether peasants were *aware* of events of national significance (they had been aware of these, as Moon points out, for quite some time) but whether they would *act* as “members of a wider, national society with which they felt they shared more common interests than they had sources of conflict.”<sup>49</sup>

Moon is quite right, I think, to insist that action is as important to consider as “awareness” or “consciousness.” Nations *do* preside over the site where thought and behavior, culture and politics, intersect. Unfortunately, I think that he errs when he attempts to define national belonging in terms of unity. Segments of the population do not need to “devour” each

45. RGVA, f. 400, op. 19, d. 147, l. 5 (letter from “a peasant” to the war minister, 20 January 1915). Emphasis added.

46. David Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens? A Comparative Perspective,” *Revolutionary Russia* 9, no. 1 (June 1996): 43–81.

47. *Ibid.*, 76.

48. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, 1976).

49. Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens?” 44.



other to be co-national; neither do they have to “share more common interests” than they have sources of conflict. Unity is a national desire, not a precondition for the nation itself. This is an error commonly made not only by nation-builders themselves, who idealize the nation precisely because it promises unanimity, but by critics of nationalism as well. Marxists in particular viewed nationalism as an ideology that “masked” dissent by painting a veneer of national unity over “real” class divisions. It was the great (and, for Marxists, exasperating) success of nationalism that it created a “false consciousness” in the masses.

This focus on “consciousness” when analyzing nationalism is still a common one. As Prasenjit Duara has pointed out, the big guns of recent theorizing on the nation like Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson also focus on national identity as a “distinctive mode of consciousness: the nation as a whole imagining itself to be the unified subjectivity.” In Duara’s view, though, the nation is not the unified product of collective imagination but is a site of significant, indeed often heated, contestation about identity and power. The problem with most earlier theories about nationalism, he claims, is the “general postulate of a cohesive subjectivity.”<sup>50</sup> I fully agree with Duara’s move away from Anderson and Gellner and with Rogers Brubaker’s similar call to focus more upon the nation as a “category of practice”<sup>51</sup> than upon states of consciousness or properties of collectivities.

The nation, like all political fields, is an arena where multiple subjectivities and multiple behaviors interact within certain parameters. They play according to a short list of rules, a set of governing ideals. Among these is the idea that central “national” institutions ought to supersede local power structures, the belief that no members of the nation should possess special rights and privileges that other members do not possess, and the notion that a historical, territorialized community is the legitimizing political force in the country. Finally, as Moon suggests, there lies the idea that citizens must be political *actors*.

To get to the heart of questions relating to the nation, therefore, we must answer the question of how political action is framed. It is here that Moon’s argument is weakest in regard to Russian behavior during World War I. He argues that the simultaneous mutinies of the French and Russian armies in 1917 were fundamentally dissimilar, citing Leonard Smith’s conclusion that the French mutiny was primarily a political contest between “citizen-soldiers” and their commanders while the disintegration of the Russian army was precipitated by peasant-mutineers and deserters who were “primarily concerned with their own interests as peasants” and “had only a very weakly developed sense of national consciousness.”<sup>52</sup> He derives this conclusion from Allan Wildman’s magisterial study of the army in 1917, but I read Wildman much differently than Moon does. Wildman

50. Prasenjit Duara, “Historicizing National Identity, or Who Imagines What and When,” in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (Oxford, 1996), 152–53.

51. Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, Eng., 1996), 21.

52. Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens?” 45, 47.

argued that Rodzianko elicited cheers from soldiers in 1917 when he appealed to a “new Mother Russia,” that peasant soldiers in 1917 “keenly sensed their own power to impose changes,” and that their breaches of discipline were connected almost wholly with suspicions that their officers were violating the popular will. “This Revolution,” Wildman concludes, “should be regarded as the conquest by the masses of undivided Soviet power, the realization of their vision of direct democracy without compromises with the propertied elements, and the immediate execution of the agenda of the Revolution on land, peace, and workers’ control of industry.”<sup>53</sup> These conclusions hardly seem to fit with the picture of parochial, prepolitical peasant-soldiers.<sup>54</sup>

Moon wisely did not press his argument that soldiers acted parochially as peasants but moved on to assert that it was the peasants left at home who were most important in 1917 and therefore deserve primary attention. Here again, though, he is on shaky ground. He acknowledges that during the war there “were cases of peasants lynching landowners with German surnames, claiming that they were traitors, and seizing idle land in order to increase food production for the war effort,” but he claims that these “justifications” were self-serving: “The notions of going without to support the nation’s war effort or ‘digging for victory’ would not have met with much resonance in the Russian countryside during the First World War, unless peasants could see some advantage for themselves.”<sup>55</sup>

In the first place, it hardly matters whether the “justifications” were self-serving or not. If we disqualify all nations whose “rules” have been manipulated by self-interested actors, then a great many scholars of the nation will go hungry. Indeed, we might argue that manipulation *proves* both the ubiquity of the nation as a political field and the need to appeal to it to make political claims. The power of ideology, national ideology included, lies not in inspiring belief but in structuring action. As Václav Havel once noted about a somewhat different ideo-political structure, “individuals need not believe in all these [ideological] mystifications, but they must behave as though they did. . . . It is enough for them to have accepted their life with it and in it. For by this very fact, individuals confirm the system, fulfill the system, make the system, *are* the system.”<sup>56</sup>

In the second place, Moon adduces no evidence to support his claim that the “notion of going without to support the nation’s war effort” would have been alien to rural Russians. For good reason, too, since Lars Lih, in the most extensive study of rural attitudes toward production and con-

53. Wildman, *End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 195–96, 375, 379, 380.

54. Moon conscientiously acknowledges here that his interpretation “conflicts with some recent work on the evolution of Russian national identity among peasants,” citing the work of A. V. Buganov on collective memory and Jeffrey Brooks on popular literature in particular. He deals with the former by agreeing with David Ransel’s criticism that Buganov had a weak conceptualization of national consciousness and with the latter by claiming that Brooks inadequately dealt with “the critical analytical problem of recreating the attitudes of the readers rather than the content of what they read.” Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens?” 47.

55. *Ibid.*, 49.

56. Václav Havel, *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965–1990* (New York, 1992), 136.

sumption during World War I, claims that “in line with the view of the state as essentially a protector, the peasant producers made a sharp distinction between grain deliveries for the army and deliveries for the town. The peasants understood the necessity of supplying the army by giving up his grain without compensation, but they saw no such necessity to supply the town.”<sup>57</sup>

Lih’s addendum to this claim highlights the essential difference between my analysis and Moon’s: “This attitude exasperated food-supply officials, who obviously felt the peasants were too backward to grasp that supplying the cities was a civic duty on a par with supplying the army.”<sup>58</sup> The progressive, patriotic food-supply officials, just like the progressive, patriotic military reformers who blamed peasant parochialism for the loss of the war, assumed that because many rural Russians did not *agree* with their vision of the nation, they did not *have* a vision of the nation. The Russian reformers, Moon, and indeed Weber himself all presumed that since the nation requires unity, the precondition for the rise of the nation is urbanity. Anything else is “backward” or “pre-political.”

Even more problematically, these nationalists and theorists all assumed that national unity also implied loyalty to the government. But the national political form does not require agreement or loyalty, either between segments of the population or between citizens and the regime. Indeed, the nation by definition opens up this space of contestation: if the political community is separate from the regime, then there must always be the possibility that members of that community, individually or collectively, will make the claim that other political actors do not represent the “true” political will of the community. What is important is not a “unified subjectivity” but the framework of political action.

To understand that framework in regard to 1914, we need to understand the relationship between mass mobilization and the emergence of a nation. Brubaker provides a clue with his argument that we should regard “nationness” as “an event . . . something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops, as a contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action, rather than as a relatively stable product of deep developmental trends in economy, polity, or culture.”<sup>59</sup> This is Brubaker’s most original contribution to the literature on the nation, and it is implicitly critical of earlier approaches (like Gellner’s and Weber’s) that treated the nation as one of the many by-products of industrialization and “modernization.”

I prefer a physical rather than a chemical metaphor. Nationness is an event, but it is a kinetic event that requires the building up of potential energy beforehand. Nationness is *both* an event that suddenly crystallizes *and* one that is the product of deep developmental trends. It is not, therefore, that Anderson, Gellner, and Weber are wrong to point to the importance of print-capitalism, industrialization, railroad building, and military conscription as factors in nation formation, but that they do not exhaust

57. Lars Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914–1921* (Berkeley, 1990), 71.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 19.

that analysis. The compression and homogenization of space and time, the increase in literacy rates and awareness of the outside world, the economic integration with other communities, and the construction of a national literature are all factors that built tremendous potential national energy throughout Europe and the Americas in the nineteenth century. But these processes in themselves did not “build” nations. They built up the potential for mass national politics. The nation would not emerge until that potential for mass national political action was mobilized, made kinetic.

Those processes that built up national potential happened in Russia as they did in western Europe, though a bit later and not quite as comprehensively. Moon, indeed, spends the second half of his article proving just this point. He outlines with great subtlety and knowledge the muted way in which the great “nation-building” institutions formed and developed in Russia after the Great Reforms. Railways and rural-urban migration had an “undeniable impact on at least sections of the peasantry,” but peasant society and culture proved resilient, and as a result only “a very small proportion of peasant-migrants assimilated to urban culture.” Primary schools and literacy courses came to the village, but those schools “failed to achieve the state’s objective of ‘civilising’ peasant children and giving them a ‘heavy dose of patriotism’ . . . in spite of their education and literacy, they remained peasants.” Universal military conscription was introduced, but only a minority of possible conscripts were actually drafted. Citing John Bushnell, he claims that because even those men drafted spent much of their active duty working according to peasant cycles within the regimental economy it was “scarcely credible that military service could have done much to reshape peasant mentality.” In short, he claims that “in Russia the rural population ‘peasantised’ the very factors that, in Weber’s argument, served as the ‘agencies of change’ which acted as conduits for the transmission of national culture to the French peasantry.”<sup>60</sup>

But why should “peasantization” preclude the building up of potential national energy? The answer, as I suggested above, is that Moon and Weber both implicitly assumed that nationness is essentially urban. Moon acknowledged that Weber took a great deal of criticism on precisely this issue from scholars like James Lehning, who stressed that peasants were not passive recipients of change and argued that the institutions identified by Weber were not so much sites of one-way peasant assimilation as they were sites of “cultural contact.”<sup>61</sup> But Moon does not follow through on the implication of this revision, namely that in other contexts peasant culture might prove stronger and more influential than it had in France and that the question of whether these institutions were predominantly urban or rural is far less important than the fact that a site of cultural negotiation had been opened up. Though institutions may have been ‘peasantized’ in Russia, this does not imply that they were thereby rendered nonnational.

Moon is on much firmer ground, though, in his concluding section. He argues there, on the basis of works by Scott Seregny, Francis Wcislo, and

60. Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens?” 55–67.

61. James R. Lehning, *Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France during the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Eng., 1995).

David Macey, that it was not the peasantry that impeded the formation of the Russian nation, but state officials. Part of the blame lay with well-meaning reformist officials who wanted to integrate rural Russians into political life but failed to articulate their vision to the “masses.” The real barriers to nation-formation, though, were the conservative state officials who feared an active populace and scuttled plans for formal incorporation of peasants into national political structures whenever they could. “It was not,” Moon concludes, “that peasants were unaware of national politics in the years of the constitutional experiment; they were excluded from participating in them in any meaningful way.”<sup>62</sup>

The potential national energy, in other words, had been built up, but since most rural Russians could not *act* nationally, that energy had not been made kinetic. More precisely, that energy had not been made kinetic on a mass scale. The politically mobilizing events familiar in other historical circumstances, most notably voting, but also participation in so-called civil society or in trade unions, never occurred on a mass scale in Russia prior to 1914. Several partially mobilizing events had occurred in the late imperial period, most notably in 1904–05, but the nine partial military mobilizations during the Russo-Japanese War replicated the jerky, discontinuous, and befuddled social and political mobilizations over the same period.

Part of the reason for the “failures” of these mobilizations, perhaps the largest part, was ideological. No shift of political frames occurs painlessly or smoothly, and Russia in 1905 was no exception. Part of the reason for the disjointed nature of the events in 1905 was uncertainty regarding the most effective or most appealing frame for political action. As General A. N. Kuropatkin, the minister of war and commander of Russian forces during the first half of the Russo-Japanese War, worriedly noted: “belief in God, devotion to the Tsar, [and] love of the Fatherland” were the factors that had previously made the “uneducated peasantry . . . fearless and obedient, but these principles have latterly been much shaken amongst the people.”<sup>63</sup> Likewise, Father Gapon’s anguished cry on Bloody Sunday that “there is no tsar” signaled not so much the end of a naive monarchist consciousness as the incapacitation of the monarchist political framework, the failure of which was felt even at (perhaps especially at) the highest level of the political elite.<sup>64</sup> With the old framework crippled, the contest was on between 1905 and 1914 for one to replace it.

In the military, that contest was gradually being won by young military reformers convinced that the looming war would be a massive total war. Modern war, they argued, could only be won by soldiers imbued with a civic spirit, with a sense of initiative, independence, and with a strong dose of masculine vigor. They turned immediately to the citizen-soldiers of western Europe as their model. Even more important, they recognized

62. Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens?” 68–73.

63. General [A. N.] Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, trans. A. B. Lindsay, 2 vols. (London, 1909), 1:296.

64. The definitive work on the ideological crisis among Russian elites in this period is Andrew M. Verner, *The Crisis of Russian Autocracy: Nicholas II and the 1905 Revolution* (Princeton, 1990).



that the coming war would be won on the home front as surely as it would be on the battlefield. In the words of one of these reformers, "preparation for war must come *from all corners, with the effort of everyone, and with all the moral and material strengths of the state . . . we must prepare for war, not only in the purely military sense, but also from the point of view of society, from the point of view of politics, and finally, in the broad economic sense.*"<sup>65</sup> These vibrant reformers articulated their vision of the militarized nation to other influential social and political actors, most notably Aleksandr Guchkov, the leader of the Octobrist Party, who spoke often in the Duma about the need for army and society to become national in nature.<sup>66</sup>

As a result of this broader shift in Russian politics, the outbreak of war in 1914 was marked by intensive and extensive mobilization. The military mobilization in July was the first general mobilization of reserve armed forces in Russian history, and it was followed by mobilization in nearly all realms of social life, from medical care to economic production to sports activities. From the start, this mobilization was political, massive, and contentious. Patriotic rallies and draft riots took place in the same small towns across the empire in late July, sometimes on consecutive days.<sup>67</sup> The mobilization was therefore multidirectional, but people were politically active.

They acted, moreover, within the same political framework, because the war itself provided the context for all the mobilization activity. As we saw in the passage from Kuchernigo, the war was understood not as a fight between indeterminate enemies and parochial *Viatskie* but within the framework of a broad community, as a fight between Russians and Germans. This was so not simply because of a general awareness on the part of rural Russians about possible international conflicts, but more specifically because of the stridently national military training that the vast majority of reservists had received during the ascendancy of young reformers in the military establishment in the years between 1905 and 1914. That reserve base was comprised of young men, and it was a good deal more literate than the population as a whole. Only 36.7 percent of the young men inducted in 1909 were illiterate, and that number was dropping by more than 1 percent a year. In 1912, 32.6 percent could neither read nor write, a number high by late twentieth-century standards, but quite in line with early twentieth-century standards.<sup>68</sup> When the United States conducted a draft of its young men in 1917, for instance, 24.9 percent were illiterate.<sup>69</sup>

65. Col. A. G. Elchaninov, *Vedenie sovremennykh voiny i boia (leksiia)* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 12, 13. Emphasis in the original.

66. See A. I. Guchkov, *K voprosu o gosudarstvennoi oborone: Rech' v Gosudarstvennoi dume tret' iago sozyva 1908–1912 gg.* (Petrograd, 1915).

67. See the 1 August 1914 report from Nizhegorod included in "O bezporiadkakh na sbornykh punktakh vo vremia mobilizatsii," report from Department of Police to the MVD Conscription Administration, 1914, RGIA, f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1729, ll. 106–7.

68. These statistics in Joshua A. Sanborn, "Drafting the Nation: Military Conscription and the Formation of a Modern Polity in Tsarist and Soviet Russia, 1905–1925" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1998), 541. These are literacy rates at the time of induction. Reading classes in the army itself meant that by the time a soldier left the army he was still less likely to be illiterate.

69. Meirion and Susie Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917–1918* (New York, 1997), 137.



Furthermore, military trainers were given a new set of texts that stressed the importance of initiative and independence for soldiers and placed the interest of the “nation” at least on a par with the interest of the tsar. Young junior officers and noncommissioned officers imbibed this new ethos eagerly. Many spent a large amount of time with new recruits, training them in the ways of the soldier with fraternal affection rather than patriarchal disdain.<sup>70</sup> Increasingly, they began to disparage their older colleagues, who looked upon military study as a waste of time and upon their soldiers as their chattel.<sup>71</sup> Even those soldiers who had old-style officers were not insulated from the influence of nationalist training, for they were targeted directly through special publications for soldiers saturated with references to the national community.<sup>72</sup>

It should be noted that this community was not primarily ethnically defined in 1914. Instead, members of many different ethnic groups talked of their inclusion in a multiethnic Russian (*rossiiskii*) brotherhood. A mullah in the city of Ural'sk prayed with his flock for “all troop commanders and soldiers” to “defeat the Germans, those open enemies of *our* motherland who initiated this war against us.”<sup>73</sup> In Riazan' province, the governor noted that the Muslim population responded to the crisis of war with “a complete consciousness of the importance and seriousness of the moment” and that there was “no difference between reservist Russians [*russskie*] and Muslims.”<sup>74</sup> For these Muslims and their ethnically Russian Orthodox neighbors, involvement in the common business of the war overrode ethnic difference, and the war was articulated as a fight conducted by the “people” for their “motherland,” quite a different type of wartime ideology from those traditionally used in autocratic states, in which war is the business of the ruler for the ruler.<sup>75</sup>

Even among the populations that had the least reason to be concerned with the events unfolding in Galicia and Poland, like nomads in Turkestan

70. Recent studies of the competence of junior officers and soldiers more broadly have emphasized the relative success of their training in the years before World War I. For the judgment of the preeminent American historian of the tsarist army to this effect, see Bruce Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 1992), 273; see also Jacob Kipp, “Mass, Mobility, and the Origins of Soviet Operational Art, 1918–1936,” in Carl W. Reddel, ed., *Transformation in Russian and Soviet Military History* (Washington, D.C., 1990), 94. Despite the dates in the title of Kipp's article, he spends the first pages of his article discussing the tsarist era.

71. See the comments made by one such junior officer to Sir Alfred Knox. Knox, *With the Russian Army*, 2:452–53. See also the dislike and scorn for old-style officers among the junior officers in Fedor Stepun's artillery unit evident throughout his wartime letters. F. Stepun, *Iz pisem praporshchika artillerista* (Prague, n.d.).

72. The most prolific private publisher for soldiers was the publishing house of V. A. Berezovskii, which had published more than 3,000 books and several periodicals for soldiers by 1910. See S. V. Belov, “Izdatel'stvo V. A. Berezovskogo (Iz istorii izdaniia voennoi literatury v Rossii),” *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal*, 1989, no. 11:85–90.

73. RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 603, l. 64ob. (translated prayer from a mullah in Ural'sk). Emphasis added.

74. RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 603, l. 26ob. (letter from the governor of Riazan' province to E. V. Menkin [chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Department of Spiritual Affairs] 16 September 1914).

75. Peter Paret, *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and the History of Military Power* (Princeton, 1992), 41, 44.

who were still exempt from the draft in 1914, officials noted that “everyone is interested in the war.”<sup>76</sup> Another official dealing with draft-exempt nomads added that although the Kirgiz were “barely cultured . . . and almost completely uninterested in questions of state life,” even they did not remain “indifferent” to the “moment of extreme flowering of patriotic feeling that Russia is experiencing.”<sup>77</sup>

As in all the belligerent countries of the Great War, mobilized participation in general affairs went well beyond men in uniform. In Russia, as well as in the rest of Europe, the mobilization was especially noteworthy among women, who had had far fewer opportunities to transform their potential energy into kinetic energy.<sup>78</sup> Over the course of the war, both civilian men and women actively worked in charity organizations, in the Red Cross, in Zemgor, and in the War-Industrial Committees, and they became political actors through their economic production, which was explicitly linked to the war effort.<sup>79</sup> The war mobilized and framed nearly all political action. Not all political frameworks marked by mass mobilization are national in their particularities (that is, not all posit a territorialized cultural community that confers legitimacy upon a ruling regime and in which all community members are formally equal in status), but most have been.

Russian political practice during the war was certainly national in its particularities, a fact most clearly seen in mobilizational material. Here a significant change had occurred in the years between the Russo-Japanese War and the outbreak of World War I. The official army catechism during the Russo-Japanese War, as Kuropatkin attested, had been that soldiers served for “Faith, Tsar, and Fatherland,” but the mobilizational literature during the Great War paid far more attention to the people (*narod*) and the motherland. Here is just one example of many:

The type of people determines the type of army. Let our enemies say what they want about us, but in difficult times for the motherland, the Russian narod is always able to prove that it is a great narod, that a blazing flame burns in the Russian spirit with all that is good, blessed, and excellent, and that there is something there that is strong. . . . In order to feel and to act this way, one must be a hero in spirit and not only fear nothing, but also have a heart that beats with a hot love for the motherland, for one’s comrades in arms, and for people in general.<sup>80</sup>

76. RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 603, l. 77 (letter from Saltykov [military veterinarian] to the governor-general of Turkestan, secret, 1 November 1914).

77. RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 603, l. 102 (letter from the director of the Chancellery of the Steppe Region to E. V. Menkin, 28 November 1914).

78. The literature on women’s mobilization and World War I is large and growing. See, for instance, Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, 1987); Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley, 1994).

79. See here especially Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia*, Semina, *Tragediia russkoi armii*, and Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *The Politics of Industrial Mobilization in Russia, 1914–17: A Study of the War-Industries Committees* (New York, 1983).

80. “Nasha slava,” publication of *Sel’skii vestnik*, included in RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 603, ll. 40, 43.

Nor was this simply the way that propagandists framed questions of political action and political loyalty. Regardless of ethnicity, soldiers spoke of fighting together within a multiethnic brotherhood. Even when complaints were voiced in private letters, recruits usually framed their anger in terms of disappointed promise, as one Muslim soldier's intercepted letter revealed:

the Russians have clergymen in war who administer the sacraments to their soldiers, but for us Muslims there is nothing. They don't assign mullahs to us, not withstanding the fact that more than half the soldiers [in the unit] are Muslim, who die without mullahs, and who are buried together with Russians in a single grave. I think we should bring this to the attention of the government.<sup>81</sup>

Again, the idea that questions of ethnic relations and cultural respect should be mediated by the central government is a crucial one, for it reflects the fact that even those Russian citizens who were traditionally classed as outsiders and were the victims of discrimination within imperial society often considered themselves part of a single political community with all the many ethnic groups that were ruled by the imperial state.

I have intentionally used evidence gathered from the periphery of the country in the last few paragraphs to show that the idea of a multiethnic nation flourished even in areas that were not ethnically Russian, where the project of propagating a national idea was hardest, and where the presence of a discriminatory imperial ideology among ethnic Russians was stronger than it was in the center of the country. The evidence from central locales is quite similar.

As we saw earlier in this essay, the theme of fairness dominated the popular response to mobilization and the war, as regular reservists and civilians alike articulated their feeling that every Russian citizen should bear an equal burden and that the tsar and government had to serve the army rather than the other way round. Both the theme of the equality of citizens and the idea that states were the servants of territorialized cultural communities were national ones, and both were ubiquitous in public discourse throughout the war.<sup>82</sup> From throughout the empire, the complaints were the same and echoed this one:

Your Excellency. Throughout Kiev province, and maybe throughout Russia, there is at present a mass of people evading their duty before Throne and Fatherland by any possible means. . . . At present anyone who doesn't want to serve in the troops serves on the railroad. On the railroads, guards are freed (I don't know what they're guarding), porters are freed (I don't know who they're opening doors for at present), guards for railroad gardens, gardeners, assistants, and others (I don't know who can think about gardens at a time like this, and anyway the garden wouldn't die if the gardener left it for a half year or a year). And anyway the "necessary" Rus-

81. RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 603, l. 89 (letter from Kazan' governor to E. V. Menkin, 10 November 1914).

82. For a more detailed exploration of this topic, see Josh Sanborn, "Conscription, Correspondence, and Politics in Late Imperial Russia," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 24, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 1997): 27–40.

sian public is living in clover, and even allows itself to reproach those who went to the war . . . I cannot in my heart blame government circles for this, but I want just to tell you this, Your Excellency.

The “wives of reservists” who authored this letter wrote in conclusion that they relied on “His Excellency’s fairness, as all Russian people do. The whole Russian narod will stand in the ranks of the army, not even excluding cripples, to defend against the enemy, but only when fairness is seen in everything.”<sup>83</sup> It bears noting as an aside that the ideal of national equality was expressed partially in a class key in this letter. These women articulated their anger at the “necessary” public that was better able to avoid induction into the army, but could not yet, in 1915, “blame government circles” for the chicanery of wealthy citizens. That hesitancy would disappear over the next two years.

In sum, the extant evidence related to social response to the 1914 mobilization supports rather different conclusions than those that have heretofore dominated the historical literature. “Russia” did not go off to war patriotically, nor was there unanimity within sociologically defined groups about the wisdom of the war effort. Patriots and protesters were present in all walks of Russian life in 1914.

The fact of dissent, however, does not imply that the other major pillar of the dominant paradigm, the lack of a sense of national identity on the part of Russian peasants, holds firm. In fact, quite the opposite is the case, for when we look at how that dissent was expressed by rural Russians, we find that it was framed in “national” terms, not local ones. Country dwellers turned to central state institutions with complaints, constantly referred to the need to protect the “interests of state” in their denunciations of their shirking neighbors, articulated an ideal of civic equality, and appealed to a historical, territorialized community as the legitimizing political force in the country. That relatively new sense of the nation as the dominant framework of political practice in the land grew stronger during the war, and the antinational autocracy weakened correspondingly. The final fall of the monarchy in 1917 and the withdrawal of the soldiers from a war that had been unpopular from its inception were therefore signs of the tangible presence of the Russian nation, not of its absence.

83. RGIA, f. 1292, op. 7, d. 298, l. 125 (letter from “wives of reservists” Tat’iana Iarenko, Sinklatia Bozheiko, and Serafima Totskaia [from Radomysl’] to minister of internal affairs, 8 October 1915).