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Mobilizing Masculinity: Conscription, Gender, and Community Wellbeing in Lithuania

By Frances Harrison¹

Abstract

In the wake of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the conscription law in Lithuania has been reinstated for men, and partnerships with Western security structures reinforced. While young men are otherwise mobilizing to navigate socioeconomic uncertainty to improve their livelihoods under depressed conditions, the revitalization of mandatory military service increasingly polices individual experiences of wellbeing in gendered and nationalistic ways. Drawing from feminist analyses of securitization and from theories of gender performativity, this article examines how the Lithuanian State, together with the Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF), mobilize masculinity and the construction of militarized identities in order to shape public support for its national security objectives. I argue that this conscription mandate compounds social divisiveness already present in Lithuanian society, and as a repressive structure, adversely shapes Lithuanian community wellbeing. In so doing, conscription works to obscure a sense of community and national belonging alike, not only for young men pressured to perform their masculinity and patriotism ahead of the draft, but also for women who, while permitted to engage volunteer service, are nevertheless evaluated against masculinist expectations. The article demonstrates how Lithuania's national security narrative promotes a hegemonic masculinity both inside the military and in Lithuanian public life, in which community wellbeing is defined much less in terms of allowing material and psycho-social health to flourish than curbing the personalities and identities deemed intolerable to Lithuanian state security. As a student and woman conducting qualitative interviews and participant observation in a militarized setting, this article is based on ethnographic research that took place as part of my doctoral fieldwork in Lithuania from August 2016 to June 2017 and contributes to feminist scholarship in anthropology and security studies. By analyzing the policing of human livelihoods at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, patriotism, and social mobility, the production of militarized identities under a national security crisis in Lithuania offers a platform from which policy advocates working in international settings elsewhere can orient their work toward more inclusive and sustainable definitions of "security."

Keywords: national security, community wellbeing, hegemonic masculinity, militarized identities, feminist ethnography

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Introduction: Theory and Ethnography

“Why have conflict, if you can have a cup of tea?”
(Dominynkas, soldier, interview 05/08/2017).

“There is no gender in the military – you are doing everything here exactly like a man!”
(Karolina, soldier, interview 05/15/2017)

This article is based on ethnographic research I conducted with military servicemen in Rukla, a small, impoverished military town in central Lithuania, as well as with social workers and a wider group of civilians in nearby Kaunas, the second-largest city in Lithuania where I chose to live during my fieldwork. My original inquiry concerned the reinstatement of the Lithuanian conscription law in response to Russian aggression in the region,² as well as social and state constructions of “national security.” Conducting research in a controlled environment lead me to reconsider the gendered dimensions of doing fieldwork as a young female scholar in a militarized setting. This reality included power relations that at once privileged me as a white, funded, American student conducting interviews abroad in English, and disempowered me as a woman, intellectual “imposter” asking, as Carol Cohn puts it - “dumb, naive questions” - among men (Cohn and Enloe 2003, 1188).³ Embracing a feminist lens has allowed me to articulate a more intersectional approach to “national security,” in which local experiences of precarity are complex but accounted for.

I examine how the Lithuanian State, together with the Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF), mobilize masculinity and the construction of militarized identities in order to shape public support for its national security objectives. I argue that this conscription mandate compounds social divisiveness already present in Lithuanian society, and as a repressive structure, adversely shapes Lithuanian community wellbeing. In so doing, conscription works to obscure a sense of community and national belonging alike, not only for young men pressured to perform their masculinity and patriotism ahead of the draft, but also for women who, while permitted to engage volunteer service, are nevertheless evaluated against masculinist expectations. The gendered policing of livelihoods assumes women will “act as men,” and men must embrace a particular brand of manhood at the frontlines of violence and possibility for war. Community wellbeing then, both inside and outside of the military, is defined in terms of curbing the personalities and identities deemed intolerable to Lithuanian national security rather than allowing material and psycho-social health to flourish.

The theoretical framework of this article challenges conventional studies of national and international security, which traditionally “identify threats and develop means to counter or contain

² In November 2013, a series of protests called “the Euromaidan” broke out in Ukraine after president Yanukovich’s failed to sign an agreement to bring Ukraine closer to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, which the nearby Baltic States took as an impending national security threat. Lithuania was first to call for increased NATO and American military support, and the only EU member state to reinstate conscription (see e.g. Marples 2015).

³ My Lithuanian language skills at the time of receiving a Fulbright to complete this project were insufficient for complex interviews. Recognizing the power dynamics in which my informants deferred to English, I conducted research in the comfort of my own language, many dynamic voices on the subject were thus excluded. My ethnographic writing takes inspiration from Irma McClaurin (2001) and Kristin Ghodsee (2016).

them” in two ways. This literature assumes, first, that security is both static and achievable (Wibben 2018, 139), and second, that a militarized, if not violent response is *necessary* for resolving perceived security threats (Enloe 2007; Miedzian 1991). Critical anthropologies pay greater attention to the “material, historical, and socio-economic conditions” of security and militarization (Maguire, Frois, and Zurawski 2014, 1) that in connection with neoliberalism often promise *insecurity* instead (Eriksen, Bal, and Salemink 2010). I draw from feminist scholarship in particular however, because feminist analyses best articulate the intersections of identity (Crenshaw 1989) alongside enduring relations of precarity (Millar 2014) and the oppression of marginalized social groups. In other words, a feminist approach to security exposes the “structural violence” inherent in securitization processes, in which human bodies and minds are vulnerable to the slow and indirect (Farmer 2004, 313-315) consequences of poverty, economic disparity, social exclusion, and mental illness. Feminist perspectives are therefore critical in articulating the embeddedness of masculinist logics in militarism and patriotism (Miedzian 1991; Wibben 2018), and how such masculinist logics shape the livelihoods of ordinary people.

Under Lithuania’s current political climate in which military preparedness and state-sanctioned anxieties over foreign encroachment supersede everyday experiences of precarity, Lithuanian lives are not immune to structural violence. Conscripted or otherwise, ordinary Lithuanians suffer daily from depressed socioeconomic conditions linked to marked levels of emigration, enduring poverty and unemployment, alcoholism, and the highest suicide rates in Europe (EMN 2019; Stricka and Jakubauskienė 2016; Tidey 2019). State and public pressure to embrace conscription and militarism then, do not only compound the social divisiveness Lithuanians already experience as a result of these depressed conditions, but also serve to exclude “others” on the basis of gender, class, and regional ethnicity (Klumbytė 2019; Lankuaskas 2010), and define in harmful ways both conscript-volunteer and civilian-military relations.

I organize the remainder of the article into three sections that articulate “mobilizing masculinities” as a defining feature of national security and public discourse, and in terms of how Lithuanian community wellbeing is shaped. Accordingly, the first section briefly examines Lithuanian social work as an avenue for challenging what constitutes “national security” in the first place and sets up the remainder of the article to articulate how masculinities and militarized identities are in effect mobilized. The second section investigates the reinstatement of conscription and its impact on community wellbeing in the context of enduring socioeconomic precarity, and what this means for gender expectations and social relations in general outside of the military. The final section illustrates how hegemonic masculinity within the military is performed at the intersections of gender, class, ethnicity, and patriotism.

Social Insecurity in Lithuania

Many Lithuanians are afraid their population is at risk of “disappearing.” Some fear the Lithuanian nation will succumb to foreign encroachment—either as Russia’s “next target,” or by “invasion” of Muslim refugees that politicians spread public alarm for during the 2016 parliamentary elections. When I asked my informants to describe their position on national security however, the majority expressed concern for socioeconomic or personal precarity instead. This was generally true among the young soldiers I worked with at the military base in Rukla, most of whom were men, as well as with the social workers I spent time within Kaunas, most of whom were women.

While I tell their story in detail elsewhere,⁴ I draw attention to it for a moment here in order to illustrate how social work contributes to a critical, more nuanced understanding of Lithuanian security. Experienced in mitigating the daily struggles of the Lithuanian chronically unemployed as well as asylum seekers navigating Lithuania's fledgling refugee integration program, the social workers offered me a fresh perspective on the significance of conscription in Lithuanian society: that ideations of "national security" are not exclusive to international politics and territorial threats. Instead, the lived experience of Lithuanians suggests an anxiety that challenges the State's "necessity" to militarize in anticipation of conflict with Russia, as the social worker Eglė described:

It's a symptom of a small country – being afraid to disappear...In all Lithuania there is big social insecurity; this makes many problems - low possibilities for people in the country. Big economies are in cities, the rest are in trouble. The social system is not enough to support them. Many are unemployed or have low salaries, suffer from alcoholism, [and] many are still leaving (03/22/2017).

Eglė explained that these precarious conditions began after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Lithuania gained its independence but nevertheless struggled economically in its transition to European Union (EU) membership.⁵ Alongside the 2007/8 financial crisis, she believed Lithuania never fully recovered from either. This, she reasoned, is why many hopeful workers and college students continue to emigrate in search of more promising livelihoods. Similarly, Eglė's colleague Maria held her own fears about Lithuania "disappearing," but not so much as a problem of emigration than of issues left behind:

Life is better here than fifty years ago because we see more worlds [than we did in Soviet times], but we also see terrible things. Our population is small, but every week in the news we hear about how there is a parent beating [their kids] because of alcoholism [etc.]. This is not healthy; it is a strange condition - going up and down. Our suicide rates are the first in Europe...this is why I think Lithuania will end (04/04/2017).

Rosie Read and Tatjana Thelen (2007, 6) suggest that it is "not simply access to material resources that makes people feel secure, but a network of social relations to which they can appeal in times of crisis and need." Maria believed that this type of mutual support is non-existent in Lithuania. She claimed that the rationale for suicide in Lithuania happens for two major reasons: in part due to the precarious economic system, but more crucially because "there is no sense of *community* in our country." Sharing a personal example concerning her elder brother, she believed the same to be true of other Lithuanian men who lived half their lives under Soviet rule:

My idea is this: my brother keeps his emotions inside. When we get together with family, afterward he drinks. But he [views] therapy as a shame, especially for men; it's the [general] perception in Lithuanian society...The generation of boys [today] aged sixteen or seventeen are different, absolutely different than those who are thirty or forty now – they (the older group) think "I am a man;" they think they have

⁴ See Harrison 2020.

⁵ See also Knudsen 2012; Woolfson and Sommers 2015.

to be quiet (with their feelings) and strong (04/04/2017, additions in parentheses my own).

Maria explained that while most Lithuanians are poor, coping with the circumstances would be so much easier if Lithuanians in general talked to each other more, as people do in far poorer countries—she believed—who suffer less psychologically because they have stronger communities, and thus commit fewer suicides. She feared that if Lithuanians continue to internalize shame and constrain their emotions under such assumptions, they would be lost to depression, alcoholism, and suicide. It is her attention to the absence of “community” in Lithuania that got me thinking more critically about the interrelationship between material and mental health, and how conscription could contribute to the gendered policing of human livelihoods. Maria and I never discussed suicide specifically in the context of conscription, but it occurred to me that conscription could impart psychological damage on young men who had thus far, as she implied, lived their entire lives in a free country, and must now perform on behalf of the State in ways that embrace preparation for war. What might this suggest about how a sense of belonging is constructed or derailed in a society increasingly organized around the question of safety and who is supposed to be responsible for it?

Community Wellbeing and “Livability” under Lithuanian Conscription

In search of answering this question, “community wellbeing” is a useful framework to employ because it helps to define lived experience. Community wellbeing is a complex concept that refers to the combination of such indicators as quality of life, level of happiness, and access to resources and opportunities that allow life to flourish within a community (Merriam and Kee 2014). It is thus political and largely dependent upon adjacent policies and institutions, rather than the success or failure of individuals (Atkinson et. al. 2020; Kermeyer et. al. 2009; Trickett and Rauk 2019). In ecological terms, the capacity of an environment not only to sustain life, but to also support in this case *human* life in sustainable, equitable, and – broadly conceived - “healthy” ways (Trickett and Rauk 2019), is what defines a community’s overall resilience and wellbeing. Importantly, feminist and indigenous understandings place gender equity, cultural identity and education, as well as relatedness and sense of belonging, at the center of what it means to be a community and to “be well” in it (Atkinson et. al. 2020; Kermeyer et. al. 2009; Merriam 2016; Trickett and Rauk 2019).

Indeed, there is a certain sense of safety and belonging that material security and social relations can cultivate. In Lithuania, where socioeconomic stressors and social divisiveness are already high, state and public pressure to embrace conscription and militarism works against, rather than for community wellbeing. Despite offering short-term “fixes” for personal growth or social mobility, as the next section examines, the coerciveness of conscription further divides Lithuanians on multiple fronts, which include tensions of gender, class, and regional ethnicity, but also prescriptive expectations of patriotism and militarism. Just barely “too old” to be drafted, a Lithuanian graduate student and acquaintance of mine put it this way:

It [conscription] means that more people will be forced to take part in repressive structures against their will...I have friends that were drafted and are trying to either hide or resist. It makes life in Lithuania even more insecure for young males, and

supports the revival of chauvinist culture among all social groups (April 2020).⁶

Tomas' concern for the prevalence of chauvinism and repression in society helps to inform my attention to gender-identity and belonging wherein militarism is increasingly coveted. Judith Butler (2004, 2006) for example, argues that gender-identity is constituted through performative acts, and that normative dichotomies that structure what is acceptably "masculine" or "feminine" constrain what she describes as the *livability* of certain lives. Gender as a "performance" rather than a set of characteristics strictly assigned to male or female bodies, is part of a broader feminist scholarship that recognizes how identity and personhood are dependent upon social contexts to be realized – or suppressed.⁷ With Lithuania's reinstatement of conscription for young men, it is helpful to evaluate Butler's theory of gender alongside what she calls hegemonic "frames of war" (Butler 2009). These frames selectively narrate the "necessity" of going to war so that potential casualties and lives lost are either obfuscated or justified. Likewise, "frames of war" authorize whose lives are publicly "grieve-able" when lost (2009, 13-15). Comparably, wherein conscripted men and volunteer soldiers depend in precarious ways on their communities to build a sense of belonging, the Lithuanian State's *framing* of the necessity to prepare for war constrains the livability of Lithuanian lives by reinstating conscription. In effect, conscription contributes to two, as Tomas would call them, "repressive structures" that render Lithuanian public life more militarized in character.

The first is the Lithuanian State's "fighting and suffering" master narrative that has written Lithuania's decades-long victimhood into its national security policy since independence in 1991 (Miniotaitė 2007). With the intension of strengthening Lithuanian statehood and sense of sovereignty, this narrative makes national heroes out of a Cold-War era Soviet-resistance group called the Forest Brothers, yet it problematically and deeply divides Lithuanians over their historical connection to the Holocaust (Budrytė 2018; Davliūtė 2017). A portion of those who fought the Soviets in the name of Lithuanian statehood during the 1950's also collaborated in the previous decade with the Nazis in the murder of over 90% of Lithuania's Jewish population (Davliūtė 2015; USHMM n.d). Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Lithuanian State has reinvigorated and selectively pulled from this narrative for the general public in educative and celebratory ways, and more specifically in effort to gain public trust on behalf of national defense (KAM.lt n.d.). In collaboration with the military, these efforts include sponsoring new museum exhibits, "military days" for school children that expose them to tanks and weaponry, and an annual festival that I was able to attend called the "Partisan Honouring, Military, and Public Unity Day" (KAM.lt n.d.).

With the reorganization of society around national defense and the men obliged to defend Lithuanian territory, the increasing prevalence of men in uniform in public space signaled for Tomas that "something is not right;" that there is a "lack of actual democracy in Lithuania." While many of my civilian informants claimed they felt safer with NATO and American troops stationed in Lithuania, or excited that they too could wear "the uniform" as a soldier or youth cadet, Tomas felt threatened: "I feel generally insecure around people with guns, especially if they are in uniforms...the more police or soldiers I see in my environment, the less secure I feel" (April 2017). Whether the chauvinism he initially spoke of – and these are not his words – is organized around the superiority of the male sex or by way of extreme patriotisms, conscription for young males and

⁶ At the time of research, conscription was for males aged 19-31, with nine months of mandatory service.

⁷ See also Cooper 2001; Enloe 2007; Kaganovsky 2008; Petryna 2002; Puar 2017.

the increasing presence of “the uniform” in Lithuanian communities undoubtedly contributes to socially acceptable ways of living.

The second repressive structure is the degree to which domestic violence against women and children, and between straight married couples (Gincman and Palavinskienė 2002), remains normative and largely ignored as an individualist problem in Lithuania, to be sorted out in the domestic or private sphere (Reingardienė 2002; Sotirovič and Vaige 2017). Lithuanian feminist scholarship has examined the role of alcoholism in domestic violence, particularly in the post-Soviet context in which men lost their status, jobs, or identity to the previous regime, and instead found destructive outlets at home to express their sense of manhood. This continues today perhaps as a means of reclaiming power lost to the enduring lack of social mobility (Reingardienė 2002), and to the social norms that render therapy as an outlet men should be ashamed of.⁸ Despite Lithuania’s post-Soviet democratization efforts, victims of domestic violence are still blamed for antagonizing it upon themselves. Both police (Sotirovič and Vaige 2017) and state institutions (Reingardienė 2002) rarely intervene in domestic violence cases because unlike Soviet times, the state no longer dictates what goes on behind closed doors.

The problem here is not only that domestic violence is both normalized and ignored, but also that inequalities of gender still undermine women’s rights and have yet to include non-binary identities as acceptably “livable” (Butler 2009). Tina, a friend of mine whose boyfriend was a proud conscript and active reserve soldier, also believed that conscription reinforced differences between women and men:

There are ads [for recruitment] with women too, but it’s still terrible for women. If they have family expectations, [LAF] will pressure you out of volunteering. Public opinion suggests the army is masculine, but I wanted the draft for women too. Women can be tough with the guys. They have...privileges. Women need more [opportunities] to learn how to take care of themselves...(March 2017).

For Tina, conscription was much less the problem than her disappointment in the fact that women were excluded from it as fellow draftees. She felt that conscription reinforced the family-oriented expectations of Lithuanian women. By the same token, it attempted to exclude women by making them take the extra step of volunteering in order to benefit from the privileges otherwise prioritized for men. To understand community wellbeing in Lithuania, it is critical to evaluate these dichotomous gender expectations alongside military life and its impact on underprivileged communities in particular. In the context of war, Judith Butler argues that “responsibility” for human lives must focus “not just on the value of this or that life, or on the question of survivability in the abstract, but on the sustaining social conditions of life – especially when they fail” (2009, 35). Rather than the moment of war or enacted violence itself, Lithuanian state “responsibility” and its role in the survivability of communities is better understood in terms of what Catherine Lutz calls the cultural accommodation of “war *readiness*,” or preparation for war during peacetime (2002, emphasis my own).

In Rukla, the military town where I did my fieldwork, “the uniform” plays a big role in children’s lives, the majority of whose families live below the poverty line, and according to one of my key informants, are regularly exposed to bullying, child abuse or neglect, and parents struggling with drug addiction or alcoholism. Kris was a schoolteacher that I had met long before

⁸ See also Gal and Kligman 2000; Ghodsee 2011; Petryna 2002.

I gained permission to interview soldiers, so I would make visits to meet her at the school or attend one of their field trips into the military base. One day she described her take on the difference between war—which she was generally against—and the military, which she hoped would influence her otherwise “unruly” pupils:

The military is about officers’ discipline, but war; overall it is a checkmate game that costs a lot of money. On discipline, it is the same as Hitler. You can say that he is a bad man, but it was discipline for young boys. Like lighting a match and you have to get dressed; he [Hitler] was able to attract young people and discipline them. You’d have to go with one boot. I would love my kids to dress like that; they probably wouldn’t be gay! (06/15/2017).

Although from our many visits I knew Kris genuinely felt sorry for the depressed conditions her school children lived in and wanted to make every effort to improve their lives and sense of safety, comments like this came off as alarming and derogatory. In what Chelce Carter (2017) calls social workers’ “compassion fatigue,” I believe her distress is better explained as a long-term disappointment with the lack of change in her community, which should have been directed at the social system or political obstacles rather than the children and families she served. Kris draws attention not only to the failure of responsibility to render lives sustainable, even outside of war, but toward the social and material conditions of life that condition certain lives as unacceptable to live.

The problem with these repressive structures is that they organize in educative ways public purpose, safety, and sense of belonging around militarized identities and masculinities. In making sense of community wellbeing, the issue is for me twofold. First, it encourages identification with a historic group willing to enact ethnic violence in the name of freedom while at the same time squandering transparency of thought. While the public enjoys static military displays, parades, and family-friendly festivals celebrating the brave sacrifices of their forefathers against the Soviets, historical misrepresentation—i.e. negative criticism—of the Forest Brothers is often construed as criminal offense or Russian propaganda, and even cost some critics their jobs and social status (Budrytė 2018; Davoliūtė 2017; Klumbytė 2019). Second, such structures predetermine non-normative gender roles, even for young school children who are still trying to figure themselves out, as threatening to the nation. This suggests that at a time fraught with a national security crisis, chronic unemployment, mass emigration, and an underserved mental health crisis, the military is the standard to gauge what a valued life – or a life *of value* – looks like (Butler 2009). The next section takes a closer look at how the Lithuanian military does this.

Militarized Identities and the Gendered Policing of Livelihoods

The first interview I shared with a Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF) officer was with a battalion commander working with newly conscripted soldiers in Rukla. In a room decorated with Lithuanian military paraphernalia, he sat across the room from me leaning sternly over a conference table. Tall and domineering with a pensive and weathered face, Lt. Col. Eugenijus was at least fifty years old and looked to me like someone you could equally respect, fear, or drink a pint with. For him, Lithuania’s “dark past” largely determined national security: “the Holocaust is a very tricky question. How much are we willing to say? With less education, Lithuanians brag

about our super empire.⁹ But with more education, our history becomes more complex, and we do not brag as much” (04/19/2017).

Eugenijus explained that this history “is the most sensitive thing” to an ongoing information war with Russia, because it could be used against Lithuanians to fracture society (04/19/17). Despite these concerns, I learned that the Forest Brothers’ guerilla warfare style tactics during the Cold War largely influenced LAF’s contemporary defense strategy against anticipated conflict with Russia, and functioned as officers’ primary method for cultivating what they called the “Partisan Personality.”¹⁰ Not unlike the State’s arguably repressive “fighting and suffering” discourse, LAF officers also selectively pulled from the narrative to train conscripted soldiers to embody what it means to be a Partisan: to defeat all odds against them:

1st Lt. Martynas (officer): We focus a lot on history, and the historical personality, especially the guerrilla personality to inspire the soldiers... If he doesn’t want to be the best, we take recourse, [and] other options to improve his ‘will’...History plays a huge role in this, it is fundamental in what our army values and builds on (04/26/2017).

CPT. 1st Lt. (officer): Our resistance fighters; almost every family was touched, almost every family [had someone] sent to Siberia.¹¹ They are remembered alive, not forgotten... You have to be patriotic. If you don’t love your country, then there’s no point to live here (04/19/2017).

Patriotism of this strength may be a tall order for a conscript, yet that the Forest Brothers were mostly men, under-resourced, and lacking international aid in their fight against a bigger aggressor (Vincè 2009), is a narrative with which many Lithuanian young men can readily identify. Even if they do not perceive Russia as threatening as their officers, many recruits lean on it because they heard stories from their grandparents, want their parents to be proud, or believe the “adventure and bravery” aspects of the military will supplant the disadvantageous public sector:

Marius (soldier): I think [history] makes [our role here] more patriotic. In the past we were a big country – from ocean to ocean – many Lithuanians were fighting for freedom; this history is used to motivate our soldiers. Eugenijus encourages with us the most historical enthusiasm. He told us a lot about [the Forest Brothers]; they fought for freedom without [an established] military in those days (05/08/2017).

Juozas (soldier): My father told me a lot about them. Now we are a free country. We don’t have as many Russians [in Lithuania today]; the reason is because the Partisans were fighting the Soviets, the leaders wanted to expand Russians into the

⁹ Referring to the Grand Duchy; Lithuania was half the size of Europe from the 13th to the 18th century.

¹⁰ Lithuanians use “Forest Brothers” and “the Partisans” interchangeably.

¹¹ Referring to Stalinist deportations to labor camps in Siberia, lasting from the 1930s to the 1950s. Budrytė (2018) argues that many of those deported after World War II were either anti-Soviet resistance fighters themselves or knew someone who was. The substantial losses from the Soviet and German occupations, the Lithuanian Holocaust, Stalinist mass deportations, and anti-Soviet resistance all endure as traumatic sites of contested memory and political identity for Lithuanians today.

Baltics, [but] they were afraid of the Partisans...there are many films [about the Partisans], it's part of the history, I feel it's why I joined! (05/15/2017).

Martynas (soldier): Lithuania was a country that everyone raped. Russians went and saw our girls working and did what they wanted with them. We are a very small country [today], but we are tough! (05/08/2017).

This "Partisan Personality" is critical to an understanding of Lithuanian conscription and the production of militarized identities and is part of a broader "hegemonic masculinity" that permeates Lithuanian livelihoods in and outside of the military. While feminist scholarship recognizes that masculinity and masculinities are complex, varied, and not exclusively linked to male bodies (Butler 2004, 2006; Hooper 2001), hegemonic masculinity in its linkage to war privileges the male body and its capacity for aggression and violence. Noting Judith Butler's argument that "certain humans are recognized as less than human," this means that hegemonic masculinity in the context of conscription is a "site of power by which the human is differentially produced" (2006, 2). In other words, the "livability" of a Lithuanian citizen is articulated with reference to what Danny Hoffman calls his "deploy-ability" (Hoffman 2011). It also establishes a hierarchy of gender identities within the military by devaluing femininity (Hooper 2001; Wibben 2018), and in this case, encourages young Lithuanians to take up threatening identities relative to the idea of Russian aggressors. Hegemonic masculinity and militarism police livelihoods not only because pervasive gender dichotomies contribute to gender inequalities (Hooper 2001) in Lithuania, but because conscripted soldiers are already mitigating their own socioeconomic precarities before having to assume the "Partisan Personality" and its particular brand of manhood.

Wendy Vogt and Noelle Kateri Brigden (2015, 312) describe the American "poverty draft" as a journey that many young people take "for a complex mixture of social, economic, and moral motives...to escape economic precarity." Citing the systematic incarceration of minority men in the United States, they point out how military participation of black females "can be understood as a move from a position of national exclusion to a place of inclusion" where they would otherwise face a systematically bleak workforce in terms of their race, class, and gender (Brigden and Vogt 2015). For Lithuanians, as a largely white population and army, inclusion in the recruitment pool could mean for some a place, if temporarily, to experience security where they would otherwise be nationally excluded or socially marginalized on the basis of gender, ethnicity and language, region, income and education level, or delinquency.

Dariusz for example, whose first language was not Lithuanian, found that his linguistic skillset failed him in the public sector: "Without a higher education I don't know what kind of job I can get...My first choice was to study but my Lithuanian exam went bad. I just joined to figure out how to go to school...[and] this was one of the highest paying jobs" (Dariusz 05/08/2017). As a sort of "Plan B," many others also enlisted in the army outside of the draft or patriotic rationale:

Mykolas (soldier): The military is for people who love stability. In Lithuania you can't always count on it...Some people really do it just for the money; [the] people living in small cities that can't get a normal pay. People from villages work at dirty jobs; they don't have a lot of options (05/15/2017).

Dominynkas (soldier): We get paid very little [as soldiers], but some guys didn't eat at home. Our rations are big in comparison, so they think 'why not?' For some people there's security here (05/08/2017).

Martynas (soldier): I was worried because from the age of eighteen for about four or five years I did stupid things because of my background; I was involved in some petty crime. I had many fines so I didn't know if they [LAF] would let me work here. But now I am just a conscript, now [I] have a head, two arms, and two legs! (Interview 05/08/2020).

The social mobility and psycho-social wellbeing—i.e. “livable lives”—of these men are thus gauged on the one hand, whether their name is on the draft, how patriotic they are if it is not, or whether voluntarism could afford them greater status than they had access to otherwise. On the other hand, their livelihoods largely depend on whether they can act like a “real man” throughout their conscription term (Miedzian 2002). In other words, the hegemonic masculinity that the “Partisan Personality” embodies does not only function to normalize men's performance. It effectively renders hetero-normative, potentially violent behavior as the standard upon which all other identities and experiences of achievement are evaluated within the military and its platform of conscription for national defense. This defines relationships between officers and enlisted soldiers, and between soldiers themselves, whose gender, class, and ethnic identities are subordinate (Hooper 2001) to national security and hegemonic masculinity.

It was common to hear in my interviews for example, that there is “no gender” in the military. Karolina, one of the few female volunteer soldiers at the Rukla military base, felt that women should have been included in conscription as an opportunity to improve skills they otherwise could not. Karolina explained that, “I don't think conscription should be for just men, I think every girl must try. A lot of girls may be scared, but they can build more confidence, like [a] jump in cold water” (05/15/2017). Karolina felt set apart from other soldiers not because of her identity as a woman, but because of her older age, wherein the majority of her female peers were younger and arriving to a space that could afford them the confidence Karolina had already mastered. In her peers' novice attempts to fulfill masculine roles, I was not quite sure how to react when she claimed, “there is no gender in the military—you are doing everything here exactly like a man!”

This sentiment was true of Tina, quoted above, who did not end up enlisting but nevertheless envied the privileges she believed her active reserve boyfriend Linas and other men gained through military service. As an outsider looking in, she claimed that women “should do the same training [as men]. In the field, you are a soldier; not a man or a woman” (March 2017). For Tina, if conscription applied to women as well, it would be a positive experience to get to know their limits, and by entering a sphere in which “there is no gender,” shed what society otherwise expects of them. Linas, sitting next to her, agreed, adding that in the military it is more about “the task” than bothering about gender or sex differences; “everyone is a soldier, there is no gender.” Yet in the same conversation he shared an anecdote that suggested otherwise: “There was only one woman in my company. Women do the paperwork better than men; we need them to. For example, our leader told us that there were five men and one woman, she prevented them from fighting!” (March 2017).

With the widespread idea that both sexism and toxic masculinity are defining features of any military, rationalizations that attempt to make gender irrelevant but that do so in hetero-

normative ways are expected.¹² But Lithuania is also tenaciously conservative in its regard for gendered divisions of labor and ideas about sexuality, where as a Catholic and former Soviet country attitudes regarding feminism and non-normative gender-identities are negative, and queerness and same-sex partnerships legally limited (Jurėnienė 2010; Terežkinas 2002). How the military engages its conscripts and volunteers is precisely based on the assumption that its new recruits should either act as men or be men themselves. This benchmark is true even for male soldiers, who share in the obligation to adhere to, or even magnify their masculinity; “to be tough” and enlist if they were not already drafted.

Dominynkas was a volunteer soldier who criticized conscription because it forces people to do something against their will, but nevertheless enlisted because he needed time to decide what to do with his studies. For Dominynkas, the military environment was largely aggressive and negative on account of his fellow soldiers, in which an enormous amount of peer pressure between young men and conflicting personalities dictates, “if you are weaker, you are trash.” He explained to me that “I am a friendly person; I do not want to fight.” He did not like war, nor guns. “Why have conflict,” he said, “if you can have a cup of tea?” (05/08/2017).

Conflict was not just something these young men prepared for in anticipation of Russian aggression, but between themselves, in which tensions rose between dedicated patriots, reluctant conscripts, and volunteers focused on social mobility. Juozas, quoted above, self-identified as a patriot so dedicated to the cause of his officers that he found it challenging to share space with conscripts and even non-Lithuanians: “Half are volunteers, half are drafted. It’s difficult to live in a room with some people who ‘like Russians,’ or who are B-S about the military. They say things like, ‘Why do I need to do service if I could live in Sweden and make more money?’” (05/15/2017).

Despite accounts of daily conflict among conscripts and volunteers forced to spend nine months together in military garb, most of my informants, like Dominynkas, acknowledged the detrimental effect of conscription even if they had volunteered on their own accord. The volunteer soldier Marius also identified as a Lithuanian patriot but was not antagonistic toward those who were not. Empathizing with his civilian peers who felt the wrath of societal pressure to enlist, he claimed, “many don’t want to go, but say they will.” Recognizing this problem, he made a conscious effort to focus on the platforms the military made newly accessible to him. He explained that after the nine-month course, “I think I will be more *manly*...I don’t need to ask for help anymore, I am more disciplined and more confident now” (05/08/2017, emphasis my own). Indeed, Marius’ newfound confidence culled from military life reflected the security he apparently lacked outside of it.

Speaking with a pair of friends I interviewed together, I was reminded of my early conversation with the social worker Maria, who was struck by how different young men are today who have only ever lived in a “free country.” One conscripted and the other a volunteer, Mykolas and Karolis understood that while some soldiers found conscription to be fulfilling in unexpected ways, it arrested the livelihoods of others:

Mykolas: I’m not following in mental things they want us to achieve, like there’s a lot of shooting we have to do...People, they don’t need to use their brains too much [in here], they just do as they are told, there’s no progress in their own thinking - (Sighing) - I’ve stepped down; I can’t make the personality they want; you can’t

¹² See for example Miedzian 2002.

move!...I didn't reach the kind of person I wanted to be, I've become better at math counting the days until I get out [of here]!

Karolis: They (people like Mykolas) don't have a lot of motivation because they are being forced.

Mykolas: I was on the "blacklist!" I didn't want to be here. Didn't want to spend a year doing something for someone else, for no payment. I had a place to live and a life, so it wasn't necessary [like it can be for others] because I was working for myself. Here, I can't think for myself—they tell me what to do."

Karolis: "I understand him (Mykolas), if I were forced to do something I didn't like, for example if I was forced to paint for nine months. He had his own dreams; he was climbing" (05/15/2017, additions in parentheses my own).

Mykolas and Karolis demonstrate how the "Partisan Personality" is the dominant expression of masculinity to be embodied; a particular brand of manhood that officers expect, and junior soldiers challenge each other to reproduce. The problem of hegemonic masculinity and its dichotomous thinking within the military, is that "soldiering" regularly masks – or at least attempts to mask - existing varieties of masculinity and their corresponding power struggles as either "non-gendered" or feminized and obedient (Hooper 2001). The act, or *performance* (Butler 2004, 2006) of soldiering, especially where conscription is involved, evaluates young men and the few women volunteers against a standard of masculinity requiring them to be competitive, prepared for violence, and unencumbered by emotion, but at the same time forces them to do so and ultimately places them in subordinate roles.

This is precisely part of what Beata Tiškevič-Hasanova and Neringa Rekašiūtė bring attention to in their photography series called, "They Won a Lottery" (Rekašiūtė 2015), the title of which references the computerized system that generates draftees' names, and features Lithuanian men shedding tears in military uniform. Their work challenges the idea that resisting the draft makes men weak, effeminate, powerless, or not a "real man" and points out the dangers of such gendered expectations that require men to take up arms on behalf of a sudden and coercive law. Perhaps most importantly, it suggests that military service should not define manhood in a society that already squanders men's [nonviolent] emotions as something to be ashamed of, ungrievable, and unlivable.

Conclusion

In this article, I bring attention to the impact of the reinstatement of conscription in Lithuanian society and the place of hegemonic masculinity in defining both national security and notions of belonging under precarious conditions. In the production of militarized identities as part of Lithuania's national security agenda, the lack of a sense of community both inside and outside of the military contributes to social divisiveness Lithuanians already grapple with on account of gender, ethnicity, degrees of patriotism, as well as material and mental health. In other words, this article showed how the gendered and militaristic policing of livelihoods shapes in destructive ways experiences of individual and community wellbeing. It contributes to feminist scholarship and its intersectional approach to "security," by placing hegemonic masculinity at the center of investigating structures of "safety" and who is supposed to be responsible for it. The national

security crisis in Lithuania that grew particularly in response to Russian aggression in the region after the Ukraine Crisis in 2013, is a platform to not only deepen inclusive understandings of security and experiences of precarity, but an avenue upon which to examine how enduring issues of social divisiveness and inequity anywhere contribute to a community's response to crisis in the first place. This article may therefore be helpful for anthropologists and practicing social scientists concerned with social injustices that have emerged as a result of large-scale or international crises such as the Ukraine Crisis and Refugee Crisis in Europe, or even the more recent COVID-19 global pandemic. An intersectional approach to national security can surely expose for example the United States' particular manifestation of the pandemic, wherein deeply entrenched racism and the normalization of police violence severely damage what it means to be a community during a public health crisis. My hope is that this work contributes to a long-term project of undoing these hegemonic masculinities and toxic nationalisms, whether in communities at home or abroad, so that human livelihoods may be lived more ethically, more consciously, and more sustainably.

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