

Monumental Change

The Shifting Politics of Obligation at the Tomb of the Unknowns

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The Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery has long served as a site of instruction about national sacrifice, but its lessons in mourning war's costs and honoring its combatants have changed with time and shifting political currents, as reflected in the reordered space, the sentinels' altered rituals and the public's increasingly disciplined engagement with the site. Tracing these changes, this article argues that the gradual distancing of the monument and its sentinels from the visiting public mirrors the sharpening sense of civilian-military division within American society itself, revealing the exclusionary politics of obligation that help shape contemporary political discourse about war and its costs.

Keywords: commemoration; memorials and monuments; unknown soldier; militarism; civil-military relations; politics; obligation

There, just a few feet from the marble steps of the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery and yards from the somber monument to the unknown soldiers of the past century's wars, Lindsey Stone struck a pose of purposeful disrespect, what she would later defend as a "visual pun." Crouched next to the sign with its insistent declaration—"SILENCE AND RESPECT"—she mimed defiance, cupping her right hand by her mouth as if to yell and giving the finger with her left. In an age where the ridiculous and lurid go viral in an instant, the photograph posted on a personal Facebook page caused immediate uproar. Accused of hating the military and "soldiers who have died in foreign wars," Ms. Stone received death and rape threats; others hoped she would rot in hell.¹ Within days,

she and the friend who took the photograph were placed on unpaid leave by their employer (they had traveled to the capital on an excursion with their firm). The two women eventually lost their jobs, despite issuing public apologies in which they tried to explain the photograph not as an act of disrespect to the memorial or to the military, past and present, but as a private joke gone awry.²

The scandal and its steep price provide more than just another cautionary tale about how social network sites blur the boundaries between personal choices and professional consequences. The incident's "mundanity" and the response it elicited flag something larger—they point to a perceived tension between military and civilian sectors in the United States, a tension fueled by intertwined notions of service and obligation.³ As much as Ms. Stone and her friend sought to explain themselves, the unfortunate image was too closely tied to a particular object in the American public's imagination about military service and the debt it accrues: the Tomb of the Unknowns, the epicenter of the nation's "most sacred shrine," Arlington National Cemetery.⁴

For the past half-century scholars and pundits have cast this tension as a "widening gap," and analyzed the concomitant politics of separateness within civil-military relations and their consequences for domestic and foreign policy.⁵ Though they may weigh the effects differently, most analyses conclude that a sense of distance, even exclusion, has emerged in recent decades, accelerated in part by changes in the military introduced at the end of the Vietnam War, including the transition to an all-volunteer armed force, and heightened in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.⁶ The so-called widened gap has developed alongside a conspicuous, if counterintuitive, turn in political discourse: just as the percentage of the US population serving in the armed forces has decreased (currently less than 1 percent),⁷ American policy and public rhetoric have increasingly embraced an idealized estimation of military service. It is a dynamic that fits squarely within what Andrew Bacevich defines as a "new American militarism," with its "romanticized view of soldiers, a tendency to see military power as the truest measure of national greatness, and outsized expectations regarding the efficacy of force."⁸

In this article, we use this dynamic as a point of departure, focusing on the connection between the monument's space and its occupants—military and civilian alike—to examine the evolving relation between the

state and its military and, by extension, the US military and the American public. To begin with, we note that with mundane transgressions and overt anti-war protest part of its history from the start, the monument has long served as a vehicle of purposive instruction about national sacrifice. But the Tomb's lessons in grieving war's costs and honoring its combatants have changed with time and differing ideological concerns, evidenced in the reordered space, the sentinels' altered role and the public's increasingly disciplined engagement with the site. Thus, we argue that the gradual distancing of the monument and its sentinels from the visiting public mirrors the sharpening sense of civilian-military division within American society itself. Drawing on scholarship that explores the interplay between national monuments and publics, as well as what James Young terms the "essential constructedness" of memorials and monuments,⁹ this claim understands the Tomb as a material artifact of social change. This is not to suggest the Tomb produced or produces change per se, but a history of its transforming space, practice and audiences, alongside an ethnographic account of its current milieu, helps render tangible the abstraction of seemingly widening civil-military relations.

More pointedly, this analysis makes clear how the Tomb's contemporary monumental space and ritual activity not only uphold the separateness of military and civilian spheres but also concretize Bacevich's "advancing militarism," specifically what he identifies as war's "new aesthetics" and the heightened and set-apart "status of military institutions and soldiers themselves."¹⁰ Unlike memorials that invite "more subjective and personalized narratives,"¹¹ "journeys of emotional discovery"¹² and individuated expressions of sorrow, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or Section 60 in the very same cemetery, the twenty-first-century Tomb of the Unknowns explicitly instructs civilian sensibilities about contemporary military virtue, as much as about past national sacrifice. Its public rituals require silence and obligate reverence. With war's tolls eclipsed by a pageantry of perfection performed before an observant public, the romanticized view of martial strength cultivated at the Tomb reinforces the exclusionary politics of obligations to the nation advanced by the state.

CHANGE OVER TIME

Change seems antithetical to a memorial so saturated with seemingly transcendent symbols of war and death. Like its counterparts in France and England, the monument was erected in the nation's capital to provide a constant reminder of the price of war and the valor of the state.¹³ In the aftermath of World War I, the 66th US Congress approved Public Resolution 67 to establish the Tomb, and on Armistice Day, November 11, 1921, an unknown soldier from a battlefield in France was buried at the plaza of the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery. With crypts later dedicated to unknowns from World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, the inscription on the massive 72-metric-ton memorial now announces, "Here Rests in Honored Glory an American Soldier Known But to God." Freightened with such sacred anonymity, the Tomb serves as a monument to abiding notions of national honor, glory and sacrifice. Its form, like that of other monuments and memorials to unknown war dead, reinforces an impression of fixed and enduring ideals: sarcophagi and cenotaphs hewn from thick slabs of marble; words of homage etched onto their surface; some even accompanied by an "eternal" flame.¹⁴

But monuments to a nation's fallen, known or unknown, are never static. Instead, they exist for a changing national public, amid shifting political winds and social and economic conditions. In writing about memorial landscapes, namely the National Mall in Washington, DC, Kirk Savage explains that monuments "acquire a life and a direction of their own," as they "become enmeshed in the complex realities of a living America."¹⁵ The Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery is no exception, and while scholars have analyzed the monument for its symbolic power and commemorative politics, its "ghostly national imaginings"¹⁶ and instances of rupture, less attention has been paid to its transformed space and, more importantly, to the interplay between the memorial's keepers and visitors.¹⁷ In what follows, we present a historical overview of change in order to contextualize our ethnographic analysis of contemporary commemorative practice that takes place at this unique national memorial. Three realms of change in form and function at the Tomb help chart the evolving relations among the state, its military and the public: (1) the monument's spatial organization and the gradual distance inserted between the physical monument, the watchful sentinels

and the visiting public; (2) the ritualistic guard of the sacred space with its emphasis on precision, synchronicity and uniformity; and (3) the public's engagement with the space as invited participants and regulated observers.

Taken together, these three areas of change illustrate how sites of national commemoration, however oriented toward the past, are nevertheless grounded in the present and infused with meaning by their present-day interlocutors, civilian and military citizen-subjects alike. Along with the expanding "monumental core" of the nation's capital, the Tomb has evolved not only "as audiences and social practices change," but also as the role of the US military within American society has developed.¹⁸ Seen in this light, the changes at the Tomb underscore an increasing sense of exclusion between these two sets of citizen-subjects, in which the state is elided with the soldier in projecting power to audiences at home and abroad. As Andrew Bickford has explained, in such an elision, soldiers are not "merely signs or floating signifiers out of the ether"; rather, more than just prosecuting war, they "represent the state, and as such, they represent, signify, stand in for the state and an idea, the ethos or ideology or worldview of the state or the system to which they are sworn and must serve."¹⁹ Through that elision and the "tendency to elevate the soldier to the status of a national icon,"²⁰ the public's attention turns from sacrifices of past wars toward contemporary military might. While undoubtedly for some visitors, the memorial still offers a space for mourning—whether immediate or distant loss—its public focus is increasingly trained on enacted symbols and bodies in motion, rather than unseen and nameless remains.

1. Changing space and clashing views

The Tomb of the Unknowns of the twenty-first century is a bounded site, its access limited by a series of railings, stanchions and chains, and the plaza and crypts guarded around the clock by rifle-bearing sentinels. Such a division of space and bodies, however, was never the original intent behind the monument. The interment of the World War I Unknown took place within a cemetery that encouraged a sense of social connection between the living and dead. People moved with more ease—or at least with fewer restrictions—among the headstones, and the memorial grave itself, with its sole set of remains, became a site to visit, an object to touch and, for some, even a spot for picnicking:

In the years immediately following the 1921 ceremonies, there was no common public script or clear expectation for behavior at the tomb. While visitors with wreaths came regularly in small groups or as representative bodies, and commercial photographers captured the ceremony, others wandered the deserted amphitheater or sat on the low-slung first version of the tomb to rest their feet and take in the view.²¹

Such a portrait of informality and repose suited the environs, if not the memorial's purported aims. Situated before the Memorial Amphitheater with its neoclassical design, the Tomb was a monument erected to level loss across class and rank—all soldiers were equal in death—and to unite both civilian and military segments of society in what Jay Winter has called the Great War's "work of remembrance."²² A modest crypt beneath a slab of stone, the memorial marked the ultimate injury of battle—to *not* be known, named and remembered individually.²³ In response to that injury, the nation had stepped in. As President Harding underscored in his remarks at the public burial, "We do not know his station in life, because from every station came the patriotic response of the five million.... We do not know the eminence of his birth, but we do know the glory of his death."²⁴ As in France and England, the select Unknown were to recall the thousands of other unnamed fallen, those buried in this or other cemeteries (public and private), as well as those whose remains were never repatriated.

While "peace remained the central theme" of the 1921 ceremonies honoring the Unknown Soldier—despite the clashing views held by President Harding and his predecessor Woodrow Wilson about "how best to create a stable and peaceful world"—tensions would arise in the ensuing interwar period "as to whether the Tomb was a symbol of war or a symbol of peace."²⁵ Indeed, the memorial itself became a "potent site for challenging the very patriotic narratives and military sacrifices it was designed to valorize."²⁶ John Don Passos's concluding segment in his novel *Nineteen Nineteen* (published in 1932), "The Body of an American," pushed back against these dominant discourses. In it, he imagined the myriad hometowns and vocations, lives and deaths, of the Unknown Soldier, which the Tomb's design of sanitized, democratized sacrifice had effectively erased. In his narrative prose, the war's wanton destruction meets its match in the flippant air of the Unknown's selection: "enie menie minie moe plenty

of other pine boxes stacked up there containing what they'd scraped of Richard Roe / and other person or persons unknown."²⁷

As such disputation persisted, sometimes spilling over into protest, changes were gradually introduced to the memorial.²⁸ First and foremost, the physical gravesite had to be protected from potential desecration. "Not only is [the tomb] strewn with cigarette stubs, burnt matches and chewing gum," complained the wife of Ambassador Miles Poindexter, "but the remains of luncheons eaten on it are scattered around with the accompaniment of pestilential flies."²⁹ Veteran groups bristled at the perceived lack of respect:

[A]t the last convention of the American Legion in Omaha officials were angered because of reports that picnic parties have been in the habit of eating their lunches on the very tomb....

There has been much complaint, not alone in legion circles but elsewhere over the attitude of the crowds of tourists who visit the tomb. There has been a singular lack of reverence and this has added to the movement to have the whole spot chained off so that an approach to the very side of the tomb could be prevented.³⁰

Beyond picnickers, the *Washington Herald* reported that "[s]ouvenir hunters have chipped the marble base" and "[b]oys have been shooting crap on top of the tomb."³¹ Thus, in 1925, the government decided to post a civilian watchman at the site, and one year later, on March 2, 1926, Representative Allen Furlow from Rochester, Minnesota, introduced House Joint Resolution Number 185, which called for "a military guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington" during daylight hours (figure 1).³² While explicit prohibitions of certain behavior had not yet been issued, these watchmen and guards signaled the heightened concerns about the public's display of proper decorum around the memorial.

During that same period, debates arose regarding whether to erect a monument above the Tomb, with critics arguing that "the simplicity of the present tomb is beauty itself and fitting for the simple greatness of a soldier."³³ By 1932, however, the War Department elected to expand the memorial's design, adding the superstructure, also referred to as the "cap," hewn out of Yule Marble (like the exterior of the Lincoln Memorial), and thus physically ensuring that the remains below were safe from violation. The winning design also called for the removal of nearby roadways and



Fig. 1. First Permanent Guard at Tomb of Unknown Soldier, [Arlington, Va.], 3/25/26 (Library of Congress, <http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/npcc/27500/27552v.jpg>)

the addition of sweeping stairs leading up to the Tomb.³⁴ There would be no more dice games or picnics on the plaza atop the gravesite.

Even with these modifications, the monument remained accessible to the public and would continue to be so well after the next sets of Unknowns were placed there—the unnamed fallen from World War II and the Korean War, interred at the memorial on May 30, 1958. Although a guard was ever-present—by 1937, the US Army had posted a twenty-four-hour watch—people still actively engaged with the memorial, for example, posing for photographs on the plaza before it.³⁵

The potential for violation or disrespect, however, eventually curbed the public's access, with changes to the memorial's physical layout and entry points introduced in the 1950s when a series of stanchions and ropes (later chains) were placed around the Tomb to keep individuals from approaching too closely or touching it. The idea of a chain barrier was not new. Vice Chairman of the American Legion, John Thomas Taylor, wrote to President Coolidge in 1926, speculating that "unsympathetic conduct" "may be due in part to the fact that the Tomb is easy to approach—simple in aspect and there is no barrier surrounding it." In his view, "the erection

of a chain at a suitable distance surrounding the tomb would adequately prevent persons from desecrating it.”³⁶ But it was not until May 1955 that officials of the Military District of Washington established the heavy manila-rope-and-stanchion barrier to keep visitors twenty-five feet back from the Tomb itself and fifteen feet from the sentinels. In an interesting role reversal, they intended to “protect” the sentinels from “hecklers,” a point to which members of the Honor Guard took umbrage: “It looks like a bullpen and distracts from the original purpose of the team.... There never has been any real trouble. These hecklers don’t really bother us—we just ignore them.”³⁷

Despite such efforts to limit access, visitors were still able to walk completely around the Tomb, as long as they stayed to the outside of the chain barrier. The Tomb itself, the additional crypts and the plaza remained unaltered; what was changing, indeed increasing, was the distance between the monument proper and the visiting public. Eventually, the chain barriers were replaced with more permanent railings and bars. Railings now form the majority of the perimeter around the Memorial Amphitheater steps where the visiting public is situated, with stanchions and chains protecting the outer limits of the plaza below (figure 2). The steps descending from the amphitheater’s interior chamber, formerly known as the Trophy Room, are cordoned off with alternating railings and chains.

In addition to increasingly limited access, alterations to the monument’s spatial organization also entailed restricting avenues of approach and exit. Today, there are only two points of entry onto the plaza itself. The first, at the southwest corner, the side closest to the sentinels’ quarters beneath the plaza, is the ingress controlled by Arlington National Cemetery staff, who await the entry and exit of the sentinels prior to and following the ceremonial Changing of the Guard. The second is at the top of the amphitheater stairs, the starting point for the frequent wreath-laying ceremonies, which is controlled by the sentinels, as they lead authorized members of the public or visiting military and state officials down the marble steps to pay their moment of respect, lay their flowers and once again return to the domain of the observing public. In this way, entry into and out of the area surrounding the Tomb is highly controlled, underscoring the separation between the military and civilian spheres that encounter one another within this memorial space. Both this restricted access and possibilities for interacting with the monument stand in stark contrast with the other major



Fig. 2. The cordoned-off space at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery. Photo by Sarah Wagner.

war memorials on the National Mall, including and especially the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM).³⁸ As Kristin Hass argues, “The Wall” invites individuated public memorials. People come to it with their memories and objects (gifts) to grapple with the war’s “restive memory,” and thus partake in the “public negotiation about patriotism and nationalism.”³⁹

Arguably one of the most revealing instances of restricted access at the Tomb occurred in 1998 when the remains of the Vietnam War Unknown Soldier were removed. Interred fourteen years earlier by the Reagan administration eager to bind up the wounds of the war in Southeast Asia, the remains had come under intense scrutiny, with the identity of the Unknown a source of media speculation.⁴⁰ When Department of Defense officials reopened the Vietnam crypt to remove its contents for forensic analysis, they did so behind a screen of temporary walls and meshing to block the media.⁴¹ Private contractors cut through the marble, concrete and granite structures and, under the cover of night, a crane hoisted the casket out of the crypt and above the plaza—an unthinkable disruption of the national icon, and one that the Defense Department took pains to shield from the public’s view. Six weeks after the disinterment, Secretary of

Defense William Cohen announced the identity of the former Unknown as First Lieutenant Michael J. Blassie. Relaying the news that the remains would be returned to Blassie's family in St. Louis, Missouri, Secretary Cohen remarked, "It may be that forensic science has reached the point where there will be no other unknowns in any war."⁴² Thus emptied, the crypt now bears the inscription, "Honoring and Keeping Faith with America's Missing Servicemen, 1958–1975."

Amid these various spatial transformations, there are of course constants. But even permanent fixtures become enfolded into the shifting signification that has gradually set off and elevated the military from the civilian citizen-subject at the memorial. To begin with, consider the Tomb's situation within this specific national monumental landscape. The memorial is located in the heart of the country's primary national cemetery, connected yet set apart from the overtly political expanse of the National Mall, itself crowned by the Capitol building and populated by other major monuments to the nation—from the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the recently added World War II Memorial. If, as Charles Griswold notes, "The Mall is *the* place where the nation conserves its past ... simultaneously recollecting it (albeit rather selectively), honoring it, and practicing it (in the White House and Capitol)," then the Unknowns rest, both literally and figuratively, outside and above the capital.⁴³ The Tomb's location at the highest point of elevation among these sites reinforces a sense of its remoteness and sanctity, removed from the quotidian activity of the nation's governance.

The grounds of the cemetery also provide an evocative backdrop to the monument that is regularly called on by representatives of the state—both military and political. First, there is the constant material reminder of national sacrifice: the Tomb is surrounded in all directions by white headstones: 400,000 active-duty service members, veterans and their family members are buried there. This number includes some 4,000 other unknowns, many of them from the Civil War, scattered throughout the grounds. Then there is the Memorial Amphitheater, just behind the monument, with its white columns echoing the Capitol building in the distance. The Tomb's proximity to the Amphitheater, used for public holidays and state events, hints at the monument's didactic as well as commemorative purpose. From Harding onward, it is there on the plaza

that US presidents have come to lay wreaths before the crypts on Memorial Day and Veterans Day and given speeches in times of war and peace. In the early morning hours on such occasions, people queue in the hundreds outside the cemetery's main gates to secure the chance to witness presidential visits to the Tomb and hear the addresses in the Amphitheater, an austere venue for messages from the state. New traditions have arisen as well for presidents-elect, with the trip to the Tomb a means to validate publicly the gravitas of their new station: just as President-elect Barack Obama did the day before his own swearing-in in 2009, Donald J. Trump's first official inaugural event on January 19, 2017, was to lay a wreath before the monument.

Even without the pomp and circumstance of national holidays and presidential ceremonies, the Tomb of the Unknowns has become a prime destination for foreign and domestic visitors to the nation's capital, and the approach to the monument is an integral part of the contemporary visitor's experience. Either having been dropped off by buses behind the Amphitheater or having walked up the sloping paths of the grounds from an easterly direction, visitors file into the memorial space from the sides. Their entrance into the sacrosanct is swiftly disciplined: signage commands silence and respect—no gum chewing, no smoking, no leaning on railings (figures 3, 4 and 5). While some may linger, strolling through the Amphitheater or entering its interior chamber, most people take up places on the marble steps before the plaza. There, they behold the pristine space of the memorial: the Tomb and the three crypts; the patrolling sentinel; the thin black mat spread across the plaza, with its worn-in footprints. In the distance, the Capitol building and Jefferson Memorial are revealed, orienting national sensibilities along a temporal continuum from foundational past to present governance and future sacrifice. Rows of white tombstones appear between the trees that shelter the memorial and line the narrow stretch of lawn directly below and beyond the Tomb. The view toward the nation's capital is further framed by the canopy of neatly shorn trees flanking a stretch of lawn below, itself one of the few spaces in the cemetery devoid of headstones and markers. It is a purposefully open, ordered vista.⁴⁴ From their place on the amphitheater steps, the visiting public faces the Tomb and its guard, their gazes fixed from a slight elevation, as if in a theater. Indeed, the visitor's eye cannot help but train itself on the movement unfolding on the plaza below, and soon the sentinel,



Fig. 3. “Silence and Respect” signage at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery. Photo by Sarah Wagner.



Fig. 4. Additional prohibitions at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery. Photo by Sarah Wagner.



Fig. 5. Additional prohibitions at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery. Photo by Sarah Wagner.

not the Tomb, commands center stage. Herein lies a subtle but arguably more profound alteration: the memorial's focal point shifting from past loss to present military strength—at least from the public's vantage.

2. Ritual guard and the “political anatomy of detail”

Just as the physical distancing of the public from its commemorative object—the protective measures limiting access—drew new boundaries between military and civilian spheres of interaction at the monument, changes in the sentinels' role and responsibilities helped reorient sensibilities of reverence. Here, perhaps more so than with the plaza's spatial reorganization, we see commemorative practice reflecting evolving ideological concerns, in particular with Cold War militarism championing ideals of preparedness and vigilance—part of what Kurt Piehler notes as the malleability of the “American tradition of remembering war.”⁴⁵ But once again, such changes came gradually. Following the first two decades of the Tomb's less formal, ritualized safeguarding, in 1948, the Third Infantry's Old Guard—the US Army's official and elite ceremonial unit—

assumed the dual responsibility of both guarding the Tomb and providing security to the nation's capital. The assignment at the Tomb was part of the regiment's official reactivation, unfurled on Army Day, April 6, 1948, and underscored the Department of Defense's efforts to promote "the new obligations of Cold War citizenship," in which, as Army Lieutenant General W. S. Paul explained at a public address, national security was the "business of every person living in this nation."⁴⁶ With the Old Guard as the "well drilled, historical face to this defense [t]he most iconic ceremony of the cemetery today was conceived as an early spectacle of Cold War militarism and patriotic vigilance."⁴⁷ Indeed, at a time when memorial building was in decline in the nation's capital, the Changing of the Guard ceremony at the Tomb embodied a putative preparedness demanded by Cold War politics.

Despite such shifting commemorative politics, for the military, the monument represented a space set apart and made sacred by enduring obligations to the dead, and, for many of its sentinels, the charge of watching over the Tomb meant more than just protecting the physical structure. They saw themselves as comrades-in-arms, keeping the unnamed soldiers company, especially in the dead of night, when the crowds had long departed. It is a sentiment heard repeatedly at reunions of the Society of the Honor Guard, whose members' service at the Tomb span from the late 1950s to the present day, a point of solidarity regardless of whether they "walked the mat" (paced before the Tomb and its crypts) in time of war or peace; indeed, they see themselves as "part of an unbroken chain of soldiers dating back to 1926."⁴⁸ Penned in 1971, the creed memorized by each sentinel before he or she steps onto the plaza captures this binding sense of duty:

My dedication to this sacred duty
is total and whole-hearted.
In the responsibility bestowed on me
never will I falter.
And with dignity and perseverance
my standard will remain perfection.
Through the years of diligence and praise
and the discomfort of the elements,
I will walk my tour in humble reverence

to the best of my ability.
 It is he who commands the respect I protect,
 his bravery that made us so proud.
 Surrounded by well meaning crowds by day,
 alone in the thoughtful peace of night,
 this soldier will in honored glory rest
 under my eternal vigilance.⁴⁹

Over the years, however inwardly cultivated by individual sentinels, this “eternal vigilance” has become more outwardly explicit, broadcast through exacting ritual. Like “military ceremony,” such ritual—particularly in its twenty-first-century iteration—“most powerfully renders the abstract idea of America personal through remembrance practices and the discourse of sacrifice.”⁵⁰ When walking the mat, contemporary sentinels perform a highly orchestrated series of motions—cycling through twenty-one steps, heel clicks and rifle shoulder changes according to an internal metronome acquired through months of rigorous, at times grueling, preparation.

The scripted motion, especially during the much-anticipated Changing of the Guard ceremonies, where all three sentinels—the two guards and their relief commander—move in concert, has acquired an almost slavish attention to perfection. Sentinels are quick to explain that line six of their creed—“my standard will remain perfection”—is the guiding principle of their vigilant discipline. And so perfection and its pursuit dominate the memorial’s plaza. Precision and timing are everything; movements are coordinated to reinforce the impression of seamless unity. Gleaming buttons, straight lines, preternaturally shiny black shoes, all are on display.

So too is state power performed and projected through the bodies and movement of the elite corps of the Honor Guard. In his explication of the “mechanics of power,” Michel Foucault takes up the example of military discipline to illustrate what he calls the “political anatomy” of the docile body. For Foucault, the docile body instantiates the biopolitics of modern power, in which sovereigns gain and exert power through disciplining bodies and regulating populations. Indeed, for him, “discipline is the political anatomy of detail”: from timetables (precision and application of time) and “temporal elaboration” of an act (in which “time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of the body”) to the correlation of body with the gesture, the “body-object articulation” (his example being

the military “manoeuvre” of the rifle) and, finally, “exhaustive use” (as discipline propels an “ever-growing use of time”).⁵¹ The sentinels guarding the Tomb, with their scripted, synchronized movements, straight backs and gliding gaits, embody both military and state power. Indeed, as “metaphors of the state,” they inhabit the disciplining and regulatory force of the sovereign.⁵²

Their weaponry is also central in the projection of this power, particularly in the ritualized performance of vigilance against external threat. For example, the Changing of the Guard ceremony includes an elaborate display of arms inspection. The relief commander bobs his head up and down to take in his subordinate’s uniform. With white gloves he tests the rifle for spotless surfaces. Although the rifle is empty, unarmed and thus ceremonial, its position signals an important division between the sentinels and the observing public: moved to the outside shoulder each time the sentinel turns to walk in the opposite direction on the mat, the weapon must always be placed between the Tomb and any possible threat.⁵³

This focus on the sentinels as the living, breathing emblems of military and, hence, state power extends into the curated space of the Memorial Amphitheater. This too is a recent development. In 2014, the Amphitheater’s Memorial Display Room, formerly known as the Trophy Room, underwent renovation, ushering the memorial into the twenty-first century with its various installations and video screens that play on a continuous loop, telling the story of the Tomb of the Unknowns and the elite Honor Guard who protect it. Here as well, the sentinels rather than the Unknowns often take center stage, this time through simulacrum, text and image, with approximately a third of the instructional space dedicated to the Honor Guard. A life-size image depicts a sentinel in full, unblemished dress uniform, echoing the wax figure of the bugler playing taps found in the cemetery’s Welcome Center, itself recently redesigned. Before the renovations, the Trophy Room housed mementos to the Unknowns given primarily by military and veterans’ organizations, as well as by the occasional civic group. The glass cases containing the myriad plaques and medals offered the civilian public the chance to ponder the symbolic weight of the Unknowns honored in such a manner by visiting dignitaries from across the country and around the world. The sentinels’ story remained peripheral, even untold, as their role was seen as protecting the crypts, not performing to the crowds.⁵⁴

The remodeled and renamed “Memorial Display Room,” however, encourages visitors to learn about the history, selection, training and ritual practice of the Honor Guard as much as about the Unknowns buried in the plaza below. The changes fit within a broader effort by Arlington National Cemetery simultaneously to deflect damaging reports about mismanagement and neglect that emerged in 2010 and to open itself up further as a tourist destination within the nation’s capital.⁵⁵ Coupled with the pristine expanse of the plaza and the groomed cemetery grounds, the spotlight on the sentinels both within the Amphitheater and on the plaza conveys a compelling, if coercive, message: it takes a powerful state to set war’s tolls into such peaceful order and to produce such scenes of ritual and discipline.

Displayed in this manner, as what Paul Connerton has termed an “incorporating practice,” the sentinels’ military discipline presents an especially effective means to convey and sustain memory—as effective as any inscription (such as the words etched on the Tomb’s side panels).⁵⁶ Connerton notes that “[t]he importance of posture for communal memory is evident. Power and rank are commonly expressed through certain postures relative to others; from the way in which people group themselves and from the dispositions of their bodies relative to the bodies of others, we can deduce the degree of authority which each is thought to enjoy or to which they lay claim.”⁵⁷ Thus, through gesture, posture and motion, the sentinels invoke the past, but at the same time they assert their position of authority in safeguarding its memory before contemporary (civilian) audiences. Their physical position, cordoned off as it is, reinforces the mnemonic hierarchy at work. As the designated protectors and purveyors of collective memory at the Tomb, the sentinels also instruct future generations about contemporary military ethos through the incorporating practices of their round-the-clock commemorative ceremony. One of the sentinels we interviewed recounted the day that stood out the most for him during his service at the monument. It was when a little boy on the steps of the plaza took to following him, mimicking each step and each motion. “When I would stop and heel click, he would stop and heel click.... And I could see him out of the corner of my eye, every time I walked, he followed.”

3. An observant public

The erected barriers and watchful guard with rifle perched on his outward shoulder concretize the boundaries set between the state/soldier and the public at the memorial. They do not fully account, however, for the qualitative changes in the encounters between military and civilian citizen-subjects at this most “sacred” of national monuments and the import of those changes. Distance—in this context, social distance—once again helps map the changes underway.

In part, social distance emerges from a perceived difference in experience. As one sentinel explained to us, reflecting on the crowds’ tendency to get a bit “unruly,” or be a bit “disrespectful,” “They’re civilians, they don’t really understand, so you can’t truly hold it against them.”⁵⁸ For those who do not know better, signs instruct and command proper decorum (“SILENCE AND RESPECT”). They signal to the visiting, civilian public—the “well meaning crowds” of the sentinels’ creed—that they are entering a space whose rules they do not know but which they must learn and abide by. To break those rules means to risk public sanction. Often the sanctioning comes from within the crowd, as other onlookers confront individuals speaking too loudly or acting inappropriately. But if the transgression is especially disruptive, the sentinels respond directly. YouTube videos capture sentinels stepping off the mat to bark the injunction: “It is requested that everyone maintain an atmosphere of silence and respect at all times.”⁵⁹ Each time, the crowd falls silent. When commanded to stand and remain silent at the beginning of the Changing of the Guard ceremony, to a person—barring injury or frailty—they obey.

How should we understand these commands, prohibitions and proscriptions, and, in turn, the visiting public’s seemingly reflexive adherence to them? Are they simply necessary steps taken to discipline the uninitiated civilian citizen-subject, or do they intimate a broader dynamic at play—namely, a level of separateness, exclusion, perhaps even distrust, felt by members of the US military or the national cemetery’s keepers toward the civilian public? Certainly one could argue in a society where cell phones routinely interrupt public events—from church services to symphonies and cinemas—that the American public does not always remember to silence its technology or lower its voice. Moreover, disrespect, or a lack of expected decorum, at the Tomb is nothing new. Today’s water bottles rolling onto

the plaza recall the 1920s picnics and the 1950s hecklers. But, as we have detailed above, the gradual transformation of the monument's physical layout and the increasingly explicit directives flag not only the malleability of war remembrance but also the shifting civil-military interactions undergirding that evolving tradition. Specifically, these changes have slowly altered the memorial's meaning by changing how people engage with it: the growing distance between military and civilian spheres in the monumental space of the Tomb, its plaza and the Memorial Amphitheater has redefined the *object* of homage. And with that changing object of reverence comes a heightened intolerance for its perceived disrespect.

People now come to the Tomb to watch more than to remember. On the one hand, this transformation in purpose is a natural outcome of the passage of time. As the conflicts of the last century recede further into the past, fewer visitors feel a personal connection to those wars or their respective war dead. Such is the transition from collective memory to formal history, according to Halbwachs: "General history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up."⁶⁰ The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq now crowd out the lived memories of the Vietnam War and the Korean War, not to mention those of World War II. The Great War, the monument's original focus of mourning, has become the stuff of history books, of great-grandfathers' service, whose stories are now told second- or third-hand. The "ritual significance" of monuments like the Tomb is gradually "obscured by their political symbolism which, now that the moment of mourning has long passed, is all that we can see."⁶¹

Born from more than just fading memories, the Tomb's altered valence thus represents a reordering of commemorative politics, with the wars of the past century ceding discursive ground to the demands of recognizing present-day military strength. Perhaps the most telling evidence of this reconfigured reverence is the literal ebb and flow of bodies into the memorial space, which follows the schedule of the Changing of the Guard ceremony. The buses depositing the thousands of visitors each day are timed to arrive just minutes before the ceremony commences.⁶² The cemetery's webpage for the Changing of the Guard (notably separate from its page for the monument itself) makes explicit this touristic character of the ceremony, underscoring the increased "opportunity" to take in the event during spring, summer and early fall hours: "The guard is changed

every hour on the hour October 1 to March 31 in an elaborate ritual. From April 1 through September 30, there are more than double the opportunities to view the change because another change is added on the half hour and the cemetery closing time moves from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.”⁶³

Anticipation builds as the crowd gathers on the steps of the Memorial Amphitheater, until at last the relief commander and sentinel about to take up the patrol step onto the plaza. The performance begins, and the visitors rise on command. Here, technology has added an interesting twist in how the public encounters the display of military ritual: invariably, several individuals in the crowd hold aloft their smartphones and tablets to record (rather than actually watch) the synchronized, flawless movements of the sentinels walking the mat. The performance thus circulates as images and recordings are posted, shared, “liked” and retweeted, creating additional audiences, even participant observers, in the spectacle of military ritual.⁶⁴ When the ceremony comes to a close and the guard change is complete, the crowd disperses quickly, heading back to the bus or to explore the Memorial Display Room or the surrounding cemetery grounds. Few, if any, visitors remain on the steps to contemplate the sole sentinel or the crypts he guards.

Day in and day out, this flow of visitors reveals just how much the exacting performance of military ritual overshadows the monument itself. The visiting public, as an audience taking in a performance, is focused instead on the pageantry of the present. It is a sanitized, anticipatory view onto war. With its display of precision and synchronicity, of masculinity (overwhelmingly white masculinity)⁶⁵ and power, the ceremonial rites that unfold on the plaza celebrate an ideal of the military far removed from the dirt and sweat and, above all, blood that underwrite its existence. In this regard, the theatricality of the Changing of the Guard ceremony encapsulates the “new aesthetics of war” within twenty-first-century American militarism; now a “spectacle” to behold, war urges a new lexicon: “surgical, frictionless, postmodern, even abstract or visual.”⁶⁶ Tucked away from sight is the destructive nature of war and its costs—the “elemental fact” that wars “leave armies of the dead and the bereaved in their wake”⁶⁷—in favor of clean lines and polished surfaces. The untainted living emblems of the state have gradually eclipsed the memory of the dead.

Thus the Tomb of the Unknowns has increasingly become a space for instructing people—civilians, foreign tourists, school groups, etc.—in

contemporary military ethos, as in disciplining sensibilities of patriotic reverence and imparting notions of obligation.⁶⁸ For American youth, hands-on lessons in civic responsibility come in the form of class trips that culminate in beholding the Changing of the Guard and participating in a wreath-laying ceremony. For each school group (typically elementary or middle school groups), four students, selected from among their peers, listen attentively as the relief commander instructs them on their role—where to stand and what to do. With their classmates looking on, they descend the marble stairs and step onto the plaza, initiates in the ritual of honoring the nation-state through the medium of war.

OBLIGATIONS, PAST AND PRESENT

There's something about you that's different from average Americans, something that cuts you apart, sets you on a different path.... Isn't that why remarkable young men and women like you are willing to put on the uniform of this country and to fight for it and, if necessary, die for it? I think America owes you an astounding debt of thanks. But America owes you something more than just thanks.⁶⁹

These words, spoken by Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre in a speech to the Society of the Honor Guard on November 13, 1999, expressed a deep sense of obligation to the military. In her analysis of sacrifice and indebtedness at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Zoë Wool argues that it is the “volunteers, visitors, and war and troop boosters” who press upon US soldiers, maimed in body and spirit from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the conditions of obligation. “It is they who claim that soldiers have sacrificed on their behalf, and they do their best to pay the unpayable debt of sacrifice.... Yet, in making that claim, the grateful elide that same violence, the same pain and death and loss, on which it is based. Gratitude sanitizes the gory implications of sacrifice, leaving in its stead a clean picture of patriotism.”⁷⁰

Wool's ethnographic portrait interrogates the effects of “sanitizing” gratitude, but leaves open the question of how it came to be. Within the broader phenomenon of an increasingly militarized society—from an ever-expanding military-industrial complex to the militarization of police

forces, clothing, food, advertising, etc.⁷¹—there are, however, moments and spaces in which we can see how the coercive bonds of civil-military reciprocity come into being. The Tomb of the Unknowns is one such example. The translocation in homage from past national sacrifice to Cold War preparedness and present-day, “frictionless” martial potency at the monument is not just a gradually conditioned social response. It also emanates from explicit political directives. Exhortations from the symbolic *pater* of the nation capitalize on the social distance between civilian and military sections of American society to insist on an indebtedness to the military, as to the state, that starts from past sacrifice but extends well into the future.⁷² In this sense, memory forges imagined ties of duty: memory “is also normative; that is, it informs us of the obligations and responsibilities we have acquired in the past, and that ought to inform our behavior in the present.”⁷³

The freighted notion of sacrifice plays an especially critical role in creating the hierarchical dynamics at memorial spaces like the Tomb and underwriting its exclusionary politics of obligation. From the vantage point of the military, on a discursive level, the turn to an all-volunteer armed force posits an exclusivity whereby membership in the military becomes more than just a choice; it intimates an elevated status derived from an idealized notion of national sacrifice—men and women who elect to shoulder a burden that others have chosen not to take up, or, as John Hamre remarked to his audience of former and current sentinels, “You decided you were going to live a much bigger life ... [and] that sets you apart and makes you very different kind of people.”⁷⁴ In theory, if the draft meant that all able-bodied men (and women) had a duty to serve their nation, then the professional forces assume that obligation voluntarily and therefore lay claim to the social capital that comes with such obligation. Debts of this nature cannot be eschewed without consequence or at least acknowledgment. Here is the other side of the military/civilian coin: the civilian citizen-subject is thus left to acknowledge an unfulfilled obligation—in Wool’s terms, “an unpayable debt of sacrifice”; in Hamre’s, “something more than just thanks.” For if the choice to serve has elevated members of the military in this schema of duty and sacrifice, then not serving subjugates the civilian public to that sacrificing military.⁷⁵

In one of his final public addresses to the military, specifically veterans, on August 1, 2016, President Barack Obama took pains to acknowledge the

sanctity of war dead, a property defined by sacrifice. At the 95th National Convention for Disabled American Veterans, he spoke of the country's "sacred covenant" with the members of its armed forces:

America's commitment to our veterans is not just lines in a budget. And it can't be about politics. It's not even really about policy. Our commitment to our veterans is a sacred covenant. And I don't use those words lightly. It is sacred because there's no more solemn request than to ask someone to risk their life, to be ready to give their life on our behalf. It's a covenant because both sides have responsibilities. Those who put on the uniform, you took an oath to protect and defend us. While the rest of us, the citizens you kept safe, we pledged to take care of you and your families when you come home. That's a sacred covenant. That's a solemn promise that we make to each other. And it is binding. And upholding it is a moral imperative.⁷⁶

Like the Tomb set above and apart from the National Mall, he placed the covenant apart from the mundane—from budgets, policy, politics—defining it through the risk of life and potential of death, *on behalf of the nation*. In this formulation, to sacrifice is to be willing to give up one's life for the United States, or, in the case of parents, one's child. And when it occurs, a military death accrues debt. As the narrator of the instructional video on constant feed in the Memorial Display Room at the Tomb of the Unknowns instructs, "We owe them [the Unknowns from World War I, World War II and the Korean War] and every service member who fought to defend this great nation our unending gratitude."

But, in an era when less than one percent of the US population serves in the military, what exactly is owed by the civilian citizen-subject to his or her military counterpart?⁷⁷ If debt cannot be met in equal measure of bodily sacrifice, some other form must be found, because, as Marcel Mauss argues, the "unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior," and "we must give back more than we have received."⁷⁸ Moving beyond mere "silence and respect" or "unending gratitude," the ineffable character of that obligation invites different scales of reciprocity. It also allows the state, negotiating on behalf of both the sacrificed (past) and the volunteer (present and future) service member, to set the terms of repayment, defined by the binding, sacred covenant that the public has a "moral obligation" to fulfill.

As genuflection only goes so far to acknowledge unmet obligation, deference becomes an alternate currency in the civilian-military relations that extend well beyond the confines of the plaza's memorial space. If we understand the so-called widening gap at the Tomb as part of the gradual trend toward militarization within American society, we must also recognize that the internal logic of that militarization depends (paradoxically) on an insistence of separateness. Such separateness has profound effects. Whether seen as guilt for not serving, as misunderstanding or romanticizing of the military—or a mix of all three—civilian “indebtedness” to military service and sacrifice has the potential to silence dissent and stymie debate because in this particular configuration of the “sacred covenant,” indebtedness becomes deference.

More than just standing ovations at sporting events or the ubiquitous “support our troops” bumper stickers during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, deference has played a critical role in shaping contemporary political discourse in the United States about the US military.⁷⁹ It has helped underwrite highly politicized but often superficial congressional debates about defense spending, at the same time that it enables the sanitizing gratitude that nevertheless neglects the messiness of war—veterans' damaged bodies and brains—in the chronically mismanaged services of the Department of Veterans Affairs.⁸⁰ To defer is to submit to opinion or judgment; in this sense, deference also cedes authority. With President Donald Trump's newly minted cabinet appointments, even civilian oversight of the military—traditionally considered a requisite feature of liberal democracy—has been called into question.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

Seen in this light—over time and across its transformed spaces—the Tomb of the Unknowns maps the changing relations between military and civilian spheres in the United States. In doing so, it complicates a more cohesive understanding of a twenty-first-century American tradition of remembering wars. So different from the more interactive, even subjective, memorial spaces in the nation's capital, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or the Lincoln Memorial, the contemporary spectacle/spectator dynamics at the Tomb work to silence war's tolls, more than to address

or efface sorrow. Rather, the performance of military perfection taking place on the plaza each day reifies notions of duty and sacrifice, setting its sentinel representatives apart both literally and figuratively from the mundane (profane) world of the deferent civilian observer. That requisite respect demanded of the visiting public echoes a silencing at the broader, discursive level, and while transgressions of the sacred space are not new, the heightened intolerance for disrespect and desecration points toward a recalibrated sense of civic order. At the same time, the memorial space enforces a specific disciplining of the American imaginary in which civilian and military worlds are increasingly separate, yet mutually constituting. Such isolation and elevation—one from another yet each dependent on the other—do more than just insert social or political distance or reinforce hierarchies of power: separateness couched in terms of sacredness has the potential to quash dialogue about the costs of war—from questioning the use of force and funds to prosecute wars to abrogated responsibilities to disabled veterans and returning service members seeking to build lives and careers as civilians. Equally problematically, it adds to the growing romanticized and misconceptualized notion of the military and warfare, in which martial strength is celebrated for its ordered potential to unleash violence, rather than recalled for the damaged bodies and lives left in its wake and on behalf of the nation.

NOTES

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1. Doug Stanglin, “Obscene Gesture Photo at Arlington Cemetery Stirs Anger,” *USA Today*, November 21, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2012/11/21/arlington-national-cemetery-tombs-unknowns-photo-facebook/1718971/> (accessed October 23, 2017); Jon Ronson, “‘Overnight Everything I Loved Was Gone’: The Internet Shaming of Lindsey Stone,” *Guardian*,

February 21, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/21/internet-shaming-lindsey-stone-jon-ronson> (accessed October 23, 2017).

2. On November 21, 2012, Stone and her colleague, Jamie Schuh, published a statement of apology in the *Boston Herald*, in which they explained that they “never meant to cause any harm or disrespect to anyone, particularly our men and women in uniform.” Immediately following the incident, Stone had posted on Facebook, “This is just us, being the douchebags that we are, challenging authority in general ... OBVIOUSLY we meant NO disrespect to people that serve or have served our country’,” *WALB News 10*, “Woman Could Lose Job over Disrespectful Picture Taken at Arlington National Cemetery,” n.d., 2012, <http://www.walb.com/story/20161054/woman-could-lose-job-over-disrespectful-picture-taken-at-arlington-national-cemetery>. See also, George Brennan, “Facebook Cemetery Mockers Lose Jobs,” *Cape Cod Times*, November 22, 2012, <http://www.cape-codtimes.com/article/20121122/NEWS/211220317> (accessed October 23, 2017).

3. Examining a parallel act of desecration (three Canadian youth urinating on the National War Memorial in Ottawa), Piotr Szpunar argues that the significance of the “mundane” act lies not in the act itself—whether viewed as incident or incidence—but in how it altered the World War I monument as a “space” and “place” of collective memory. Piotr M. Szpunar, “Monuments, Mundanity and Memory: Altering ‘Place’ and ‘Space’ at the National War Memorial (Canada),” *Memory Studies* 3, no. 4 (2010): 391.

4. A sign near the cemetery’s entrance makes explicit the sacred nature of the space, instructing visitors accordingly: “Welcome to Arlington National Cemetery, Our Nation’s Most Sacred Shrine. Please Conduct Yourselves with Dignity and Respect at All Times. Please Remember These Are Hallowed Grounds.” As Micki McElya writes, the sign “compels visitors to hush, to revere, or to feel proudly American.” Micki McElya, *The Politics of Mourning: Death and Honor in Arlington National Cemetery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 2.

5. Ole R. Holsti, “A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976–96,” *International Security* 23, no. 3 (1998/99): 5–42; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Military Portrait* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960); Elliot Cohen, “Why the Gap Matters,” *National Interest* 61 (2000): 38–48; Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2001). The “widening gap” debate has also garnered attention in mainstream media; see, for example, Thomas E. Ricks, “The Widening Gap Between Military and Society,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July

1997; and, more recently, James Fallows, "The Tragedy of the American Military," *The Atlantic*, January/February 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-tragedy-of-the-american-military/383516/> (accessed October 23, 2017). While much of the scholarship from the late 1950s onward framed civil-military relations in terms of distancing and gaps, earlier work, such as Harold Lasswell's 1941 essay on the "garrison state," reflects concern about encroaching militarism in a time of intense domestic discord and an acute sense of danger; Lasswell warns of a world in which "the specialists on violence"—military men who would dominate a modern technical society—would become the "most powerful group in society." Harold Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 4 (1941): 455, 457. The authors thank Michael Dolski for his insights on the broader scholarly debate.

6. Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27–28; Beth L. Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Pew Research Center, "War and Sacrifice in the post-9/11 Era," October 5, 2011, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era/> (accessed October 23, 2017). Focused on military-civilian attitudes in the post-9/11 era, this report notes that "as the size of the military shrinks, the connections between military personnel and the broader civilian population appear to be growing more distant.... 84% of veterans who served after the 9/11 terror attacks say the public does not understand the problems faced by those in the military or their families. The public agrees, though by a less lopsided majority—71%."

7. Ibid. The numbers paint a vivid picture of the US military's narrowing membership and shifting attitudes. Compared to its twentieth-century forces, far fewer people proportionally serve in the contemporary US military: "During the past decade, as the military has engaged in the longest period of sustained conflict in the nation's history, just 0.5% of the American population has served on active duty at any given time." At the height of World War II, that figure was 9 percent.

8. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 2.

9. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 14; see also Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), and *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); and Geoffrey M. White, *Memorializing Pearl Harbor: Unfinished Histories and the Work of Remembrance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

10. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 20, 23.
11. Erica Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 53.
12. Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 21.
13. Unlike the crypt below the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in London's Westminster Abbey, however, the American Tomb of the Unknowns is located outside the capital proper; see, Ken Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers: From London and Paris to Baghdad," *History & Memory* 5, no. 2 (1993): 13–14; and Daniel J. Sherman, "Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (1998): 464–65. That said, the 1901 McMillan Plan, which sought to extend the "monumental core" of the National Mall along east-west and north-south axes, had already envisioned connecting Arlington National Cemetery to the Lincoln Memorial via the Arlington Memorial Bridge. Savage, *Monument Wars*, 152. See also Lisa Benton-Short, *The National Mall: No Ordinary Public Space* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 82; and McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 207–8, 182.
14. Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers," 17. For World War I monuments to unknown and missing soldiers, see also Laura Wittman, *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Thomas Laqueur, "Memory and Naming in the Great War," in John Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 150–67; Sherman, "Bodies and Names"; George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Geoff Dyer, *The Missing of the Somme* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
15. Savage, *Monument Wars*, 11.
16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; London: Verso, 2006), 9.
17. McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*; Michael J. Allen, "'Sacrilege of a Strange, Contemporary Kind': The Unknown Soldier and the Imagined Community after the Vietnam War," *History & Memory* 23, no. 2 (2011): 90–131; Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919–1941* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010); Kurt G. Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of*

Commemoration in America, 1919–1933 (New York: New York University Press, 2010); and Sarah Wagner, “The Making and Unmaking of an Unknown Soldier,” *Social Studies of Science* 43, no. 5 (2013): 631–56.

18. Savage, *Monument Wars*, 152, 21. On the expansion of the National Mall and specifically the McMillan Plan, see *ibid.*, 147–70; and Benton-Short, *The National Mall*, 34–38, 80–82.

19. Andrew Bickford, *Fallen Elites: The Military Other in Post-Unification Germany* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 29.

20. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 23.

21. McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 204. According to the website of the Society of the Honor Guard, a non-profit organization made up of former and current sentinels, “Back in the early 1920’s, we didn’t have guards and the Tomb looked much different. It was flat at ground level without the 70-ton marble ‘cap.’ People often came to the cemetery in those days and a few actually used the Tomb as a picnic area, likely because of the view.” <https://tombguard.org/society/faq/> (accessed October 23, 2017).

22. Jay Winter, “Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War,” in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, eds., *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 40–60.

23. Laura Wittman notes that the tomb for the unknown soldier in Italy, similar to those in France and Britain, was to have “no aesthetic program at all,” just a simple “flat horizontal stone marker.” In all three cases, such simplicity nevertheless worked to great symbolic effect, intimating ideals of humility, transcendence and the passing of time and the body. Wittman, *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, 81–82.

24. Warren Gamaliel Harding, “The Unknown American Soldier,” Address of the President of the United States at the Ceremonies Attending the Burial of the Unknown American Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 1921, 67th Congress, 1st Session, Document No. 78.

25. Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 121, 122; see also McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 205.

26. McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 196.

27. John Don Passos, “The Body of an American,” in *U.S.A.: I. The 42nd Parallel, II. Nineteen Nineteen, III. The Big Money* (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 468. For a careful textual analysis of this segment of the novel, see McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 200–201; and Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 121.

28. For example, on the first Armistice Day after the Tomb’s completion, in 1932, veterans protested in honor of two of their ranks killed in clashes with police

when publically campaigning for early payment of service bonuses. McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 206–7.

29. Elizabeth Gale Poindexter, Wife of Ambassador Miles Poindexter, “Grave of Unknown Soldier,” *Washington Herald* (n.d.), file 293.8, box 1271, section 10(1), Central Files 1926-1939, Office of the Adjutant General, RG 407, National Archives, Washington, DC.

30. “Guard to Protect Tomb of Unknown Soldier Assured: Coolidge Promises,” *Washington Post*, March 9, 1926, 22. McElya notes that the War Department “received a number of complaints about behavior at the tomb and requests for protection,” which, she concludes, “suggested that the touring public still needed a policing presence to train appropriate reverence among the living.” McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 204.

31. “Guard to Watch over Unknown Soldier’s Tomb,” March 9, 1926, file 293.8, box 1271, Central Files 1926-1939, Office of the Adjutant General, RG 407, National Archives.

32. Society of the Honor Guard, “To Provide a Military Guard,” March 22, 2013, <https://tombguard.org/column/2013/03/to-provide-a-military-guard/> (accessed October 23, 2017).

33. “Monument to Be Asked for Tomb of Unknowns: War Department’s Decision,” *Washington Post*, November 25, 1925, 1.

34. Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 124.

35. On the popular series of images commissioned by the Office of War Information in 1943, which depict a couple posing before the tomb, a celebration of “wholesome, all-American young people,” linked to the “patriotism and national honor enacted at the Tomb,” see McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 231.

36. John Thomas Taylor, National Legislation Committee, the American Legion, to the President, the White House, Washington D.C., March 10, 1926, file 293.8, box 1271, Central Files 1926-1939, Office of the Adjutant General, RG 407, National Archives.

37. Cited in “Ropes Bar Hecklers of Tomb Sentry,” *Washington Post*, May 8, 1955, B1.

38. Michael R. Dolski, *D-Day Remembered: The Normandy Landings in American Collective Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016), 118–19.

39. Hass, *Carried to the Wall*, 2, 3. Interestingly, the story of access to the VVM runs counter to that of the Tomb. Originally, the grass came up to the base of the black granite panels, and visitors were initially unsure how to approach the memorial. Eventually, to impose some sense of structure, the walkway was added, effectively drawing people closer to the monument and thus shaping their interactions with it.

40. Allen, “‘Sacilege of a Strange, Contemporary Kind’”; and Wagner, “The Making and Unmaking of an Unknown Soldier.”

41. Forensic anthropologist Robert Mann, who assisted with the disinterment and initial analysis of the remains, notes that an “eight-foot-plywood fence,” erected to “preserve the dignity and sanctity” of the Tomb, was also intended to “stymie the efforts of news photographers.” Robert Mann and Miryam Ehrlich Williamson, *Forensic Detective: How I Cracked the World’s Toughest Cases* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006), 110.

42. Quoted in Wagner, “The Making and Unmaking of an Unknown Soldier,” 645.

43. Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 4 (1986): 691.

44. From the cemetery’s original conception, “landscaping, the maintenance of park-like greenways, and the careful locating of new sections of graves,” to avoid the sense of crowding, were all directed toward cultivating Arlington’s unique position (and aesthetics) as a “national shrine.” McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 181.

45. Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 186.

46. Quoted in McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 214.

47. *Ibid.*, 215.

48. Society of the Honor Guard, “The Tomb Guard,” <https://tombguard.org/tomb-of-the-unknown-soldier/the-tomb-guard/> (accessed October 23, 2017).

49. Society of the Honor Guard, “Sentinel’s Creed and Line 6,” June 22, 2012, <https://tombguard.org/column/2012/06/the-sentinels-creed-line-6/> (accessed October 23, 2017).

50. White, *Memorializing Pearl Harbor*, 21.

51. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 139, 149–54.

52. Bickford, *Fallen Elites*, 29.

53. The Society of the Honor Guard’s “Frequently Asked Questions” page indicates that the guards carry “fully functional M14 rifles,” <http://tombguard.org/society/faq/> (accessed October 23, 2017).

54. Certainly, sentinels, past and present, understand the performative aspects of their service at the Tomb, which some jokingly refer to as “Hollywooding.” In decades past, to “Hollywood” was to go out to the plaza after a shift of guarding the Tomb, still in dress uniform, to stand among and mingle with the visiting crowds. That ability to move among the crowd, as a sentinel or sergeant of the guard, signaled the more relaxed milieu at the monument—or at least less social

distance between the Honor Guard as members of the military and the civilian public.

55. McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 307–9. The redesigned Welcome Center is structured around the slogan, “Honor, Remember, Explore,” and includes the “cornerstone of the exhibits,” the life-sized replica of the bugler playing “Taps,” <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Welcome-Center> (accessed October 23, 2017). The Tomb of the Unknowns was regarded as critical to improving Arlington National Cemetery’s tarnished public image.

56. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72–104.

57. *Ibid.*, 73.

58. Infractions are infrequent and, more often than not, benign. As the Society for the Honor Guard website explains, “Today, most of the challenges faced by the Sentinels are tourists who are speaking too loudly or attempting to get a better picture (by entering the post),” <http://tombguard.org/society/faq/> (accessed October 23, 2017).

59. See, for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTw2CY4xviQ>; and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsdHxUXf2CE> (both accessed October 23, 2017).

60. Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 78.

61. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 93.

62. See McElya, *The Politics of Mourning*, 1–2. Furthermore, Savage notes that in contrast to the nineteenth-century visitors who “elaborately criss-crossed the city” in horse-drawn cabs to take in the monuments and heroic statues, the twentieth-century visitor hopped on tour buses that provided a sampling of the monumental landscape, a “rush of sights” as in the montage for Frank Capra’s movie, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Savage, *Monument Wars*, 254.

63. “Changing of the Guard Ritual,” Changing of the Guard, Arlington National Cemetery, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Changing-of-the-Guard> (accessed October 23, 2017).

64. Scholars in media and memory studies have argued that the “‘second-order’ witness, who though removed spatially and/or temporally from the ‘here and now’ of the event, experiences it via media technologies and goes on to produce testimony about this experience.” Penelope Papailias, “Witnessing in the Age of the Database: Viral Memorials, Affective Publics, and the Assemblage of Mourning,” *Memory Studies* 9, no. 4 (2016): 443.

65. The first black soldier to “walk the mat” was Specialist 4th Class Fred Moore, who earned the Honor Guard badge in March 1961. Already in training, Moore was quickly advanced to a sentinel after President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah,

visited the Tomb for a wreath-laying ceremony and pressed US President John Kennedy about “why he didn’t see any people of color on the Tomb Guard.” See Jaqueline M. Hames, “First African American Tomb Guard Recalls ‘Walking the Mat,’” *Soldiers News*, February 18, 2015, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/604125/first-african-american-tomb-guard-recalls-walking-the-mat> (accessed October 23, 2017). Army Sergeant Danyell E. Wilson became the first female African American sentinel at the Tomb in 1997, just one year after Sergeant Heather Lynn Johnson became the first female to earn the Honor Guard badge and serve as a sentinel at the monument. Four women have served as sentinels at the Tomb, the newest badge holder, Sgt. Ruth Hanks, joining the elite duty in 2017.

66. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 20.

67. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 94.

68. Given Washington DC’s tremendous draw for visitors from abroad, the Tomb of the Unknowns also exists as pedagogic space for disciplining the imaginaries of its visiting foreign nationals, offering a narrative of American military might used for benevolent ends and born from the nation’s “willing” sacrifices. For a parallel discussion of the intertwined themes of American international leadership and national sacrifice at the Normandy American Cemetery, see Michael Dolski, *D-Day Remembered*, 164–67.

69. John J. Hamre, Remarks to the Society for the Honor Guard of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Fort Myer, Virginia, November 13, 1999, https://tombguard.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/John_Hamre_SHGTUS.pdf (accessed October 23, 2017).

70. Zoë Wool, *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 112.

71. Catherine Lutz distinguishes between “militarism” and “militarization,” explaining that “[t]he term militarism ... focuses attention on the political realm and suggests warlike values have an independent ability to drive social change, while militarization draws attention to the simultaneously material and discursive nature of military dominance.” Catherine Lutz, “Making War at Home in the United States: Militarization and the Current Crisis,” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 725. See also Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Catherine Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Bickford, *Fallen Elites*; David Vine, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2015).

72. A striking display of this symbolic status occurred when US Presidents Harding, Eisenhower and Reagan presided as father of the nation and titular “next of kin” over the burial rites for the unknown lost “sons” of World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War respectively. Wagner, “The Making and Unmaking of an Unknown Soldier,” 634.

73. Ross Poole, “Memory, History and the Claims of the Past” *Memory Studies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 152.

74. Hamre, Remarks to the Society for the Honor Guard.

75. In its 2011 report, “War and Sacrifice in the post-9/11 Era,” the Pew Research Center found that, “[m]ore than eight-in-ten (83%) say that members of the military and their families have had to make a lot of sacrifices, while only 43% say so about the American public. But among those whose responses rate the military’s sacrifice as greater than the public’s (47% of respondents), seven-in-ten see nothing unfair in this disparity. Rather, they agree that ‘it’s just part of being in the military.’”

76. The White House, “Remarks by the President at 95th National Convention for Disabled American Veterans,” August 1, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/01/remarks-president-95th-national-convention-disabled-american-veterans> (accessed October 23, 2017).

77. Pew Research Center, “War and Sacrifice in the post-9/11 Era.”

78. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (1950; New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 65.

79. See Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 24–25.

80. In its February 2015 Report to Congressional Committees, the US Government Accountability Office added the Department of Veterans Affairs to its High Risk List for its continued “failure to provide timely health care to veterans,” noting that “[i]n some cases, these delays or (VA’s failure to provide care at all) have reportedly harmed veterans.” For the full report, see: <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/668415.pdf> (accessed October 23, 2017).

81. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*; Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*; and Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique.” In mainstream media, see, for example, Gordon Lubold, Damian Paletta, and Ben Kesling on Trump’s pick of Marine General Michael Flynn as Nation Security Advisor, “Donald Trump’s Choice of Generals for Top Posts Raises Concerns,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trumps-choice-of-generals-for-top-posts-raises-concerns-1481157356> (accessed October 23, 2017). Flynn resigned his post on February 13, 2017. Bacevich views this “ongoing process of militarizing the presidency” as yet another feature of the “new American militarism.” Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 30.

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