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Decolonizing the British Army: a preliminary response

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On 25 May 2020, having been apprehended on suspicion of using a counterfeit US\$20 note, George Floyd was asphyxiated by a police officer kneeling on his neck, despite his pleas that he could not breathe.¹ Floyd's death provoked outrage across America and Europe, and spontaneous public demonstrations, declaring solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, took place in many towns and cities. In some cases, the statues of slavers, slave-owners or imperialists were forcibly removed or vandalized. Yet the protestors did not simply want the removal of some questionable public monuments; they demanded the dismantling of 'structural' or 'institutional' racism itself. Protestors called for 'decolonization'. They wanted public institutions across western countries to acknowledge their historical involvement in slavery and colonialism, to re-examine their current treatment of racial and ethnic minorities, and to question whether they had not, even if only accidentally, supported practices which, if not racist in intent, have had systematically discriminatory effects.

The British Army has, of course, not been immune to this pressure. On the contrary, following the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, General Sir Nick Carter, the Chief of the Defence Staff, declared:

<ext>Recent events have brought the issues of racism and discrimination sharply into focus. We owe it to our black, Asian and minority ethnic servicemen and women, who will be feeling concerned at the moment, to try to look at this from their perspective, to listen and to continue to make change happen.²<extend>

On 6 June 2020, Lieutenant-General Tyrone Urch, Commander Home Command and Champion of the British Army Black Asian Minority and Ethnic (BAME) Network, took the unprecedented step of posting a letter to his subordinates on the issue on Twitter:

* I am grateful to reviewers and to Colonel Karl Harris, BAME Network Chair, for their useful comments on this article.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gQYMBALDXc>. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 17 Dec. 2020.)

² Danielle Sheridan, 'Head of armed forces reveals "issues of racism" in military focused in wake of Black Lives Matter', *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/11/head-armed-forces-reveals-issues-racism-military-focused-wake/>.

<ext>As the Army commander responsible for training and recruiting, I am also determined{1} to improve BAME engagement and for the Army to appeal to every potential recruit, their friends and their families as an inclusive employer and a family that upholds the highest values and standards.³<extend>

Concurrently, the volunteer BAME Network conducted a study that lent substance to the CDS's statement and was received by the Chief of the General Staff and Army Board, through General Urch. The British Army is actively committing itself to a programme of 'decolonization'. It is investigating its culture and history, with the aim not just of advancing the non-discriminatory, multicultural policy which it has pursued for the last two decades, but of embracing an explicitly anti-racist agenda.⁴

The Army seems sincere. Yet what are the prospects for 'decolonizing' the Army, as advocated by generals such as Sir Nick Carter and Tyrone Urch? This article examines the issue. It considers the Army's policy on minority integration over the past two decades and acknowledges the successes of this programme. However, it also describes the persistence of both formal and informal racial discrimination. Above all, it identifies enduring obstacles in British military culture today which are likely to impede the Army's attempts at 'decolonization'.⁵ Three main obstacles to future anti-racist programmes in the Army seem apparent. First, most of its BAME soldiers today are foreign nationals rather than British citizens. The nationality of minority soldiers has facilitated discrimination and ensured that the Army remains unrepresentative of British society. Second, the vast majority of British soldiers are young, generating interactional dynamics in barracks which often exclude minority soldiers, especially foreign ones, even when there is no explicit racism at work.

³ <https://twitter.com/UrchTyrone/status/1269220860159811587/photo/1>.

⁴ For an early discussion of the concept of decolonization, see Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, 'The postcolonial moment in security studies', *Review of International Studies* 32: 2, 2006, pp. 329–52.

⁵ e.g. Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

Finally, the professional ideal of the British Army remains inevitably Anglo-Saxon, potentially disadvantaging minority soldiers.

This article cannot claim to be in any way definitive. Although the issue of anti-racism has been growing in importance in policy debates in recent years, the scale of the Black Lives Matter protests took most commentators by surprise. Given the import of the issue, an informed discussion about decolonization is imperative. However, the six months over which this article has been prepared^{2} is insufficient time to conduct the extensive interview and fieldwork research which the question of decolonization demands. Consequently, it has to be stated from the outset that this piece is not based on systematic empirical research. It is avowedly preliminary and speculative. It does not demonstrate its claims categorically. Rather, it forwards hypotheses about the three obstacles to minority integration outlined above on the basis of a general understanding of British Army culture, rather than detailed investigation. The argument is, at some points, impressionistic, based on inferences, not fully corroborated by facts.⁶ In short, the article takes some evidential risks, which readers are asked to recognize, in order to contribute to a vital policy debate. The article also fully acknowledges the British Army's central function: to defend the United Kingdom. Serving soldiers and most British citizens do not want to decolonize the Army at the expense of its military capabilities so that it can no longer fight. The Army must adopt an anti-racist policy which does not affect its operational effectiveness—and which may even enhance it. Even with the recent announcement of an increase in the defence budget, this will not be easy. The article, therefore, concludes by proposing a series of practicable measures by which the Army might integrate racial and ethnic minorities more effectively.

Before starting the analysis, it is necessary to define 'race' and 'racism'. Clearly, the concept of race is deeply controversial and much disputed; yet some clarification is required. While specific human races are surprisingly difficult to delineate absolutely, it is a biological fact that humans have differently coloured skins. Racism is normally understood as discrimination based primarily on skin colour. Precisely because skin colour is such an obvious physical feature, it has often been used very successfully in order to denigrate and exclude unfavoured populations. Nevertheless, despite its apparent obviousness, skin colour does not itself automatically determine exclusion; societies do not inevitably divide into separate communities on the basis of 'race'. Race becomes significant as a marker only as

⁶ I hope to conduct research in collaboration with the British Army in order to test the proposals forwarded here at a later date.

individuals invest it with meaning, uniting themselves as one ‘race’ against others. Biology is not destiny. In this account, racism is a form of cultural discrimination; it is better understood as a form of ‘ethnic boundary marking’ than as based on any biological categories. As such, it is contextual, contingent and strategic. In his analysis of ethnic and racial discrimination, the sociologist Andreas Wimmer has provided one of the clearest recent accounts of how racism operates as form of ethnic boundary work:

<ext>The ethnic boundary approach rests on the assumption that individuals behave strategically. They try to align themselves with certain individuals rather than others; they promote certain types of classification—of defining who is what—rather than others; and they do so in an attempt to gain recognition, power, or access to resources{3}.⁷<extend> Race is a tool of strategizing and local alliance-building. Sometimes race is called upon as a marker of group membership. It is one way in which groups unite themselves quite arbitrarily to their temporary collective advantage. For Wimmer, racial discrimination is a response to individuals’ experiences of institutional structures, alliance networks and power dynamics, rather than arising from primordial identities. This may be depressing. Yet, precisely because racism is a collective response to localized conditions, not an intrinsic disposition, it is possible to revise and reform it. By identifying the institutional context in which discriminatory social practices occur in the British Army today, it may be possible to overcome them and to develop a genuinely anti-racist military culture in the future.

Multicultural integration: 1998–2020

In order to assess the prospects for decolonization, it is necessary to have some understanding of the current ethnic and racial settlement in the Army. A brief history of minority integration is, therefore, required. The British Army has long employed troops from other racial or ethnic backgrounds than the predominant white Anglo-Saxon{4}, often raising regiments from the very peoples whom it had recently conquered. The Scottish and Irish have played a disproportionate role in the British Army throughout its history, for instance.⁸ Colonial troops helped maintain the empire in India, Africa and the Caribbean. These indigenous troops also

⁷ Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic boundary making: institutions, power, networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 44. See also Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: from the crusades to the twentieth century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Michael Banton, *Racial and ethnic competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁸ Hew Strachan, *The politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); Allan Mallinson, *The making of the British Army* (London: Bantam, 2009).

played a significant role in both world wars.⁹ Nevertheless, the British Army itself was historically always a white, Anglo-Saxon force. For instance, even at the end of the Cold War in 1990, when the British Army consisted of 160,000 personnel, under 1 per cent were from minority backgrounds.

However, in the 1990s the Army was forced to change its policy on the integration of minorities. Many commentators became concerned that, despite the United Kingdom's increasing diversity, there were very few minority soldiers in the Army. In addition, disturbing allegations of racial discrimination and harassment within the Army began to surface.¹⁰ Indeed, the situation was so bad that in 1994 the Commission for Racial Equality initiated a formal inquiry into the Household Cavalry Regiment after two egregious incidents of racist bullying.¹¹ As a result of these deplorable incidents, the Office of Public Management published a damning report of widespread racism in the armed forces in 1996¹², threatening the MoD with a non-discrimination notice. This notice was deferred only after the MoD agreed to work with the Commission for Racial Equality to implement a five-year action plan for equality across the armed forces.¹² The Defence Secretary at the time, John Reid, regarded minority integration as a priority. The subsequent 1998 Strategic Defence Review was explicit:

⁹ Tarak Barkawi, *Soldiers of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); David Killingray with M. Plant, *Fighting for Britain: African soldiers in the Second World War* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2010); Kaushik Roy, 'Race and recruitment in the Indian Army: 1880–1918', *Modern Asian Studies* 47: 4, 2013, pp. 1310–47; Kaushik Roy, 'The construction of regiments in the Indian Army, 1859–1913', *War in History* 8: 2, 2001, pp. 127–47; Daniel Marston, *Phoenix from the ashes: the Indian Army in the Burma campaign* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

¹⁰ Christopher Dandeker and David Mason, 'The British armed service and the participation of minority ethnic communities: from equal opportunities to diversity?', *Sociological Review* 49: 2, 2001, pp. 219–20.

¹¹ Vron Ware, *Military migrants: fighting for YOUR country* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 38. Commission for Racial Equality *Ministry of Defence (Household Cavalry): report of a formal investigation* No.17338 1996, https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28327675?seq=13#metadata_info_tab_contents

¹² Ware, *Military migrants*, p. 38; Commission for Racial Equality *Ministry of Defence (Household Cavalry)*.

<ext>We are determined that the armed forces should better reflect the ethnic composition of the British population. Currently some 6 per cent of the general population are from ethnic minority backgrounds, but they make up just 1 per cent of the Services. This must not continue. We have set a goal of attaining 2 per cent of new recruits this year from ethnic minorities for each Service. We want that goal to increase by 1 per cent each year, so that, eventually, the composition of our Armed Forces reflects that of the population as a whole.¹³ <extend>

The 1998 Strategic Defence Review was a watershed. As a result, the British Army committed itself to applying equality legislation and sought to reform its organizational culture, countering the widespread racism which had been such a daily feature of Army life up to that point. The most significant change involved recruitment policy. The Army actively sought to recruit ethnic minorities, in line with the intention set out in the Strategic Defence Review. Numerically, the Army was very successful in achieving its goals: in 2001, ethnic minority representation had increased to 2.4 per cent,¹⁴ and the figure continued to increase rapidly through the first decade of this century, so that by 2010 10 per cent of the Army was BAME. The Army had exceeded the ethnic and racial targets set by the 1998 Strategic Defence Review. This level of representation has been sustained to the present day. In the latest biennial MoD statistics, issued in October 2020, the Army recorded that 13.4 per cent of its regular personnel was BAME, which was far ahead of the RAF, at 3 per cent, and the Royal Navy (including the Royal Marines), at 4.8 per cent.¹⁵ The Army, with 81.4 per cent of all regular BAME personnel (10,744 soldiers), seems have done extremely well in terms of minority recruitment to meet its stated aim of reflecting the ethnic constitution of wider British society. An institution which throughout its history—and notwithstanding the historical contributions of imperial troops—had been Anglo-Saxon, has for the first time become a genuinely multicultural force.

The Army deserves some credit here. Strikingly, it achieved this objective at precisely the time when it was under extreme operational strain, committed to intense campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, whatever criticisms might be justifiably be made of the armed

¹³ Ministry of Defence (MoD), *Strategic Defence Review* (London, July 1998), para. 41.

¹⁴ Ware, *Military migrants*, p. 4.

¹⁵ MoD, *UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics 1 October 2020*,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/943009/Biannual_Diversity_Statistics_Publication_Oct20.pdf, 7.

forces at the strategic and operational levels, British units in Basra and Helmand, including many minority soldiers, performed well. Moreover, BAME soldiers often served with distinction on the front line. Private Johnson Beharry, a Grenadian, was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest gallantry award, for repeatedly rescuing his comrades during heavy fighting in Al Amarah in Iraq in March 2005; his was one of only four VCs awarded in the past two decades. Many other minority soldiers were decorated for gallantry during these campaigns. Fijian soldiers, in particular, have frequently been described as the ‘unsung heroes’ of the British Army.¹⁶

On the basis of this evidence, it would seem plausible to conclude that the multicultural experiment initiated in the 1990s has, broadly, worked. How has this integration been achieved? The British Army’s publication *Values and standards* provides useful evidence here.¹⁷ In Iraq, the British Army had been involved in several cases of abuse. In particular, the maltreatment of prisoners at Camp Breadbasket in Iraq in 2003 and the murder of Baha Mousa in 2004 had been deeply embarrassing incidents for the Army, tarnishing its reputation domestically and internationally.¹⁸ From then on, the Army was determined to ensure that its operations were conducted properly, with discipline and in line with the rules of engagement and laws of armed conflict. Senior generals in the Army became aware of a need to delineate a new ethos and impose it on soldiers more explicitly. Consequently, the British Army published its code of conduct, *Values and standards*, in 2008. This document identified six{7} values (courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity, loyalty, selfless commitment) and three standards (lawful, acceptable behaviour, professional). The values referred primarily to how soldiers should behave towards each other. The standards prescribed how soldiers should conduct themselves towards non-military personnel or enemy combatants, especially on operations.

However, *Values and standards* was also a response to the diversification of the Army—including, above all, to concerns about racial harassment. While the Army’s values certainly

¹⁶ ‘Fiji’s “unsung heroes” of UK army’, BBC News, 9 Nov. 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3996677.stm>.

¹⁷ Army Headquarters, *Values and standards of the British Army* (Andover, 2008), https://www.army.mod.uk/media/5219/20180910-values_standards_2018_final.pdf.

¹⁸ ‘Iraq abuse case soldiers jailed’, BBC News, 25 Feb. 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4296511.stm>; A. T. William, *A very British killing: the death of Baha Mousa* (London: Vintage, 2013).

spoke to traditional martial virtues of bravery and loyalty, they prioritized professional teamwork:

<ext>Effective and cohesive teams are the building blocks of operational success; when correctly formed, they can withstand considerable hardship and succeed. Foremost among the factors which makes teams effective is trust, both within the team and in the team's capability. Trust of this sort can only truly be secured if every team member is confident in the commitment and resolve of all other members of the team.¹⁹<extend>

Racism was seen as plainly antithetical to teamwork; it prevented competent soldiers, who just happened to be black or Asian, from performing their duties properly:

<ext>There is no place in the British Army for prejudice or discrimination, whether in person or online. Only by treating each other fairly and with respect, can we ensure that every officer and soldier in the Army fulfils their potential.²⁰<extend>

Values and standards concluded: 'You must judge people on their abilities and not on their race, religion or sex.'²¹ Reflecting the inclusive principles articulated in *Values and standards*, the British Army and the MoD have repeatedly reaffirmed its anti-discriminatory position whenever a case of harassment has come to light: 'As a modern and inclusive employer, the armed forces do not tolerate unacceptable behaviour in any form. Any allegations of inappropriate behaviour are taken extremely seriously and investigated thoroughly.'²² From the early 2000s, the British Army has been very clear; racism is incompatible with military professionalism and undermines operational effectiveness.²³ At the same time the Army, and the MoD, also enhanced disciplinary procedures against harassment and bullying. In 2013, the MoD published a new guideline against discrimination, Joint Service Publication (JSP) 763, *The MoD bullying and harassment complaints procedure*. This document aimed to simplify and accelerate complaints so that soldiers who

¹⁹ Army Headquarters, *Values and standards*, p. 6.

²⁰ Army Headquarters, *Values and standards*, p. 15.

²¹ British Army, *A soldier's values and standards* (Aldershot, n.d.), <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/our-people/a-soldiers-values-and-standards/.{?}>

²² Haroon Siddique, 'Ex-soldiers suffered degrading racial abuse in army, tribunal finds', *Guardian*, 16 Sept. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/16/ex-soldiers-suffered-degrading-racial-abuse-in-army-tribunal-finds>.

²³ For a longer discussion of military integration, see Alon Peled, *A question of loyalty* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

were subject to abuse would find it easier to highlight concerns. Unfortunately, the measures were not entirely successful. and in 2018 the Service Complaints Ombudsman Annual Report noted that female and BAME personnel were overrepresented in the bullying and harassment figures, which were themselves comparatively high. In 2018, females constituted 11 per cent of the armed forces and accounted for 23 per cent of the complaints, while BAME made up 7 per cent of the armed forces and 13 per cent of the complaints.²⁴ As a result, in July 2019 the MoD published a further policy paper, *Report on inappropriate behaviours*, written by Air Chief Marshall Wigston. The Wigston Report acknowledged that ‘the overwhelming view was that good behaviours are the norm’.²⁵ However, it highlighted significant cultural problems. Deliberate harassment had sometimes taken place. However, it noted the frequency of ‘behaviours rarely considered to be malicious, perpetrated by a lack of understanding’ which nevertheless constituted ‘microaggressions’.²⁶ The report highlighted three main problems: units sought to hide issues to protect their reputations; the chain of command was not normally culturally representative of subordinates; and there was a fear of reporting.²⁷ The Wigston Report therefore recommended a revision of JSP 763, accelerating the complaints procedure, and mandatory diversity training. Both JSP 763 and the Wigston Report concentrated on problems; they sought to rectify situations where mistakes and transgressions had occurred. Nevertheless, despite their disciplinary rather than exhortatory function, both documents highlighted a new ethos for the armed forces, including the British Army. In a professional force, arbitrary discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity was not simply unjust; it also undermined the operational effectiveness of the Army. From the mid-2000s through to 2020, about 10 per cent of the Army has been recruited from minority backgrounds. Under the principle of enhanced professionalism, the multicultural project has been broadly successful.

Obstacles to decolonization

The Army’s successes should be acknowledged. Yet, despite the adoption of *Values and standards* and the reinforcement of disciplinary procedures, it is very obvious that problems of discrimination have remained prevalent. For instance, following the Black Lives Matter protests, a former British soldier, Joseph Higgins, was interviewed by ITV News. He had

²⁴ MoD, *Report on inappropriate behaviours* (London, 2018), p. 8.

²⁵ MoD, *Report on inappropriate behaviours*, p. 10.

²⁶ MoD, *Report on inappropriate behaviours*, p. 10.

²⁷ MoD, *Report on inappropriate behaviours*, pp. 11–15.

served apparently happily for six and a half years in the Royal Artillery between 2007 and 2012, including deployments to Afghanistan. Yet he declared that in the light of the recent Black Lives Matter protests, he could ‘no longer stay silent’ about discrimination in the Army because ‘racism is all over the British Army’.²⁸ Illustrating his point, there have been three major harassment cases in the last two years. In 2018, Nkulukeko Zulu, a South African, and Hani Gue, a Ugandan, were awarded damages for discrimination they had suffered when they served with the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. These soldiers had joined the battalion in 2008 and 2012 respectively and had served apparently successfully; Zulu had been promoted to lance-corporal. However, on 23 January 2017, photographs on Gue’s door had been defaced with swastikas and a Hitler moustache.²⁹ On another photo, the images of Gue and Zulu had been marked with racial graffiti. Zulu and Gue took the Army to court. The judge concluded that in both cases, a member of 3 Para must have vandalized the photographs, and awarded in favour of the plaintiffs for racial discrimination. This case was extreme but it was not unique. In February 2019, Lance-Corporal Inoke Momonakaya, a Fijian, was awarded £490,000 from the MoD in compensation for the racism which he had suffered while serving with the 2nd Battalion, Duke of Lancashire Regiment. Forced always to play the Taliban on exercises, he was subjected to racial stereotyping and verbal bullying; and, while in Cyprus, a sergeant-major named a unit mascot, a doll of a black troll with frizzy hair, ‘Momo’.³⁰ In November 2019, an employment tribunal ruled in favour of Sergeant Randy Date, who had been mistaken for another soldier{8} in his training wing, Sergeant

²⁸ Antoine Allen, ‘Racism “brushed under the carpet”’, says former British soldier who proudly served his country’, ITV News, 2 July 2020, <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2020-07-02/racism-brushed-under-the-carpet-says-former-british-soldier-who-proudly-served-his-country>.

²⁹ Siddique, ‘Ex-soldiers suffered degrading racial abuse’.

³⁰ The Service Complaints Commission had not, in fact, upheld his complaints, so Momonakaya had taken the MoD to court. Following this case, the Ombudsman, Nicole Williams, warned that racism was occurring with ‘increasing and depressing frequency’, and that the Service Complaints Commission was ‘not efficient, effective or fair’{?}, The Guardian ‘Racist Incidents on Rise in British Army, warns ombudsman’ 19 December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/19/racist-incidents-on-rise-in-british-army-warns-ombudsman>. It was substantially in response to this intervention that the Wigston Report had been conducted.

Masoud Rashid, simply because both were black and, therefore, it was implied, looked the same to the officers involved.³¹ These cases demonstrate that racism and bullying still occur regularly in the Army.

Racial discrimination and harassment obviously obstruct the programme of decolonization and will have to be eliminated if the Army is to achieve this goal. Why, then, have discrimination and bullying continued to occur despite the Army's efforts? In some cases, there is evidence of overt and committed racism on the part of soldiers. The case of Nkulukeko Zulu and Hani Gue is instructive here. For instance, it was acknowledged in court that a sergeant, who has since left the army, referred to Zulu with a grave racial epithet in front of his platoon in 2014. In July 2017, members of 3 Para posted a photograph of personnel on Facebook with a Nazi flag as a backdrop. Photographs of members of 3 Para with the far-right activist{9} Tommy Robinson, were also later posted on Facebook.

Sadly, there are racist soldiers in the British Army, then. This kind of abuse is very serious, but it is also relatively easy to identify and punish, precisely because it is so overt. However, for the most part, racial discrimination has, as the Wigston Report makes clear, operated at a lower level. Informal culture and instinctive everyday practice represent a major and perhaps even the most serious impediment to anti-racism. It is precisely these subtle, everyday aggressions which the Army will need address in order to 'decolonize' itself. Of course, this kind of discrimination operates in numerous different ways, not all of which can be individually recorded. However, it is possible to identify three main informal, cultural obstacles to the full integration of minority soldiers.

Foreign and Commonwealth recruitment

On the face of it, the Army's integration of minority of soldiers in the past two decades has been resoundingly successful. Yet, on closer inspection, the process of integration has been far more ambiguous. The 1998 Strategic Defence Review directive envisaged the increased enlistment of BAME soldiers who were domiciled UK citizens, with the aim of making the British armed forces reflect the increasing diversity of the British population and thereby better connecting the armed forces with British society and its people. The Army could, therefore, be truly representative only if it recruited British citizens who were already part of that society. However, the actual process of diversification in the Army ran counter to this

³¹ East London Employment Tribunal judgment, case no. 3200974/2018, Nov. 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ddfaa16ed915d016a77f57f/Mr_Randy_Date_v_MOD_-_Case_No_3200974_2018_-_Judgment.pdf.

policy. In the past two decades, the Army has failed to increase significantly the number of BAME British citizens recruited.

Indeed, the Army has often remained an unattractive employer to ethnic and racial minorities in the UK. One of the fundamental problems seems to have been that many minorities in the UK still view the Army as racist. For instance, in 2003, Asifa Hussain published an article on discrimination and recruitment in the British armed forces. He cited a survey in which minority respondents were asked why they felt ethnic minorities in the UK were not joining the armed forces, to which 42 per cent responded that racism was the principal reason: 'Fear of racial discrimination is at the heart of the disinclination of minority ethnic people to join the armed forces.'³² On this account, 'the forces need to{10} show ethnic minorities that they are open to people who have different cultures and traditions'.³³ Other scholars at the time noted some of the more subtle cultural obstacles that seem to have impeded the enrolment of British minorities in the armed forces. Because of its imperial history, the Army may alienate the descendants of ethnic groups who might have been its colonial victims.³⁴ If anything, this sense of alienation has only increased in the past decade. With the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Britain and the controversial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, some British Muslims have not just been alienated by racism within the military, but have become vehemently opposed to the British Army and its foreign campaigns.

In the light of the difficulties of recruiting British minority soldiers, the Army adopted a different strategy in the early 2000s: it turned to the Commonwealth to fill its ranks.³⁵ While ethnic minorities in the UK might have been indifferent or even hostile to the Army, there were many attractions to British military service for Foreign and Commonwealth recruits. Notwithstanding problems of racism, the Army offered stable, well-paid employment, and training, as well as the possibility of a British passport. In comparison with the labour market and living conditions prevailing in their home nations, enlistment was a potentially good choice for these recruits. Consequently, by the middle of the 2000s, the British Army was actually overwhelmed with applications from overseas: by 2005, numbers had risen by 3,000 per cent{11}. Indeed, there was some public concern that the British Army was becoming a

³² Asifa Hussain, 'Careers in the British armed forces: a black African Caribbean viewpoint', *Journal of Black Studies* 33: 3, 2003, p. 317.

³³ Hussain, 'Careers in the British armed forces', pp. 327.

³⁴ Dandeker and Mason, 'The British armed service', p. 230.

³⁵ Ware, *Military migrants*, p. 67.

‘foreign legion’.³⁶ As a result of its unexpected success in recruiting Foreign and Commonwealth nationals, the British Army eventually imposed quotas. On 3 February 2009, the Defence Secretary, John Hutton, ruled that, in the interests of operational effectiveness, no more than 15 per cent of any regiment or corps could consist of non-UK citizens; at that time, the Royal Logistics Corps, the Royal Army Dental Corps and the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps all exceeded that figure.³⁷

Despite the quota introduced in 2009, the majority of BAME soldiers in the British Army over the last two decades have been Foreign and Commonwealth nationals, not British citizens, and even today a very large proportion of minority soldiers in the British Army are not UK nationals. The data on ethnicity and race is difficult to gather and so even the official statistics are unlikely to be completely accurate. Nevertheless, in October 2020, 13,200 regular service personnel in the British armed forces were identified as from ethnic minority backgrounds; 60.2 per cent were British citizens, while 39.8 per cent were recorded as foreign.³⁸ Since the Army recruited practically all the Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers who serve in the UK, the national-foreign ratio is slightly higher in this service. Of the 10,000 minority soldiers in the Army in 2020, about 5,000 were of Foreign and Commonwealth extraction; that is about 50 per cent of all minority soldiers. Confirming that the proportion of minority soldiers in the British Army remains high, in the period September 2019 to September 2020, ‘the proportion of BAME personnel of a non-UK nationality joining the UK Regular Forces increased from 52.6% to 65.3%, against the same time period last year’, almost all of whom became soldiers.³⁹ Up to the end of 2017, official statistics show that non-British BAME soldiers were in the clear majority. Indeed, for most of the period from 2000 to the present, Foreign and Commonwealth minority soldier comprised approximately 60 per cent – and sometimes more - of the BAME total. About 6 per cent of regular soldiers are now from UK minority backgrounds. It is an advance on the 1980s, but much less than is suggested by the headline figures. In the first two decades of this century, the British Army has become a multicultural force only by enlisting Foreign and Commonwealth troops.

³⁶ Michael Evans, ‘How British Army is fast becoming foreign legion’, *The Times*, 14 Nov. 2005, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-british-army-is-fast-becoming-foreign-legion-p22tsnn53s2>.

³⁷ Ware, *Military migrants*, p. 85.

³⁸ MoD, *UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics 1 October 2020*, 7.

³⁹ MoD, *UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics 1 October 2020*, 8.

As their operational record shows, these soldiers have played an important role in the Army in the past two decades. Nevertheless, the very success of the Foreign and Commonwealth strategy has generated frictions. For instance, in some cases, especially in intelligence, foreign soldiers have lower security clearances than UK citizens, so they have been unable to perform their duties fully. Their recruitment may also hamper decolonization. In a professional force, training is paramount. Soldiers are united primarily by the inculcation of common drills. In the past two decades, many scholars have therefore claimed that informal interaction away from professional soldiering is of little importance to combat performance.⁴⁰ There is good evidence for this. Yet even in a professional army, the informal domain remains an important subsidiary sphere which contributes to small unit cohesion and, therefore, combat effectiveness. Professional soldiers who know each other well and are friends are more highly motivated to fight for one another. Consequently, highly cohesive ‘core groups’, consisting of soldiers who are personally committed to one another, are crucial to combat performance. Certainly, professional soldiers have accepted comrades into ‘core groups’ only once they have proved themselves professionally competent. Military

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Kier, ‘Homosexuality in the US military: open integration and combat effectiveness’, *International Security* 23: 2, 1998, pp. 5–39; Robert MacCoun, Elizabeth Kier and Aaron Belkin, ‘Does social cohesion determine motivation in combat? An old question with an old answer’, *Armed Forces and Society* 32: 4, July 2006, pp. 646–54; Robert MacCoun, ‘What is known about unit cohesion and military performance?’, in Bernard Rostker and Scott Harris (eds.) *Sexual orientation and US military personnel policy: options and assessment. National Defense Research Institute Study* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1993), 283–329; William Hix and Robert MacCoun ‘Cohesion and performance’, in **Bernard Rostker, Susan Hosek, John D. Winkler (eds.)** *Sexual orientation and US military policy: an update of RAND’s 1993 study* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010); Eyal Ben-Ari, Zev Lehrer, Uzi Ben-Shalom and Ariel Vainer, *Rethinking the sociology of combat: Israel’s combat units in the Al-Aqsa intifada* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010); Uzi Ben-Shalom, Zeev Lehrer and Eyal Ben-Ari, ‘Cohesion during military operations: a field study on combat units in the Al-Aqsa intifada’, *Armed Forces and Society* 32: 1, 2005, pp. 63–79.

friendships are not the same as civilian ones. Yet once these groups have been formed, the intense bonds within them have motivated soldiers.⁴¹

Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers have often proved themselves highly professionally competent. Yet however professionally competent Nepalese, Grenadian or Fijian soldiers might be, it is often more difficult for them to integrate into these core groups and, therefore, to form close friendships with British soldiers. Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers sometimes speak English as a second language. Even those who are native speakers often speak with a foreign accent, which contrasts with the local patois that British soldiers employ and expect. There are also often marked cultural differences between Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers and British nationals. For instance, Fijian soldiers come from a more patriarchal culture. Some have had more difficulty in accepting female superiors. Others have found certain aspects of British culture troubling, lacking respect, even morality.⁴²

Apparently small linguistic and cultural differences have therefore hampered their full integration.

Theoretically, the British Army might have forced its soldiers to socialize with each other, compelling them into inclusive core groups whatever their backgrounds. The French Foreign Legion has effectively imposed a regime of this sort on its troops. The Legion was established in 1831 in order to defend the French empire, especially in North Africa. For most of its history, it recruited adventurers, criminals and deserting soldiers from other European armies. Today, it has many recruits from Russia and the former Soviet republics. Precisely because it is so multinational, the Legion has imposed a common culture upon its soldiers. It regards foreign subcultural groups, which it denigrates as ‘mafias’, as an existential threat to its integrity. Consequently, it polices these groupings rigorously with a draconian discipline, even in the informal domain. Legionnaires not only train together, but they must also speak in French, eat, sing and live together. Commensality and conviviality are requirements in the Legion.⁴³ The result is a fully integrated, if inflexible, force. The British Army may have recruited large numbers of foreign soldiers but, unlike the French Foreign Legion, it has not insisted on cultural conformity. There have doubtlessly been some

⁴¹ Anthony King, ‘Combat effectiveness in the small infantry unit: beyond the primary group thesis’, *Security Studies* 25: 4, 2016, pp. 688–728.

⁴² Ware, *Military migrants*, p. 153.

⁴³ Mikaela Sundberg, *A sociology of a total organisation: atomistic unity in the French Foreign Legion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

benefits to this approach; it certainly reflects the less authoritarian and more nonconformist culture of the British Army. Yet it has potentially limited the integration of foreign soldiers. As a result of the informal social barriers which separate them from British soldiers, Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers have often tended to form their own exclusive friendship circles. It is noticeable, for instance, that they often eat together in small groups, separately from their white peers, in dining facilities.⁴⁴ This is a widely observed phenomenon. In her work on black soldiers in the Dutch Army in Bosnia and Kosovo in 1999–2000, Liora Sion observed the experiences of black and Asian Dutch soldiers from the former colonies of Molucca, Surinam, Antilles and Guyana. These soldiers suffered severe discrimination even on operations. As a result, in Bosnia and Sarajevo, they combined to form localized communities. Black Caribbean Dutch soldiers preferred their own ethnic group for company, but also united with other foreigners, while ‘ethnic Dutch’ soldiers were their least favourite companions.⁴⁵ The British Army has rarely seen this level of discrimination between ethnic groups. Indeed, on operations in Helmand and Basra, soldiers of all ethnic backgrounds were closely integrated. Yet the contours of ethnic and racial differentiation have persisted in the informal domain, especially in training and barracks. Sometimes, foreign soldiers can be ‘resented for keeping to themselves’.⁴⁶ Precisely because most minority soldiers in the British Army are foreign, it is simply more difficult for them to enter core groups than for their British peers. Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers have often served faultlessly as soldiers, but they have not always been accepted as close professional comrades.

This may be significant. It is very noticeable that all the recent major cases of racial discrimination have involved Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers. Other cases of discrimination in the past decade or so have similarly involved Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers. Kerry Hylton, a Jamaican national who served in the Welsh Guards, was awarded £22,000 for racist bullying in January 2008. In 2008, Tileria DeBique, from St Vincent, took the MoD to court for discrimination; she had been dismissed for repeatedly failing to fulfil her duties. She had a child in 2005 and had subsequently found it impossible to cope with the demands of service, as a single mother. In her deposition, she explicitly stated that because of immigration laws she had been unable to bring her sister over from the Caribbean to provide

⁴⁴ Ware, *Military migrants*, p. 101. This accords with the author’s own observations.

⁴⁵ Liora Sion, ‘Ethnic minorities and brothers in arms; competition and homophily’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39: 4, 2016, pp. 2501-4.

⁴⁶ Ware, *Military migrants*, p. 153.

child-care support.⁴⁷ The discrimination that some Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers have experienced is inexcusable and is in direct contradiction with the Army's *Values and standards*. Yet the alien status of many of these soldiers seems to have created a divide between them and Anglo-Saxon colleagues. Cultural differences appear to have given rise to a social environment in which marginalization and, therefore, discrimination have been more likely to occur. The Army has been very successful in recruiting Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers, who have often served very well. Yet if, in line with the decolonizing agenda, the Army wants to integrate minorities completely and to represent British society, the policy of foreign recruitment may be problematic.

Youth culture

The integration of BAME and, especially, Foreign and Commonwealth minority soldiers may have been further complicated by the employment profile of the British Army. It is possible that the social background of its recruits has impeded minority integration. The Army recruits some soldiers from quite deprived backgrounds. Racial discrimination, interpersonal abuse and aggression are often integral parts of the cultural repertoires which these soldiers have experienced outside the Army. Consequently, conditioned by their civilian lives, soldiers have employed abuse, including racialized abuse, when serving in it. Sometimes, racism is explicit; at other time, abuse involves no explicit racist element. British soldiers may well employ a racist term against a minority colleague without intending to create a genuinely discriminatory environment. As the Wigston Report noted, many microaggressions can be quite innocently perpetrated.

Yet while the civilian backgrounds and childhood socialization of British soldiers may obstruct integration, the highly particularistic institutional conditions that govern life in the British Army are probably more immediately relevant. As Andreas Wimmer has argued, racial discrimination is best explained by competitive local conditions, rather than inevitable biological divides.⁴⁸ It is, therefore, worth examining the British Army as an organization. When doing so, one striking feature emerges immediately: the British Army has a very unusual age profile. In stark contrast to civilian organizations, its workforce is very young, with a sharp declining gradient across its age cohorts. Most soldiers are in their twenties, and there are very few military personnel aged over 50. In 2020, 35,000 or 42 per of the Army's

⁴⁷ Her case was not upheld, but it usefully shows the increased obstacles to integration that exist for foreign soldiers.

⁴⁸ Wimmer, *Ethnic boundary making*.

soldiers were under 25 years of age; 65,000 soldiers or 79 per cent were under 30.⁴⁹ It seems probable that the very youthfulness of British soldiers contributes to racial exclusion. If sociological studies of youth culture are correct, young people are highly sensitive to their peers.⁵⁰ Even more than older people, they crave status and aspire—and need—to be recognized as members of a peer group. Young people, therefore, form friendship groups very quickly and easily. However, the necessary corollary of in-group formation is exclusion. Young people are highly sensitive to the risk of exclusion, and the insecurity it engenders impels them to adopt the strategies most likely to allow them to integrate. They become adept at imitating one another, adopting the same clothing, mannerisms and values; they conform with one another. Consequently, individuals can be excluded by their peers on the basis of even the smallest anomaly in appearance, language, posture or behaviour.

The conformism of young people is immediately relevant to the integration of Foreign and Commonwealth minority soldiers into the Army. In the alien and sometimes intimidating environment of a barracks, young soldiers have every motivation to congregate rapidly into groups, which close themselves off to outsiders. The speed of group formation in these situations is often striking.⁵¹ In his famous discussion of status groups (upon which Wimmer's theory of boundary marking is based), Max Weber noted that would-be members of a status group identified certain commonly shared characteristics: 'race, language, religion, local or social origin, descent, residence etc.'. ⁵² Weber himself emphasized the role of mere convenience in this selection: 'It does not matter which characteristic is chosen in the

⁴⁹ D. Clark, 'Number of personnel employed in the armed forces of the United Kingdom in 2020, by age', *Statista*, 28 July 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/580534/number-of-personnel-in-uk-armed-forces-by-age/>.

⁵⁰ See e.g. William Foote Whyte, *Street corner society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance through rituals* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006); Gary Fine, *With the boys* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Paul Willis, *Learning to labour* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁵¹ For a classic study of barrack culture, see John Hockey, *Squaddies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

⁵² Max Weber, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology*, vol. 1, trans. G. Rother and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 341–2.

individual case: whatever suggests itself most *easily*{12} is seized upon.’⁵³ Weber’s pragmatic process of status group formation is very evident among young British soldiers, both during training and within their units. Young Anglo-Saxon soldiers coalesce into exclusive groups along the lines of least cultural resistance, as Wimmer would predict. They seize on what is most obviously shared by them as a basis for ‘exclusive social intercourse’.⁵⁴ Their immediate military experiences are crucial here; they are bound together by training and their regimental identities. Yet ‘banal’, indigenous cultural resources also unite them: their football teams, their local city, video games, music and television programmes all play a role in uniting young soldiers.⁵⁵ Foreign BAME soldiers are at a clear disadvantage here; they are not British. They have no experience of the vernacular culture. It is therefore more difficult for British soldiers to interact with them than with native colleagues. Consequently, young British soldiers are funnelled towards one another by interactional dynamics. While a common culture facilitates the friendships of British soldiers with each other, minor linguistic and cultural differences obstruct interactions with foreign soldiers.

Race, as skin colour, almost certainly plays a role here, but not necessarily in a simple instrumental way. In line with Wimmer’s account, British soldiers may not instinctively reject an alternative skin colour itself. Rather, in the lifeworld of the barracks, skin colour comes to denote cultural and linguistic difference, and therefore to indicate that social interaction may be more difficult and effortful with a minority soldier, who is likely to be from overseas. Skin colour is not an inevitable racial divide, but it becomes an ‘ethnic boundary marker’.⁵⁶ It is important to try to see the situation from the perspective of young British soldiers. If they invest in more time-consuming interactions with their foreign colleagues, who happen to have a different skin colour, that may lead to their exclusion from Anglo-Saxon groups of which they could more easily become members—and which are, all the time, forming behind their backs. Everyday social dynamics in the barracks may, then, give rise to an unintentional racial division. It is very noticeable that many white soldiers from South Africa, Australia, Ireland and Zimbabwe have integrated unproblematically. For

⁵³ Weber, *Economy and society*, p. 342 (emphasis added){?}. Emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Weber, *Economy and society*, p. 342. For further discussion of status groups, see Randall Collins, *Weberian sociological theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 125–33.

⁵⁵ Michael Billig, *Banal nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

⁵⁶ Wimmer, *Ethnic boundary making*, p.44.

some actively racist soldiers, skin colour itself may be the critical criterion here. Yet South African, Australian, Irish and Zimbabwean{13} soldiers are more likely to share the same language and Anglo-Saxon culture with British soldiers. The cultural barriers to interaction are lower for them, and they are therefore able to pass as nationals far more easily than Fijian, Nepalese or Grenadian soldiers. Moreover, there are far fewer of them; less than one per cent of white soldiers are foreign nationals.⁵⁷

The youthfulness of the Army's soldiery may, then, impede inclusive commensality and conviviality. The failure of soldiers to socialize easily with one another in the informal domain may seem trivial, but is in fact a very significant problem. Unfortunately, precisely because foreign minority soldiers are often excluded from core Anglo-Saxon groups, congregating into separate ethnic subgroupings, it is more likely that they will be subjected to criticisms and complaints. Anglo-Saxon soldiers do not know them so well, and so are likely to misunderstand their actions more easily. The informal avenues of explanation and mitigation that exist for white British soldiers are simply not open to foreign soldiers who are not in these networks; and so foreign soldiers cannot justify their actions in the way that a white British national might be able to. Professional standards may, subsequently, be applied more harshly to them.

The Anglo-Saxon ideal

Since 2000, the British Army has earnestly sought to reform itself into a highly professional, multicultural force. Under *Values and standards*, it has encouraged soldiers to accept each other as fellow professionals. Yet—of course—the standards of professionalism are not completely objective. Professional ideals are still inevitably infused with historical presumptions. There is no reason to presume that the British Army's definition of professionalism is essentially or irremediably racist. On the contrary, against easy attributions of racist stereotypes, Gurkha soldiers are certainly prized as outstandingly professional and competent British soldiers. Johnson Beharry plainly represents contemporary British military heroism at its finest. Yet through history, expectation, presumption and practice, the concept of professionalism continues to coalesce around a certain racial and ethnic ideal. The most famous British soldiers have been white British men: Churchill, Wellington, Montgomery, Bagnall. After all, for almost its entire history the British Army was composed of white soldiers drawn from the homeland, and even today 85 per cent of the force remains white. The ideal of British military professionalism, consequently and inevitably, remains an Anglo-

⁵⁷ MoD, *UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics 1 October 2020*, 7.

Saxon man. The pragmatic assumption is that a professional British soldier will be a young white male.

Although understandable, this is not optimal for minority soldiers; they do not easily correspond to this ideal. Their predicament here is compatible with that of female soldiers. Although females can now formally serve in the ground combat arms, they have still faced obstructions due to enduring gender stereotypes. Precisely because most soldiers have been and are men, it is difficult for females in the combat arms to conform to the military ideal. In order to be accepted as professional soldiers, they have often been forced to turn themselves into 'honorary men'.⁵⁸ It is not enough to be competent; they have to desexualize themselves. This has proved difficult for them. BAME soldiers, especially those from Foreign and Commonwealth countries, confront a similar challenge. Since professionalism is also a racially informed concept, they may be disadvantaged in relation to their white peers. Even if they perform their duties as well as a white soldier, it is likely that their performances will be judged more harshly than those of their Anglo-Saxon colleagues. Racial and ethnic value judgements are likely to creep surreptitiously into assessments of them, as with those of women. BAME Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers are likely to be severely disadvantaged here, for it will be almost impossible for them to adopt the vernacular codes of behaviour that are so deeply inscribed in Anglo-Saxon culture. BAME soldiers need to pass as 'honorary Anglo-Saxons' in order to be fully integrated into the Army. That is not impossible; but any programme of decolonization has to recognize the particular challenges which minority soldiers may face in their service.

Conclusion

Since 2000, the British Army has become multicultural. Despite a number of documented problems, 10 per cent of the force is now from a BAME background. The Army has integrated minority soldiers even as it fought two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This achievement needs to be acknowledged. However, the question remains whether, in the coming years, the Army can 'decolonize' itself, while retaining operational effectiveness. Will it be able to eliminate enduring patterns of racial discrimination to become a fully integrated and more representative force?

This article has identified three obstacles to decolonization. First, the Army became multicultural only by recruiting minority soldiers from Foreign and Commonwealth

⁵⁸ Anthony King, 'The female soldier' *European Journal of International Relations* 22: 1, 2016, pp. 122–43.

countries. Yet, precisely because most of its BAME soldiers have not been British, integration has been more difficult for them; thus complete integration has been compromised by the Army's own recruitment policy, and the employment of foreign soldiers has left unresolved the problem of the British Army's relations to ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom. Second, because the vast majority of its soldiers are young and white, their presumptions and upbringings have generated interactional dynamics in barracks that often result in the exclusion of foreign BAME soldiers, even if only accidentally. Finally, the professional ideal of the Army remains—understandably—Anglo-Saxon. In order to advance the programme of anti-racism in the near future, the Army will need to resolve or at least mitigate these three tensions. The Army needs to recruit more soldiers from British minorities, integrate them more completely into the force, and link the force more closely to the increasingly diverse British society. How will it do this?

There are, of course, a huge number of possible reforms the Army might implement. General Urch and his BAME network are currently identifying the most promising. However, if the preliminary analysis proposed here is even remotely plausible, there seem to be three obvious strategies which the Army might implement almost immediately. The Army can do little to change the civilian culture from which it recruits. However, it must continue to institute an anti-discriminatory culture through the promotion of military professionalism under *Values and standards*. It must seek to change the presumptions which some of its soldiers have learned in childhood. And at the same time, it must pursue overt cases of racism with force: bullying, harassment and discrimination have to be combated on a daily basis. In fact, especially under the leadership of General Sir Nick Carter, it is apparent that the Army has taken cases of racist abuse increasingly seriously. The prosecution of racist discrimination demonstrates that the policy of integration is serious. It signals to potential British minority recruits that the Army will not tolerate racism and may make the Army more attractive to them.

Prosecution is important, but it is a negative sanction. The Army also needs to embrace a positive vision of inclusion. The heavy recruitment of Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers has involved significant risks. Precisely because Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers are not British citizens, their integration has been more challenging than the incorporation of black or Asian soldiers who are domiciled UK citizens, and they cannot connect the Army with indigenous British society. In order to overcome these problems, the Army should increase the number of British minority soldiers—with urgency. In its recent controversial but successful 'Snowflake Generation' publicity campaign, it has sought to do this. These

advertisements have been explicitly directed at British youth, including racial and ethnic minorities. Their reception has been mixed, engendering discriminatory responses in some quarters, but they might represent a starting point. It is unlikely that the partial displacement of Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers by UK citizens will eliminate all racism in the Army, especially among those soldiers who are committed racists. Yet the recruitment of minority British citizens, who have grown up in the same towns and cities as their comrades, attended the same schools, follow the same celebrities and support the same football teams, is likely to facilitate interaction and friendships between them. Race might still be a salient signifier, but a shared civic nationality might reduce discrimination.

Finally, as the Army recruits more minority British citizens, it should also look carefully at the roles to which these troops are assigned. Many Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers have been recruited into the combat service support branches, the Royal Logistics Corps or the Royal Army Dental Corps. These corps provide a vital function for the Army; but they are not high-status regiments, with influence over the dominant professional ideal. In order to develop the ideal of military professionalism, the Army should look to recruit outstanding BAME candidates into the most prominent and prestigious regiments: the Guards, the Household Cavalry, the Parachute Regiment, the Rifles and, of course, the special forces. Of course, as the Zulu and Gue cases show, the incorporation of ethnic minorities into the most famous regiments does not in itself guarantee successful integration. Yet the regular presence of excellent BAME personnel in these regiments is most likely to influence the soldiers' ideal of what a professional British soldier looks like.

In addition, in order to alter the ideal of British military professionalism, it will be important that black and Asian soldiers take on leadership positions. Since it takes the Army about 15 years to cultivate a sergeant and 25 to develop a general, the most effective short-term strategy here is to commission more black and Asian British citizens into the officer corps, expanding their numbers at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Simply by commissioning more UK citizens who happen to be from minority backgrounds, the British Army will immediately diversify its commanders and leaders. The Army should, then, actively recruit outstanding minority students from schools and universities as potential officers; and it would be useful if these individuals were commissioned into elite regiments. As scholars have shown, there is a close correlation between regimental affiliation and eventual promotion to the highest levels of the Army, so the commissioning of black and Asian British officers into these favoured regiments might accelerate their advancement to

positions of senior leadership.⁵⁹ These suggestions are not exclusive. Other policies might also facilitate the deeper integration to which the Army aspires. Of course, even if implemented, the success of these reforms will take time. Yet, in addressing the contradictions which have hindered the Army's multicultural policy, they may be an effective way of ensuring that Army becomes truly integrated in the next decade. Certainly, the Army no longer has the option of continuing on the path it has followed for the past twenty years.

⁵⁹ Keith Macdonald, 'Black mafia, loggies and going for the stars: the military elite revisited', *Sociological Review* 52: 1, 2004, pp. 106–35; Keith Macdonald, 'The persistence of an elite: the case of British Army officer cadets', *Sociological Review* 28: 3, 1980, pp. 635–9; Randall von Zugbach, *Power and prestige in the British Army* (Aldershot: Gower, 1988).