The Politics of War Commemoration in the UK and Russia

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The nascent field of Memory Studies emerges from contemporary trends that include a shift from concern with historical knowledge of events to that of memory, from 'what we know' to 'how we remember it'; changes in generational memory; the rapid advance of technologies of memory; panics over declining powers of memory, which mirror our fascination with the possibilities of memory enhancement; and the development of trauma narratives in reshaping the past.

These factors have contributed to an intensification of public discourses on our past over the last thirty years. Technological, political, interpersonal, social and cultural shifts affect what, how and why people and societies remember and forget. This groundbreaking series tackles questions such as: What is 'memory' under these conditions? What are its prospects, and also the prospects for its interdisciplinary and systematic study? What are the conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools for its investigation and illumination?

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Preface

Wars do not simply vanish when politicians sign truces and weapons are set aside. Instead, society re-imagines the experience of wars during annual ceremonies of war commemoration. The power of this annual ritual lies in its ability to incite strong feelings and emotions. Remembrance emerges as an overwhelming emotional urge and the ultimate moral duty to the memory of fallen soldiers. There is a sense that only through the ritual of commemoration can we express compassion for the dead and for those that they left behind, and somehow repay our debt to the fallen. However, this debt seems never-ending, as every year we pledge ourselves to the same ritual of recommitment in our duty to remember.

The most peculiar aspect of our relationship with the fallen is a powerful, yet often unarticulated, pressure exerted by the ritual itself. It demands conformity and passionate participation; it does not accept any doubts or wavering. This power of conformity tells us that the ritual of war commemoration entails something more than remembrance of the lost lives of fallen soldiers. War commemoration reflects our own deepest desires for unity, belonging and continuity of a national story; it shapes our identities and defines our political choices. These choices reflect how we remember the fallen of the two World Wars, but they also affect our responses to modern conflicts. Here, the figure of a fallen soldier is understood as a powerful cultural construction that frames our responses to modern warfare and changes in the military profession and civil–military relations. The mass media, memorials and rituals of commemoration are seen as key sites for the collective recommitment to the memory of the dead and towards the living – from veterans to the national armed forces and the nation-state.

This study compares modern facets of war commemoration in both Britain and Russia. Both societies immerse themselves annually in commemorative spectacles of recommitment. In Britain, this recommitment occurs on 11 November, revolving around the legacy of the First World War. In Russia, society on 9 May confirms its duty to remember the fallen of the Second World War. In both cases, the collective re-imaginings of these wars do not exist on their own. The recalling of the memories and myths of the World Wars revives the power of nationalism, and reinstates commitments to the national armed forces and to the nation,

albeit in a fundamentally different way. This comparison suggests that differences in political regimes or war experiences do not necessarily send different messages. The annual ritual of war commemoration in both countries brings to life a similar mixture of nostalgia, sympathy and also nationalistic and militaristic sentiments. However, this observation does not assume a similarity in the meanings of war commemoration or its political functions, yet it encourages us to think beyond the accepted ideological labels.

This comparison also draws attention to the complexities and controversies existing around the national commemorative icons. Symbols such as the red poppy in Britain or the St George Ribbon in Russia have many parallel meanings. They express compassion, grief for the lives of fallen soldiers, a desire for national unity and support towards veterans, wounded soldiers and military families, yet they also encourage nationalism and raise support for the national armed forces, legitimating military conflicts and government foreign policies. The hidden power of commemorative symbols lies in their ability to evolve and adapt to the context of modern society with its passion for consumption, entertainment and desire to 'lighten up' commemoration.

The primary focus of this study lies in the ambitious task of inspiring a critical attitude to war commemoration as a process which can potentially evoke nationalistic sentiments, normalise warfare and militarise societies at the cultural level. For this reason, the book draws attention to the political aspects of war commemoration by prioritising the politics of remembrance over its function to console and support. This approach does not deny the value of compassion or respect to the fallen, but it arises out of the belief that only by distancing ourselves from these deeply ingrained emotions can we attempt to understand the politics of war commemoration in modern societies.

Finally, this study suggests that our duty to remember fallen soldiers is equally replicated by our duty to take responsibility for the current conflicts in which the service personnel of national armed forces had been deployed. Without this duty, we construct a comforting vision of depoliticised and decontextualised commemoration. Commemoration masks our fears about multiple threats to national identity, traditions and even survival, fears of rapid social changes, and of modern conflicts with their often ambiguous purposes and outcomes. Struggling to face these fears, we reconcile ourselves to remembrance without politics. However, this illusion does not exist in the modern world. Fallen soldiers rarely sleep in peace; instead, they become instruments for reviving nationalistic sentiments and preparing the population for

the perpetuity of war. While this seems like an enormous task, I believe it is important to continue our search for alternative modes of remembrance without mobilising our war dead for the justification of future conflicts. I do not yet know the answer to this difficult problem, but I am optimistic and I hope that this book will encourage others to join me in this search.

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List of Abbreviations

AFM	Armed Forces Memorial
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCCP	Central Committee of the Communist Party
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DfE	Department for Education (UK)
FOM	*Fond Obshchestvennogo Mneniia* (Public Opinion Survey Agency)
FZ	*Federal'nyi Zakon* (Federal Law)
HC	House of Commons
H4H	Help for Heroes
IWM	Imperial War Museum
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NMA	National Memorial Arboretum
NVO	*Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (Independent Military Review)
RAF	Royal Air Force
RBL	Royal British Legion
RF	Russian Federation
RSVA	*Rossiiskii Souiz Veteranov Afganistana* (Russian Union of Afghan War Veterans)
TASS	*Telegrafnoe Agenstvo Sovetskogo Souiza* (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union)
UKNIWM	UK National Inventory of War Memorials
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VTsIOM	*Vserossiiskii Tsentr Izucheniia Obshchestvennogo Mneniia* (All-Russian Centre of Public Opinion Observation)
WMDs	Weapons of Mass Destruction

1
Memory Politics and the Afterlives of Fallen Soldiers

1.1   Fallen soldiers: from the age of nationalism and beyond

A popular approach in the analysis of war commemoration associates commemorative practices with the expression of nationalism. War commemoration is perceived as an instrument that forges national identifications, unites societies and acts as an essential component in 'the symbolic repertoire of the nation-states' (Ashplant *et al.*, 2000, p. 7). This approach draws its inspiration from a classic study by Maurice Halbwachs on *Collective Memory* (1992 [1950]). According to Halbwachs, collective memory is a social construct and 'a social fact' that comes into existence by the power of social groups. Halbwachs considers collective memories as 'a part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, a group with whom we have a relation at this moment, or with whom we have had a relation on the preceding day or days' (1992, p. 52). From his perspective, family, religious association and social class make the most important contribution to collective memory. Scholars of nationalism extrapolate his conclusions to the level of nation-states. Exploring the origin of Western nationalism, Benedict Anderson begins his book on *Imagined Communities* with a reflection on the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in London, describing these memorials as the most 'arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism', which have been 'sacrilege of a strange, contemporary kind! Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with *ghostly national imaginings*' (Anderson, 1983, p. 9, emphasis in original). As Anderson illustrates, nations function as 'imagined communities' because they are sustained by the power of shared 'imaginings', symbols and ceremonies.

Halbwachs' pioneering study advocates a non-linear development of collective memory. He suggests that 'our sense of reality [is] inseparable from our present life' (1992, p. 49) and therefore the current interests of social groups shape society's vision of the past. This presentist approach inspired one of the most famous studies of 'invented traditions' by Eric Hobsbawm. According to Hobsbawm, the 'invented tradition' is 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (1983a, p. 1). Hobsbawm explains the present-orientated essence of collective memory by society's desire for the historical continuity. In this regard, Hobsbawm, like Durkheim, believes that commemorations 'awake certain ideas and feelings, to link the present to the past, the individual to the collectivity' (Durkheim, 2001, p. 282). They revitalise shared feelings and commitments by reconciling societies with profound social transformations, while also constructing a new source of legitimacy for a nation-state (Hobsbawm, 1983b, p. 263). Hobsbawm's findings are critical for the problematisation of war commemoration in modern societies because they suggest that a turbulence of political and societal changes can be resolved through the 'invention' of the new rituals and symbols. These rituals can potentially be used to re-legitimise the political (and military) inspirations of governments and reconcile societies with controversial political outcomes of modern conflicts.

The nationalistic nature of war commemoration is thoroughly investigated by George Mosse in his book *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (1990). Mosse developed an interest in war memories from his research on the political symbolism of the Third Reich in *The Nationalisation of the Masses* (1975). He came to the conclusion that 'festivals commemorating the noble dead' were one of the most successful instruments to 'nationalise the masses' in Germany (Mosse, 1975, p. 76). He explains the success of these festivals by their ability to blend together history and the idea of the nation, where citizens form strong emotional associations with the 'glorious dead'. In *The Fallen Soldiers* (1990), he explores the power of war commemoration to form national myths and sentiments. In particular, he investigates the Myth of the War Experience, which emerged in Western societies out of ashes of the First World War. This myth 'was designed to mark war and to legitimize the war experience; it was meant to displace the reality of war' (1990, p. 7). He convincingly demonstrates that the memory of the First World War 'was refashioned into a sacred experience which provided the nation with

a new depth of religious feeling, putting at its disposal ever-present saints and martyrs, places of worship, and a heritage to emulate' (1990, p. 7). According to him, the cult of the war dead is central to the Myth of the War Experience; it evokes nationalistic feelings through war memorials, military cemeteries and ceremonies of remembrance.

Mosse outlines three key characteristics of this cult. First, he discusses 'the triumph of youth' of fallen soldiers (1990, pp. 72–4). In this instance, death on the battlefield is seen as a passage in male socialisation, a transition from the boyhood of a soldier to the manhood of a fallen soldier. Second, the cult of the war dead implies 'an analogy of sacrifice in war to the Passion and resurrection of Christ' (1990, p. 74). As he explains, 'suffering purifies' and death transforms fallen soldiers into 'saints of the nation' (1990, p. 76). Here, the figure of a fallen soldier embodies both the national hero and the martyr figure. Finally, Mosse insists that the most important function of the cult of the war dead is its ability to fashion a new solidarity within societies by continuing 'a patriotic mission [which] not only seemed to transcend death itself, but also inspired life before death' (1990, p. 78). Mosse argues that the remembrance of fallen soldiers can rejuvenate the nation through engagement with the spirits of the war dead. After the First World War, numerous memorials and military cemeteries symbolised that 'the fallen did not fulfil their mission as individuals but as a community of comrades' (Mosse, 1990, p. 79). Here, Mosse puts a particular stress on the collective and 'democratic' essence of First World War commemoration, which smoothed over the differences between the identities of fallen soldiers.

The interpretation of war commemoration as a vehicle for nationalism favours the idea of 'a unitary and coherent version of the past' (Misztal, 2003, p. 127). This version of the past prefers either a linear historical narrative as in Mosse's study or expresses itself through a non-linear, presentist' concept of the national timeline, as suggested by Hobsbawm. However, as Schwarz argues, the vision of a national past cannot be 'literally constructed; but it can only be selectively exploited' (Schwarz, 1982, p. 396). In other words, the state and political elites cannot just 'invent' the past, they can also exploit and re-design popular narratives by constructing a highly selective account of national history. These exploits, as Zerubavel explains in his study of the Israeli national memory, can be activated through the complex commemoration in which 'each act of commemoration reproduces a commemorative narrative', and these narratives intersect each other by reinforcing the broader national master narrative (Zerubavel, 1995, p. 6). According

to this view, commemoration can express itself through a series of time-loops, revolving around not one but many key events in national history. The task in this instance is to extract these keystones and to study 'the history of commemoration as well as its relation to other significant events in the group's past' (Zerubavel, 1995, p. 7). This discussion suggests that societies hardly ever remember the experience of one war without drawing parallels with other wars. Paraphrasing Maja Zehfuss' point, the experience of any war can 'haunt' societies 'even if in fundamentally different ways' (Zehfuss, 2007, p. 13). Therefore, the study of the politics of war commemoration should seek to explore not only the memory of a particular conflict but also to identify the 'templates' or 'the horizons of representations through which later conflicts are understood' (Ashplant *et al.*, 2000, p. 34; see also Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010, pp. 91–6).

Recognition of the complex temporality of national commemoration brings forth another aspect of this process. According to Pierre Nora, from the 1980s, commemoration in Western societies is no longer associated with the nation-state, but is driven by the interests of social groups (Nora, 1996). Nora describes a transition from a nationalistic to a particularistic type of commemoration where 'the state is divorced from the nation and eventually the old couple is supplanted by a new one: state and society' (Nora, 1996, p. 5). Nora's point about the decline of the nation-state is popular among scholars of modern Western societies, who write about the declining power of the nation-state to mobilise the population under the banners of nationalism (Giddens, 1991; Appadurai, 1996; Bauman, 1997, 2001). However, as Billig suggests, it may be premature to proclaim the death of the nation-state as well as to deny its power to create nationalistic commemoration: 'Maybe, nations are already past their heyday and their decline has already been set in motion, but this does not mean that nationhood can yet be written off' (Billig, 1995, pp. 176–7). Olick comes to the same conclusion in his analysis of the politics of regret in modern democracies. He suggests that the process of commemoration might illustrate 'not a replacement of state dominancy by society', as Nora thought, 'but the proliferation of alternatives alongside the original' (Olick, 2007, p. 189; see also Olick, 1999). These alternatives can potentially diminish the influence of nationalistic rituals and symbols, but this does not mean that governments cannot claim their superiority in framing the past or have stopped trying (Billig, 1995, p. 177). Moreover, by 'exploiting' and re-using the templates of the World War commemorations from

the 'age of nationalism', governments might seek to overcome the fragmentation of national identity.

The example of the USA demonstrates the vitality of commemoration as a vehicle for state-driven nationalism. In September 2001, the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC produced not only 'the opening to trauma time and the recognition of the contingency of political community', but also led to 'the reaffirmation of solidarity and nationhood' (Edkins, 2003, p. 19). This solidarity emerged in the context where 'the time of memory and commemoration evolved … alongside the time of revenge' (Simpson, 2006, p. 4; see also Sturken, 2007, p. 7). This feeling of revenge reconstituted the country's 'imagined wholeness' and national unity (Butler, 2003, p. 41). As a result, 'after September 11, 2001, Americans no longer had to project themselves into distant past in order to claim its virtues. Instead, they could imagine that the cycles of history had been renewed and that a new national drama awaited them' (Hoogland-Noon, 2004, p. 352). Fundamentally, the commemoration of the victims of 9/11 revitalised the idea of the nation by demanding unity and support for subsequent military interventions.

Thus, tragedies and wars of the twenty-first century can successfully reinvigorate the nationalistic meaning of commemoration by offering a sense of historical continuity and a powerful illusion of national unity in times of trouble. However, this approach alone cannot capture the complexity of war commemoration in contemporary societies. Both its strength and its limitation come from its focus on the nation-state. This focus helps us to understand the reasons for new commemorative symbols and traditions, but it fails to problematise the interests of other groups involved in the process of commemoration.

1.2   War trauma and communities in grief

To understand the alternative side of war commemoration, we need to shift the focus of our attention from the interests of the state to the desires of survivors and bereaved communities. The intellectual background of this approach comes from 'cognitive psychology, psychoanalysis, trauma studies and oral history's quest to retrieve the memories of groups whose histories had previously been neglected' (Radstone, 2005, p. 137). Drawing upon these studies, war commemoration in this context tells us a story of suffering, grief and reconciliation of social groups touched by war.

In a similar fashion to Mosse's analysis of the cult of the war dead, the cultural historian Jay Winter investigates war memorials in Britain, France and Germany after the First World War. Unlike Mosse, Winter is less interested in the nationalising appeal of war memorials. His primary concern is to study 'how multiple forms of associational life which have as their focus the commemoration of the dead assist those they had left behind' (1995, p. 6). In this instance, Winter approaches the commemoration of the dead as 'a communal enterprise' and a 'place of individual and collective mourning' (1995, p. 79), whereby 'the marks of the spot where communities were reunited, where the dead were symbolically brought home, and where the separations of war, both temporary and eternal, were expressed, ritualised and in time, accepted' (1995, p. 98). In sum, Winter not only prioritises the interests of communities over the interests of the nation-state, he also sees commemoration as a therapeutic activity which heals war trauma and brings about reconciliation.

Within this approach, the effect of war memorials is associated with the needs of survivors and bereaved communities. According to Winter, these communities are closely connected by 'experiential ties' of 'fictive kinship' (1999, p. 40). This kinship springs from a common experience of trauma and loss. This concept of experiential and, in essence, traumatic kinship is grounded in Freud's analysis of mourning and melancholia: 'mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on' (Freud, 2001 [1917], p. 243). The proponents of this approach apply psychoanalytical analogies by transferring the impact of an individual trauma to the trauma of communities and nations (McNally, 2003; see also Merridale, 2000; Etkind, 2009). This extrapolation implies that 'all "bad events" – and particularly those which involved violence – have a pathological effect on the sufferer's psyche' (Bourke, 2012, p. 25). However, as Bell reminds us, 'even if psychoanalysis can provide a satisfactory account of individual behaviour, it is often not clear how useful it is as a concept for analysing collectives' (2006, p. 8). Psychoanalytical associations when transferred to the level of collectives tend to universalise the impact of trauma. This indiscriminate approach to trauma advances 'an undifferentiated "victim" culture' (Bell, 2006, p. 9; see also Bourke, 2005). This culture allows for the representation of soldiers of defeating and winning sides, civilian survivors of war, families of deceased soldiers and wider society as victims of war while also assuming 'a universal human response to grief' along with a universal desire for closure and reconciliation

(Ashplant *et al.*, 2000, p. 33). This victim-centred reframing of war commemoration corresponds with broader debates on the individualisation and pluralisation of identities in modern Western societies (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Bauman, 1997, 2001). This focus on the identities of soldiers overshadows the broader context of war commemoration and brings us to the limitations of this approach.

First and foremost, the analysis of commemoration 'exclusively in terms of the psychological and emotional dynamics of individual remembering' downplays the importance of the context and, we can add, the differences between war experiences (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 185). Moreover, it constructs the vision of a decontextualised commemoration that treats 'war' as a continuum of violence and tragedy. This decontextualisation is appreciative of the identities of soldiers and their individual losses, but it lacks the potential to question the necessity of soldiers' sacrifice. As Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz conclude in their analysis of the Vietnam War memorialisation, in the context of controversial war, 'to the original dilemma of how to honour the participant without reference to the cause, there is a corresponding reciprocal problem of how to ignore the cause without denying the participant' (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz, 1991, p. 404). Their research does not offer the answer to this question, but following their line of enquiry, we might ask: when it is important to ignore and 'forget' the cause of wars while remembering the fallen soldiers? If this separation of the cause from the participant results from the aims of a controversial war, does it mean that our 'forgetfulness' of ambivalent causes of wars can open the door to state- or military-driven narratives, whilst at the same time closing the door for public deliberation of controversial wars? After all, by the late 1980s, the commemoration of the Vietnam War overcame its moral dilemmas by demonstrating that 'the identities and heroic sacrifices of fallen soldiers [can be] remembered, but the broader political context of the conflict (on which American society lacks moral consensus) [can be] quietly ignored' (Ducharme and Fine, 1995, p. 1311). As a result, the decontextualised commemoration recognised the sacrifices of the American soldiers in Vietnam, but it also assisted in the re-militarisation of society (Bacevich, 2005).

The second problematic aspect of this approach follows from its predisposition to ignore the political context of wars. This disregard for the context not only pushes the 'state out of the frame of consideration' (Ashplant *et al.*, 2000, p. 9), but also downplays the importance of the political aspects of this process. As Joanna Bourke warns us, 'the victim culture has had a politically neutering effect' on modern

societies (Bourke, 2005, cited in Bell, 2006, p. 9). In accepting the view that soldiers can be seen as individuals and victims of war, it is very difficult to discuss issues of political responsibility and ethical commitments with regards to wars. Undoubtedly, this conceptual framework is sensitive to the feelings of survivors and bereaved families, but this sensitivity comes at the cost of treating these groups as politically passive subjects. It positions them as recipients of society's compassion rather than the active social actors. Jenny Edkins, in her seminal book *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, points out that 'in contemporary culture victimhood offers sympathy and pity in return for the surrender of any political voice' (2003, p. 9). Survivors and bereaved families are often faced with a dilemma: to accept sympathy without political participation or challenge the existing memory narratives by claiming a political voice. As Edkins suggests, the 'trauma time' has a potential to bring politics into memory narratives by disrupting 'the linear time of the state' (2003, p. xiv). Although, as we demonstrated above, state-driven commemoration does not necessarily express itself through a linear timeline, 'trauma time' can nevertheless expose relations of power. From this perspective, representations of traumatic events construct an 'intimate bond between personhood and community and, most importantly, they expose the part played by relations of power' (Edkins, 2003, p. 4). Adopting this thesis to war commemoration, we suggest that this process is constituted by evolving power relations, activated through discourses and practices of commemoration. The analysis of this relational politics of war commemoration defines the main purpose of our investigation. Edkins' approach brings politics back to the analysis of war commemoration, but this approach appears to be relatively 'blind' towards changes in modern warfare, the role of the armed forces, and the interaction between the military, the state and civilian society. The following section fills this gap.

1.3   The era of the posts-: war, military and society

Accepting the idea that war commemoration is a deeply contextual phenomenon, this section engages with debates about a series of transformative shifts in civil–military relations. In the literature these relationships are considered through a series of transitions from the era of a *total war* or a *heroic* warfare to *a post-heroic warfare*, from a period of the *modern* militaries, based on conscription, to the *postmodern* armed forces and, finally, from acceptance of a high number of military casualties to a sensitive public attitude towards the loss of lives in

modern conflicts. Drawing on these debates, we develop a set of research hypotheses and research questions about the nature of contemporary war commemoration.

In the introduction to a pivotal volume, *The Politics of War Commemoration*, the authors discuss the politics of naming modern conflicts noting that in many modern societies the definition of war is subject to controversy (Ashplant *et al.*, 2000, pp. 54–5). Although there is significant literature on the changing nature of warfare, which is assumed to have happened between the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there is no definite answer to what constitutes this change. Hew Strachan and Sibylle Scheipers in the introduction to the volume *The Changing Nature of War* point out that 'the perception of newness is often not so much a matter of empirical change but of our conceptual perspective on war' (2011, p. 18). From their perspective, the 'assertive newness of modern wars' often results from a lack of historical contextualisation of modern conflicts (Strachan and Scheipers, 2011, p. 7). Therefore, our perception of the change or continuity in the nature of warfare is relational and can only be tested through the historical contextualisation.

Without oversimplifying the debate on the changing nature of warfare, two interlinked arguments deserve our attention. First, there is a certain consensus in the literature that in modern societies 'the most striking change' in the practice of war is 'the unlocking of the close relationship between war and the state' and also 'the unlocking of the close relationship between war and the nation' (Strachan and Scheipers, 2011, p. 14). Here it is suggested that the meaning of war in modern societies is different because of the changing relationships with both the state and the idea of the nation. For example, the commemoration of the World Wars is often explained by the totality of these wars. This totality established itself through conscription, destruction on a mass scale, and mass military and civilian casualties, and resulted in the national Myth of the War Experience and the cult of the war dead discussed earlier in this chapter (Mosse, 1990). However, 'in the past two decades several scholars argued that western societies have entered a post-heroic age' (Scheipers, 2014, p. 1; see also Luttwak, 1995; Coker, 2002). Scheipers also suggests that this post-heroic warfare can also be described as 'a post-nationalistic war' due to a decline in associations with the idea of the nation, or the state (2014, p. 4). According to this view, the state in Western democracies struggles to convince the population both to sacrifice their lives for the greater cause and to tolerate the death of soldiers in modern conflicts. Although the post-heroic warfare

concept is widely criticised within security studies (Gelpi *et al.,* 2009; Feaver and Miller, 2014), it gives us some grounds for the conceptualisation of war commemoration in modern societies. Here our research questions are: how does war commemoration reflect the nature of modern warfare? Does it associate the fallen soldiers with the framework of a *heroic* war or depict them as victims of *post-heroic* warfare whose lives were unnecessarily lost?

Reflecting on the concept of post-heroic warfare, McInnes writes about 'a shift in the nature of war from an era of total war toward one where war is a spectator sport' where a 'large number of casualties is the exception, not the norm' (2002, p. 4). In modern societies, wars are often led by a minority of professional soldiers and are observed by the majority of an often uninterested population through news reports. In this instance, such labels as a 'post-heroic warfare', a 'spectator sport war' or a 'risk-transfer' war and the 'Western way of war' (Shaw, 2005a) describe a principal difference between wars led by Western democracies and wars led or experienced by non-Western and non-democratic societies. This conclusion brings us to a second point on the nature of modern warfare. This more straightforward argument refers to 'a technological progress, embodied in such conceptions as the "revolutions in military affairs"' (Strachan and Scheipers, 2011, p. 19). From this perspective, it is assumed that military technology has already changed the face of the modern battlefield. As McInnes argues, 'the technological lead of the West means that its air forces are able to roam the skies with relative impunity, providing a symbol of Western potency and the ability to act without incurring costs' (2002, p. 144). The changing nature of warfare in this instance emphasises the technological superiority of Western militaries and also implies that the death of soldiers not only should be avoided due to the dominant societal attitudes, but also could be avoided due to that technological supremacy. Both arguments on the changing nature of warfare draw a distinction between the West and the 'rest'. This distinction implies a hierarchy between the 'valuable' lives of soldiers from Western societies and the lives of soldiers and civilians from non-Western societies (Butler, 2003; Zehfuss, 2009).

The debate on the changing nature of warfare overlaps with a debate on the changing nature of military professionalism. Charles Moskos, in a seminal volume, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* (2000), discusses the transition from modern to postmodern military (see also Booth *et al.*, 2001; Williams, 2008). Moskos specifically draws our attention to a change of military professionalism by stressing transition from its 'institutional' stage (when military service is a

compulsory national duty) towards its 'occupational' condition (when military service is a matter of personal choice and a profession with certain occupational risks and guaranties). However, in his analysis of the American military, Krebs argues that 'soldiers are hailed for their sacrifice, and whatever additional pay they receive for service in a combat zone is not some emolument but only partial payment of the nation's debt to them … This language … is at odds with the occupational model of military service' (2009, p. 481). Fundamentally, transition from the institutional to the occupational stage of military professionalism or from the modern to the postmodern military does not necessarily mean the disappearance of associations between the idea of the nation and the military. If we accept Krebs' proposition, the military in the twenty-first century remains quite capable of performing 'the important domestic socio-political role, broadly categorised as "nation-building"' (Edmunds, 2006, p. 1073). Perhaps, as Williams suggests, the modern military in Western societies can more adequately be described as a hybrid social institution in which the institutional and occupational characteristics of military profession are intertwined with each other (Williams, 2008; Haltiner and Kummel, 2009). Finally, it is important to stress that the outlined academic debate refers to Western democracies with a tradition of all-volunteer forces and largely ignores the experience of societies that have preserved conscription. The experience of these countries is under-theorised within the field of civil–military relations. In this instance, it might be argued that the preservation of conscription in the twenty-first century does not necessarily imply the institutional stage of the armed forces in the development of the military profession. Theoretically, these societies can also move towards the hybrid system by combining elements from both stages of military professionalism. Whether war commemoration constructs a nationalistic (institutional) or professional (occupational) character or displays a hybrid nature will be subject to an empirical testing.

Considering war commemoration as a site of socio-political interaction, we further problematise the interests of the various parties involved. From the perspective of the state, war commemoration can be viewed as a vehicle for identity politics and also a channel to garner public support for wars and the armed forces. Within the field of civil–military relations, the problem of public support for wars is approached via the mutually linked concepts of casualty sensitivity and casualty aversion (Gelpi *et al.*, 2009; Feaver and Miller, 2014). This debate is shaped by contrasting claims. On the one hand, it is argued that Western societies have become more casualty sensitive and tend to

withdraw their support for war if the number of military casualties has been growing (Luttwak, 1994; Moeller, 1994). This interpretation situates public attitudes towards military casualties within the framework of post-heroic warfare. On the other hand, the results of public opinion surveys in the USA over ten years of military deployment in Afghanistan and Iraq show that, for example, American society has been much more casualty tolerant than was originally thought. According to this view, the number of military casualties in Western democracies does not directly correlate with public support for war, but public support for war is 'a function of two things – the retrospective judgement of whether the war was a good idea to begin with (the stakes) and the prospective judgement about the likelihood of success' (Feaver and Miller, 2014, p. 149). Between the two factors, 'success matters' more (Gelpi *et al.*, 2005, pp. 7–46) and therefore the main policy recommendation is to convince the public that there is 'credible plan for victory' (Feaver and Miller, 2014, p. 150). This policy advice implies that any democratic deliberation of war objectives or their outcomes is unnecessary or even damaging for the success in modern wars. According to Feaver and Miller, 'there may be many good reasons to argue over whether the war was a good idea to begin with, but changing public opinion *now* on whether the war should continue is not one of them' (2014, p. 150, emphasis added). Thus, this approach not only prioritises the interests of the political and military elites over the interests of civilian society, but also leaves little scope for public deliberation over the necessity and main purposes of modern conflicts. Our investigation does not claim to prove a correlation between war commemoration and public support for wars; rather, it is concerned with a different question. How does war commemoration evoke support for wars through the ritual of remembrance and what are the political implications of this rhetorical encouragement?

From the perspective of the military, war commemoration can be approached through studies of military culture. Starting from a classic study by Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (1960), it is accepted that military ceremonies preserve values of military culture within the armed forces, and this culture improves the cohesion and combat readiness of military units. Military sociologists have explored the positive contribution of military ceremonies in the cohesion of the American and Israeli militaries (Rubin, 1985; Machalek *et al.*, 2006; Soeters *et al.*, 2006). But Janowitz also suggests that modern militaries perform a representative function through their association with the idea of the

nation (1960, p. 198). In this instance, the military emerges as not just 'a war-fighting machine', as is widely accepted within strategic studies, but as a 'a social and cultural site' and a 'repository of mythical constructions of the past and an embodiment of the nation's aspirations' (Krebs, 2005, p. 538). This socio-cultural function of the military is particularly important because 'relatively few people in contemporary societies actually serve in the military and fewer still see combat' (Burk, 1999, p. 459). Due to a civil–military gap – which is thoroughly explored in the literature on civil–military relations (Feaver and Kohn, 2001; Burk, 2002; Feaver and Gelpi, 2004) – war commemoration exposes the social-cultural role of the military and shows 'how central military service is to the life and well-being of the country' (Burk, 1999, p. 452). Here, we suggest that the same argument is applicable to the societies that have preserved conscription in the twenty-first century. In this case, the two – institutional and socio-cultural – facets of the military can coexist or collide with each other, illustrating the complexity of the relationships between the military, the state and civilian society.

According to Schiff, public military ceremonies advance a 'sense of the belonging to the armed forces', while informing 'core civilian values including the institutional processes that determine the needs and requirements of the military' (2009, p. 47). Within this approach, military sociologists and political scientists consider public support for the armed forces as an essential component for achieving 'healthy' civil–military relations, while ensuring the high level of military professionalism and combat readiness (Feaver and Kohn, 2001; Strachan, 2003; Williams, 2008). In a view of this approach, all sites of cultural interaction between the military and society are perceived as instruments of gathering support for the military. This military-centred commemoration prioritises the interests of the military over the interests of civilian society and, like state-centred commemoration, it does not leave much scope for public debate over the role of the armed forces or the necessity of modern conflicts.

The limits of political deliberation are illustrated by Stahl's analysis of the Support Our Troops campaign in the USA where 'this call does not engage the question of "why we fight" … rather support-the-troops rhetoric works as a regulatory mechanism for disciplining the civic sphere itself – that is, it functions to subvert citizen deliberation' (Stahl, 2009, p. 534). The demand for demonstrating unconditional support for the armed forces can depoliticise the interaction between the military and society by assuming that the only form of public engagement

acceptable for the military is a demonstration of support. Here, our research questions are: can we observe the emergence of a depoliticised and military-centred commemoration in the UK or in Russia and, if so, what are political implications of this process?

Finally, considering war commemoration from the perspective of civilian society, we turn towards the important issue of responsibilities and ethical commitments. Our basic premise is that civilian society should be able to choose its own way to remember fallen soldiers and contest the state- or military-driven discourses and practices of war commemoration. By exercising its political choice, civilian society can better protect itself against the danger of militarisation. This danger emerges when 'a military definition of reality becomes the common sense of the nation' (Lutz, 2002, p. 725, cited in Davies and Philpott, 2012, p. 48). As Cynthia Enloe explains, 'militarisation is the step-by-step process by which something becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from the military as an institution or militaristic criteria' (2000, p. 291). In many senses, war commemoration can be an effective vehicle for militarisation because it is 'highly productive of abstract notions of citizenship and patriotism and is a powerful producer of historical narratives, particularly those that serve to justify and legitimize not just the use of violence in global affairs but also the economic and social organization of the policy required to produce the capability for such violence' (Davies and Philpott, 2012, p. 49; see also Giroux, 2004, 2008). Viewed in this way, the militarised impact of war commemoration might be substantial due to its ability to prioritise the role of the military and the state by blending together historical narratives, national sentiments and 'affectively charged images and representations' (Bleiker and Hutchinson, 2008, p. 115).

Although for many people, war commemoration has nothing to do with politics, this book is inspired by Judith Butler, who said that 'to grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself' (2003, p. 30). From this perspective, it is important to study when and why specific issues are depoliticised, excluded from 'processes of political deliberation and decision' and 'placed outside politics' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 241). By preserving a critical attitude to war commemoration, we limit the encroachment of militarisation in our everyday lives and defend the right of civilian society to disagree with the politics of war.

1.4   Looking into the reflections of memories

Traditionally, war commemoration is approached from two dominant perspectives. On the one hand, it is associated with 'all those devices through which a nation recalls, marks, embodies, discusses or argues about its past, and to all those devices which are intended to create or sustain a sense of belonging or "we feeling" in the individuals who belong to it' (Turner, 2006, p. 206; see also Gillis, 1994). On the other hand, war commemoration 'is held to be significant primarily for psychological reasons, as an expression of mourning, being a human response to the death and suffering that war engenders on a vast scale' (Ashplant *et al.*, 2000, p. 7). This study does not follow either of these approaches; instead, it approaches commemoration as a complex social process of negotiating commitments towards fallen soldiers and also the military, the state and civilian society.

The focus on the interaction between the military and civilian society places this study within the field of civil–military relations. Traditionally, civil–military relations are explored from 'the perspective of the rationalist, which focuses primarily on the decision maker; the structuralist, which studies institutions; and the culturalist, which looks at the subject' (Herspring, 2009, p. 670). All three subjects of research favour the analysis of 'elite-level politico-military interactions' (Webber, 2006, p. 2). This research prioritises the interests of civilian society and offers a unique insight into the popular discourses and practices of war commemoration.

To capture the politics of war commemoration, we turn towards the representations of fallen soldiers. These representations are considered as powerful reflections of memories which define identity politics and shape the relationships between the military, the state and society. Our analysis approaches three milieus or, as Nora would describe them, 'sites of memory', including the mass media, memorials and ceremonies of remembrance (Nora, 1996). To approach these sites, we apply a critical discourse analysis (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000; van Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 2010). Broadly speaking, this method of analysis develops Foucault's approach because it looks at 'discourses and practices [which] systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49; see also Foucault, 1978). This book explores how discourses and practices have been evolving over the time, and how these reflections of memory have been shaping our political commitments towards wars and the national armed forces.

This research applies a case-study method as one of the main instruments of analysis. This method is popular within both memory studies and civil–military relations. It enables a detailed analysis of a specific case through the collection of empirical data from a variety of sources and the combination of different research techniques for its analysis (Yin, 1988; Silverman, 2005). For the purpose of theory-building, I use Burawoy's method of the 'extended case-study method' by combining inductive and deductive approaches to the data and 'applying reflective science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the "micro" to the "macro", and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory' (Burawoy, 1998, p. 5).

The case-study method does have its shortcomings. First, it runs the risk of sacrificing analytical and explanatory analysis in favour of a detailed description of the case (Yin, 1988). Second, the findings of an individual case study are difficult to generalise or convert to other cases (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). In this instance, we agree with Jay Winter that 'the comparative approach is the only way to break out of cultural history limited by national perspectives' (1995, p. 10). This book compares the experience of the UK and Russia. These two cases are selected according to the 'method of difference', which implies that 'the two cases should differ in every respect except the variable being studied' (Hopkin, 2002, p. 253). Although this method is most commonly used for a large number of cases, it is applied in historical sociology and political science to trace social changes (Tilly, 1984; McMichael, 1990).

The cases are considered as 'contrasting' along three lines. First, the armed forces of both countries have been engaged in different types of wars (the global War on Terror vs. regional conflicts). Second, these countries have different types of the armed forces (all-volunteer forces vs. a conscripted military). Third, these countries exercise different political regimes (democratic and authoritarian) and therefore can be assumed to have contrasting types of civil–military relations (democratic vs. authoritarian). Despite these differences, the commemoration of fallen soldiers is a notable phenomenon in both countries. Both countries have established rituals of war commemoration and countless war memorials.

Pursuing comparability between the cases, the principle of the 'incorporated comparison' (McMichael, 1990) is used to approach both cases from the same perspective. Without a doubt, this method of comparison causes certain problems. First, this principle predisposes us to edit out data which do not 'fit' in the structure of comparison.

Compensating for this problem, commemoration is situated within the broader political and social transformations which are experienced by both societies. Second, as this chapter has demonstrated, many concepts and hypotheses in the field of civil–military relations and memory studies are based on the experience of Western democracies. The application of these theories to the case of Russia raises the problem of a theoretical re-adjustment to a different socio-political context. This book is based on a premise that this challenge does not undermine the possible benefits of comparison. The comparative method helps us to break with the traditional isolation of Russian society, which is often studied as a unique case, but it also encourages us to look for similarities and differences between commemoration in a democratic and an authoritarian society. In particular, this book draws parallels between the commemoration of British soldiers of the Falklands War (1982), the Gulf War (1990–1) and the campaigns in Iraq (2003–9) and Afghanistan (2001–14), and the commemoration of Russian soldiers killed in the Soviet Afghan War (1979–89) and two Chechen conflicts (1994–6 and 1999–2009). The choice of these conflicts is defined by their impact on both societies.

The logic of comparison shapes the structure of the book. The first three chapters explore the commemoration of fallen soldiers in Britain. An analysis of the Russian experience of commemoration forms the second part of the book. In each case, the analysis begins with a discussion of the media coverage and moves on to an analysis of memorials and ceremonies. Specifically, Chapter 2 illustrates how the controversy of modern military campaigns in Britain facilitates a shift in the discussion of commemoration from warfare to the military service. The emerging military-centred discourse praises the professional and individual qualities of the fallen, and therefore it decontextualises and depoliticises commemoration. Chapter 3 explores war memorials as vehicles for identity politics and discusses continuity and change in war memorialisation. This analysis explores memorial inscriptions from the digital database of the UK National Inventory of War Memorials (UKNIWM) and examines the National Memorial Arboretum in North Staffordshire as a new site of remembrance. Chapter 4 explores the intersection between war commemoration and the rhetoric production of citizenship, and also the Military Covenant. This analysis argues that the contemporary discourse of remembrance in Britain adopts the support-the-troops rhetoric and indirectly raises support for modern operations. However, there is certain scope for resistance to state- and military-centric narratives through such tradition as the White Poppy Campaign and other forms

of resistance. Chapter 5 discusses ambivalences in the representations of those fallen in Afghanistan and Chechnya, crises within the Soviet and Russian armed forces and the conflicts themselves. In Russia, these overlapping controversies in civil–military relations undermine the construction of a military service-orientated commemoration. Chapter 6 shows that unlike in Britain, contemporary memorials in Russia do not show a tendency towards a direct succession in war memorialisation. The memorial landscape is dominated by monuments dedicated to the fallen of the Second World War (known as the Great Patriotic War in Russia). Military casualties of recent campaigns are remembered in memorials to the participants of the Soviet Afghan War and other post-Soviet conflicts. The language and imagery of these memorials explores the themes of military culture by representing the fallen of the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts as those who have done their duty. This representation disregards the controversies of late-Soviet and post-Soviet military campaigns, and therefore constructs a depoliticised and decontextualised frame of commemoration. Chapter 7 considers the transformation of Victory Day (9 May) into a day of forging the nationalist sentiments and reinstating a conservative political agenda. The evolving nationalistic commemoration reinforces the power of the government's identity politics and assists in harnessing public support for the regime and also, indirectly, current and future conflicts. The conclusion shows that in both countries to an extent, the commemoration of fallen soldiers serves as a vehicle for nationalism and assists in the normalisation of war frames. Finally, the analysis explores the hero-victim dilemma and discusses the different facets of cultural militarisation in both countries. Let's begin our journey towards the understanding of war commemoration in contemporary societies.

2
Media Commemoration in Britain

2.1 The fallen of the Falklands

In contemporary societies, 'the media play an active role in shaping our understanding of the past, in "mediating" between us (as readers, viewers, listeners) and past experiences, and hence in setting the agenda for future acts of remembrance within society' (Erll and Rigney, 2009, p. 3). The media is particularly influential in many Western countries, where 'the legitimising, the contesting, and the waging of warfare have become shaped much more by the media "production" of warfare than any discernible "original" or "authentic" experience' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 4). This point is particularly relevant in the context of British society, in which only a relatively small number of the population are exposed to the dangers of wars and military profession. This chapter explores the representations of British fatalities from the Falklands War through to the Gulf War, and to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The coverage of these conflicts reveals a series of shifts in war commemoration. The campaign for the Falkland Islands led to the legitimation of repatriation as a new military tradition; the Gulf War problematised the deaths of soldiers in friendly fire incidents; and the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan saw the 'mediatisation' of deaths and a shift towards a military service-based commemoration.

In 1989, historian Raphael Samuel in the preface to the volumes of *History and Politics Workshop* wrote that this volume was 'born out of anger at the Falklands War, and consternation at the apparent failure of the anti-war half of the nation to assert itself' (Samuel, 1989, p. x). Samuel was not alone in his quest to understand this 'surprising upsurge of patriotic feelings', 'shocking recapitulation of the imperial past' and overwhelming 'flag-waving' mood which gripped the population for

several months in 1982 (Shaw, 1991; Dawson, 1994; Billig, 1995). While the following analysis discusses the reincarnation of the spirit of nationalism during the Falklands War, it also explores how this war altered the ways in which British society commemorates fallen soldiers.

2.1.1   The spirit of nationalism

In the 1980s, Samuel wrote: 'patriotism is no longer a ruling passion, as it was when Britain was under siege, but is rather an occasional sentiment, quickening into life under provocation but at other times lying dormant' (Samuel, 1989, p. xxviii). The Falklands War created this 'provocation' and awoke the spirits of nationalism. This reincarnation was assisted by the circulation in the media of historical associations between the image of 'Britain under siege', which withstood the dangers of the Second World War, and Britain in the early 1980s, which struggled to find a solution to political, economic and societal problems. These parallels brought the two versions of Britain together by re-imagining its unity and strength.

Since the 1960s, Britain had been undergoing a series of political, economic and social changes. The source of such changes came from several areas, including 'the question of Europe, violence in Northern Ireland, the growth of Scottish and Welsh nationalisms and the internal "break-up of Britain", crisis in the schools, fears of sexual minorities, and panics over immigration and race' (Eley, 2001, p. 822). This general unrest was also fuelled by rising unemployment, a continuous erosion of the old manufacturing bases and a decline in public spending under the Thatcher government. Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, the country underwent a rapid transformation in societal values and lifestyles. These changes were 'manifold and complex: they were material (the new experience enjoyment of "affluence"), spiritual (new attitudes to life, more secular and hedonistic), moral (changing attitudes to sexual behaviour, to relations between classes, sexes and generations), and social (a shifting balance of responsibility between the individual and the collective)' (Mandler, 2006, p. 221). This peaceful revolution in the everyday lives of Britons undermined the popularity of traditional nationalistic sentiments. In this context, the events of the Falklands War presented an opportunity for the political elite to remind the public that 'Britain was "still the same" in the 1980s, despite changes in the political, economic, social and belief systems of the country' (Noakes, 1998, p. 105).

On 2 April 1982, the government declared a state of emergency and, soon after this decision, the Task Force sailed to the Falkland Islands. The campaign ended in victory for the British forces on 14 June 1982. Journalists and politicians repeatedly described the campaign as 'war',

ignoring the fact that the British government did not officially declare 'war' on Argentina. Instead, as Freedman explains, the government worked hard to create 'a sense of legitimacy around its actions' by concentrating 'on the key principles of self-determination for the islanders, the inadmissibility of force as a means of resolving disputes, the inherit right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, and the importance of not rewarding aggression' (Freedman, 2005, p. 489). This explanation legitimated the campaign at the level of international politics, but its role was secondary in the domestic context. In Britain, national newspapers called for the nation to 'be armed for war' and stand 'shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy and the evils of oppression' (Parliament, 1982). The rhetoric of survival conjured up associative links between the population of mainland Britain and the Islanders. 'We are all Falklanders now' announced *The Times* (*The Times*, 1982). Newspapers also widely circulated a statement from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who said that Falkland Islanders were 'British in stock and tradition and they wish to remain British in allegiance' (cited in Billig, 1995, p. 3). This language imposed a sense of urgency and war-readiness; it legitimated the campaign as a fight for freedom, democracy and even the survival of British society.

It is difficult to imagine the success of this nationalistic rhetoric without historical parallels being drawn with the Second World War. According to Connelly, 'since 1945 nearly every international crisis involving Britain has been compared to, or seen through the lens of, the Second World War' (2004, p. 268). During the Falklands War, journalists called the conflict the 'people's war' and compared air attacks to those of the Second World War, the departure of the Task Force in 1982 on the ocean liner the *Queen Elizabeth II* to the departure of British troops on the *Queen Mary* in 1943, the landing of Royal Marines in Port Stanley to the D-Day landings in France, the decisive character of Thatcher to that of Churchill, and hailed the victorious results of both wars (Glasgow, 1995b, pp. 128–9). These comparisons between 'now and then' re-established an imagined historical continuity by integrating the Falklands campaign 'into a flow of British history and legend' (Noakes, 1998, p. 108).

Margaret Thatcher was particularly passionate about using historical parallels, stressing continuity between the Britain of the 1980s and the 'Britain that built the empire' and 'won the Second World War' (Thatcher, 1982a). The following excerpt illustrates this narrative:

> When we started out, there were the waverers and the faint hearts. The people who thought that Britain could no longer seize the initiative for herself … that Britain was no longer the nation that had built

an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world. Well they were wrong. The lesson of the Falklands is that Britain has not changed and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history … When the demands of war and the dangers to our own people call us to arms – then we British are as we have always been. (Thatcher, 1982a)

In this speech, Thatcher explicitly introduced the idea of historical continuity by implying that the war-like setting, be it the Second World War or the Falklands War, was essential for recovering a sense of national unity. Later in the same speech, Thatcher praised the 'superb teamwork' of the Task Force, their 'brilliant leadership', 'professionalism and effectiveness'. She also contrasted the excellent performance of the military with the strikes of railway workers and the NHS workers, who 'misunderstood the new mood of the nation' (Thatcher, 1982a). This rhetorical strategy implied that civilian institutions should follow the example of the military by 'sacrificing' their 'mercantile' interests in favour of the interests of the nation. In this instant, the British military emerges as a social institution with hybrid qualities; it is described both as a powerful military machine and also as a vehicle for national identity. This representation of the military shows the pertinence of the 'national military myth' (Shaw, 1991, Chapter 3), which survived the end of conscription in 1962 and was rejuvenated during the Falklands War.

The positive representation of the armed forces formed the cornerstone of the media reporting on the Falklands campaign. Reports of the exceptional military professionalism of the British armed forces amounted to 92 per cent of the total news coverage produced by the national press and the two BBC channels during the conflict (Morrison and Tumber, 1988, pp. 274–8). Doubts about the success of the Falklands endeavour were virtually absent in the media (Glasgow, 1995a, p. 82; Robinson *et al.*, 2005, p. 954). This coverage downplayed the legacy of the Suez Crisis in 1956, the military withdrawal from the Empire, the context of the Cold War, a series of decreases in the military budget coupled with the end of conscription, and the ambiguous results of a counter-insurgency operation in Northern Ireland, which began in 1969 (McInnes, 1997; Beevor, 2000). By 1982, violence in Northern Ireland resulted in the death of over 320 British soldiers and hundreds of civilians. Until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, service personnel were strongly advised not to wear their military uniforms in public places. In this context, the overwhelmingly positive and troop-supporting reporting during the Falklands War was particularly important in re-establishing public support for the military.

2.1.2 The bodies of the soldiers

When contrasted with Vietnam, the Falklands War was known 'as a less "reported war"' than others in contemporary history (Carruthers, 2000, p. 120). The national media produced coverage with characteristics that were reminiscent of reporting during the Second World War due to the constant delays in the delivery of news, military and government censorship of the news briefs, and often contradictory information about UK military fatalities.

During the conflict, the names of all deceased service personnel appeared in commemorative listings in the mainstream newspapers with the sanction of the Ministry of Defence. A typical commemorative listing indicated a military rank, surname, age, a region and a place of origin of a deceased soldier (for example, 'Royal Marines killed in the San Carlos Air attack: Sgt Roger Enefer, 34, of Plympton, Plymouth; Lance Corporal Peter McKay, 19, of Macduff, Banffshire'). These listings were rarely accompanied by photos of individual soldiers or stories about their personal or professional qualities. This uniform format was altered in cases of exceptional deaths. One of the rare cases of a personalised commemorative report resulted from the death of the Lieutenant-Colonel of the 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment, Herbert Jones, also known as 'H' Jones. According to historian Lawrence Freedman, the battle over Port Darwin and Goose Green 'established "H" Jones as the first authentic hero of the campaign' (Freedman, 2005, p. 494). For this battle, Jones was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, which is the highest military award in the British Army.

The extensive coverage of Colonel Jones' death must be understood in the context of the military victory which occurred at Goose Green. As Freedman explains, at this point in the campaign, 'victory there [Goose Green] would demonstrate to the British people that the reoccupation of the Islands was making palpable progress, to the Argentinian commanders that the British forces were irresistible, and to the international community that there was no intention to pause to allow a cease-fire to be negotiated' (Freedman, 2005, p. 476). The British forces at Goose Green did not disappoint these expectations. This battle was considered a demonstration of the superior qualities of the British professional army against an army of poorly motivated and poorly trained Argentinian conscripts. Inspired by this mood, the first news reports on the results of this battle exaggerated the success of the British Army by circulating information on the huge disparity in casualties; over 250 Argentines had been killed in battle at Goose Green compared to only 13 British soldiers (Freedman, 2005, p. 493). Freedman explains that these reports, including a widely circulated report by

a BBC News correspondent, were incredibly misleading, especially when it transpired that the military recovered only 45 bodies of Argentinian soldiers. In spite of these facts, nothing could undermine the initial impact that the celebratory reporting of the Battle of Goose Green had had on the public's imagining of this event.

In the context of successful military victory, the death of paratroopers was presented as a sad yet proud moment in British history. An article in *The Times,* 'Marines Close on Stanley as Outposts Fall', illustrates this style of success-driven commemorative reporting:

> A senior staff officer described it yesterday as one of most brilliant and courageous actions by a battalion since the Second World War … British casualties turned out to be remarkably light – 12 dead and 31 wounded. They included the battalion commanding officer, 'H' Jones who at a critical stage of Friday's battle led a small group of PARAS in a successful assault on a nest of two heavy machine guns. (Fairhall, 1982)

The references in this article to the Second World War functioned as a historical template, illustrating continuity in the military victories of the British Army. The reference to the 'remarkably light' casualties legitimated the victory and also positioned the death of 'H' Jones as a meaningful act which ensured the overall success of the battle. To reinforce this celebratory-heroic narrative, the article included a photo of a smiling Colonel 'H' Jones in military uniform, but did not offer more information on Jones' personal or professional qualities. An article in *The Guardian* under the title 'A Soldier Who Died as He Had Lived' offered more insight into the personal life of Colonel 'H' Jones by describing him as a dedicated soldier, a loving husband and a good father (*The Guardian* Correspondent, 1982). The textual information was illustrated with three photos of Colonel Jones with his wife and children. The article attempted to personalise and domesticate the Jones' death, but did not challenge the overall celebratory framework of reporting. The article included the following quotation from an interview with Mrs Jones: 'We were so proud when we learned how the 2nd Battalion had taken Goose Green, and the boys, who were home on half-term, were delighted to see their father hailed as a hero in the morning papers' (*The Guardian* Correspondent, 1982). This excerpt emphasises pride and appreciation of Jones's heroism over the emotional distress and tragedy of losing a father and husband. In this regard, one might conclude that the media coverage during the Falklands War, like the First and

Second World Wars, 'urged' the 'audience to convert its grief into pride' (Moriarty, 1997, p. 135).

Although the death of Colonel H. Jones resulted in patriotic coverage, his funeral led to one of the most groundbreaking changes in the commemoration of British soldiers. Before the Falklands War, all British soldiers used to be buried on the sites of battles or in British military cemeteries overseas, where uniformed gravestones and war memorials served as symbolic reminders of the power of the British Empire (Capdevila and Voldman, 2006, p. 155). Following the First World War, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission established a military cemetery on the Falklands Islands, which was initially planned to be a final resting place for the British fallen of the Falklands War. However, in the Britain of the 1980s, the bodies of the British fallen came to be perceived not only as a belonging to the nation-state and as the property of the military, but as individuals who had the right to an individual burial and private commemoration. This change was facilitated by the fact that the BBC News Service broadcast images of dead paratroopers from a funeral ceremony after the battle (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1   The Falklands War: funeral ceremony on 1 September 1982 (© Crown Copyright. IWM; reproduced with permission)

BBC correspondent Robert Fox said: 'On a wintry sunny evening the men who died freeing Port Darwin and Goose Green were buried together in a common grave on a bare hillside above the anchorage at San Carlos Water' (Fox, 1982). Prior to Goose Green, the Task Force had lost over 100 service personnel at sea, including those from the *HMS Sheffield*, *HMS Ardent*, *HMS Coventry* and *HMS Antelope*. This broadcast was one of the first to show dead British soldiers from this war.

The reporting on the funeral at Goose Green generated public outcry about the traditional form of military burial. The day after the funeral, the British national newspapers joined the debate, with *The Sun* publishing a front page article: 'Bring Back Our Dead Boys' (*The Observer* Reporter, 1982). The public's dissatisfaction was driven by re-broadcast opinions of survivors and bereaved families. The personal involvement of soldiers and military families with the dead legitimated their right to demand changes in this commemorative practice (Dixon, 2000; see also Winter, 1995). Both groups criticised the practice of mass burial and the fact that, initially, the military authorities and government officials showed no intention of repatriating the bodies of fallen soldiers to the UK. According to the initial BBC report, 'the paras are anxious that their dead comrades should not remain in the anonymous grave here at Ajax Bay … "They must be taken back to England" one company commander said' (Fox, 1982). References to the feeling of 'anxiety' amongst commentators and the use of expressions such as 'they must be brought back' communicated the urgency of both the repatriation and individual burial of the soldiers.

During the following month, the necessity of repatriation was widely discussed in the national media and in the House of Commons, and was expressed in the letters of the bereaved families to the Prime Minister. The official discourse was structured around the importance of upholding military tradition in the burial practices. For example, *The Guardian*, referencing a government official from the Ministry of Defence, reported that 'the tradition for hundreds of years had been for servicemen killed in action to be buried in the soil where they fell' (Keel, 1982). Another article cited that 'Ministry of Defence sources seemed adamant at the weekend that the tradition could not be broken for reasons of logistics and precedent' (Herbert, 1982; Keel and Black, 1982). Moreover, the military leadership in a BBC radio interview argued that the traditional practice of military burial was 'better for bereaved relatives' as 'they would not have to undergo a second tragedy by burying the bodies of their sons or husbands brought back from the scene of fighting' (Keel, 1982). The government officials reproduced similar arguments

by stressing the importance of 'time-honoured practice' and tried to re-assure the families that soldiers would be re-buried on 'the beautifully kept cemeteries run by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission' (Keel and Black, 1982). Finally, Margaret Thatcher in her interview with the ITN TV channel reproduced the aforementioned arguments.

> I know that there's quite a lot of strong feeling about this and I think the other side has been put today, that usually the soldiers are buried on the field of battle ... I think everyone understands that the important thing is to win it and then wherever we've been we've had the most wonderful Commonwealth cemeteries which are looked after beautifully ... If however people do feel very strongly then of course we'd have to take their feelings into account ... I would just like the relatives to know why their loved ones fell – they fell in the cause of liberty, justice and democracy. (Thatcher, 1982b)

This quotation shows the collision between the feelings of families and the narrative of the state. In the framework of state-driven commemoration, the bodies of soldiers legitimate the military victory and they also legitimate the right of Britain to start this conflict in order to stand up for democratic values. According to this logic, the bodies of the fallen signify the power of the state and, as such, they should remain within the *military* environment by being buried in a *military* cemetery on the Falkland Islands – the place of their victorious battle. As Wasinski explains in his analysis of military burials in the USA, 'the body buried in the military cemetery cannot express itself completely freely as strict regulations are in force inside them' (2008, p. 119). The military cemetery positions the death of an individual within the realms of both the military and the state. References to the 'beauty' of military cemeteries engender these symbolic associations, while also aiming at reconciling the bereaved families with this state-led military-centred commemoration.

In letters and public statements, the families of the deceased soldiers claimed their right to bury their loved ones as they wished. In this instance, the media coverage represented the repatriation of the bodies as a demonstration of respect for the wishes of the bereaved families (Pitt, 1982). The moral right of the families to the bodies of the dead was expressed through repetitive references to 'home' as a main reason for the repatriation. For example:

> Yesterday, Mr Michael Cork from Canterbury, whose son Anthony was among the dead, said he wanted the body brought *home*.

'We – his family – should be able to say what we want and have our wishes respected. I am sure the families of the other boys feel like us.' (Keel, 1982, emphasis added)

Mrs Linda Dixon of Basildon, Essex, whose 18-year-old son Stephen died in the action, said yesterday that it was 'an insult' to leave the bodies in the Falklands. 'I know I speak for every mother who has lost a son in the Falklands when I say the most important thing for them now is to bring *home* the bodies. We cannot visit their graves or remember them with a headstone or a vase of flowers. They must be brought back to their families and loved ones', she said. (Keel and Black, 1982, emphasis added)

Jane Bingley, whose husband, 24-year-old Lance Cpl. Garry Bingley, was among buried on Sunday, said 'I want Garry back here with us.' She said that before he left for the Falklands, Bingley gave instructions that: 'If I'm killed out there, I want to be buried in Aldershot … This is my *home*.' (*The Observer* Reporter, 1982, emphasis added)

In these quotations the concept of 'home' emerges as a complex symbolic construction. First and foremost, it contests the belonging of the bodies of the dead to the state and the military institutions. By claiming ownership, the reference to 'home' prioritises the wishes of bereaved families and even the dead themselves over the interests of political entities. Second, it suggests that the state is equally responsible for the repatriation of British soldiers as it is for the declaration and waging of wars. Third, the concept of 'home' suggests a symbolic separation between the Falkland Islands and the rest of Britain. In a sense, the public debate over repatriation showed that the British dead could not be left to guard the political claim of Britain on these islands. Instead, their rightful place was 'at home', in Britain and with their families. On 9 July 1982, as a result of mounting public pressure, 64 bodies of service personnel were loaded onto ships to be repatriated to the UK and re-buried at various cemeteries across the country (Ghorlton, 1982; Langdon and Keatley, 1982). Out of a total number of 255 service personnel, including 174 sailors and soldiers who died at sea, only 17 soldiers, including Colonel H. Jones, remained buried in the Falkland Islands.

During the Falklands War, the comments and emotions of the relatives of the Task Force were often censored by the TV producers. Following incidents which resulted in large casualties, the media used the pretences of 'privacy' and 'taste' to restrict televised interviews with the bereaved families and effectively silence 'those who could have told us most directly about human costs of the fighting' (Glasgow, 1995b,

pp. 104–5). This practice of 'taste and tone' censorship corresponded with the interests of the political and military elites. It demonstrated the politicisation of grief and bereavement, and sustained a broader framework of patriotic and troop-supporting media coverage. However, the story of the Falklands War has also revealed that power relations and military traditions could be challenged and eventually altered. In 1982, the efforts of bereaved families, coupled with shifts in societal attitudes, brought about changes in the practice of war commemoration. Only in 2003 was repatriation finally incorporated into national legislation and, since then, 'service personnel who die in the course of operations or their duties abroad have been repatriated to the United Kingdom at the expense of Ministry of Defence' (Summers, 2010, p. 51).

In 1982, the victory in the Falklands War was marked with thanksgiving services and homecoming parades. Three days before the national thanksgiving service in St Paul's Cathedral, two bombs killed eight British service personnel in London. The IRA issued a statement that directly referenced the Falklands War, stating that 'now it is our turn to properly invoke article 51 of the UN statute and properly quote all Thatcher's fine phrases on a right of self-determination of people' (Pallister, 1982). The continuing hostilities in Northern Ireland revealed the fragility of the re-imagined unity of the country and also problematised the danger of turning the military into an institution of government policy and an embodiment of national identity.

2.2   The Gulf War: the irony of a 'clean' war

In London's Imperial War Museum, above a stand with information on the Gulf War, television displays reproduce the footage of the first air attacks on Iraq in January 1991, the border-crossing of the Coalition Forces and the victorious cheers of Western soldiers on the road to Iraq. For many people, this video footage is an essential part of their experience of the Gulf War. As Taylor ironically points out, in Britain 'When people are asked the question "What were you doing the night the Gulf War broke out?", many will reply: "Watching it on TV"' (Taylor, 1992, p. 33). Unlike the Falklands War, the Gulf War became known as the 'first television war', 'the most realistic war' and the war which brought the concepts of 'clean' warfare and 'friendly fire' into being. Yet many scholars challenge these popular descriptions of the Gulf War by considering this conflict as one of the most media-manipulated wars of the twentieth century (Baudrillard, 1995; Shaw, 1996; Ignatieff, 2000; Virilio, 2002).

2.2.1   Old myths for a new war

Contrasting with the Falklands, the coverage of the air attacks in Iraq on 16 January 1991 was taken live from CNN by the majority of international news organisations, including the main British broadcasters (Shaw, 1996, p. 74). This process illustrated a change in the mediation of warfare, while also exposing a shift in the role of the British armed forces in the post-Cold War era. Since 1991, British forces have acted as a part of the Coalition Forces and as an ally of the USA. As Walsh explains, 'the Gulf War of 1991 was not exclusively a patriotic British war in the sense that the Falklands was; no sovereign British territory was invaded in the Persian Gulf as was the case in the South Atlantic a decade earlier, and no legitimate case could be made that the Gulf War represented a national crusade to defend specifically "British" values or people' (1997, p. 206).

Without direct references to specific 'British' values, the media coverage of the Gulf War evoked cultural associations with the Second World War (Macallister, 2004, p. 173). Reporters compared Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler, described the Gulf as 'our finest hour' and associated the air campaign with the Blitz (Morrison, 1992, p. 83; Philo and McLaughlin, 1995, pp. 146–7; Walsh, 1997, p. 211). These cultural parallels constructed a sense of historical continuity by incorporating this campaign into the established cultural war imagery. To compensate for the absent link with British identity, the media exploited the concept of a special relationship between the USA and Britain. According to Danchev, the Anglo-American 'special relationship is an ideological construction', with often blurred meanings, but charged with historical associations (Danchev, 1996). The idea of the special relationship 'creates its own legends' and 'what is special about it is its capacity to do this – to invent and reinvent itself, to exploit its mythical potential' (Danchev, 2007, p. 190). In the case of the Gulf War, references to the special relationship communicated the idea of the 'battle-hardened friendship' between the USA and Britain (Combs, 1993, p. 279). The construct of the special relationship suggested that 'an Anglo-Saxon understanding of the planet based on a shared heritage, proven by the bonds of bloodshed in a common cause on the sands of North Africa, in the hills and valleys of Italy, the jungles of South-East Asia and the borage of Normandy' will be preserved and will flourish (Connelly, 2004, p. 294). In the context of the post-Cold War period, the USA emerged as a superpower and 'the UK as its first supporter' (Swanson and Smith, 1993, p. 184). As Prime Minister John Major put it in his address to the British contingent in the Gulf, 'you are here not just because it is

necessary because of the invasion of Kuwait, … but if you had not been here with our allies … then it might have been much bigger, perhaps a much more difficult problem to deal with' (Major, 1991). In this statement, the cause of the Gulf conflict was directly linked with Britain's commitment to its American ally.

Historical associations did not account for all the coverage of the Gulf War. The Gulf War went into the annals of history as a new type of warfare. These 'new' qualities of warfare were associated with strikes of surgical precision, smart weaponry, and targeted and limited civilian casualties ('a clean' war). The media coverage reflected this trait of the Gulf War by focusing on military technology, strategy and tactics (Philo and McLaughlin, 1995, p. 149; Shaw, 1996, p. 75; Hoskins, 2004, p. 24). To sustain this technologically driven representation, the British media represented the Coalition Forces as an effective military machine and described soldiers of the Coalition Forces as a highly skilled professional force. This imagery and narratives corresponded well with the established image of the British armed forces (Strachan, 1997).

The media coverage responded to the framing of the Gulf War as 'clean' warfare by limiting the publication of images of death and destruction. During the winter months of 1991, only three per cent of news slots on British television portrayed any results of military actions, such as injuries or deaths of soldiers or civilians (Morrison, 1992, p. 88). The bodies of dead civilians were broadcast 'without close-up and usually purposefully covered' (Morrison, 1992, p. 90). Several British (BBC and ITN) TV crews filmed the horrific images from the Iraq–Kuwait road, known as the 'Highway of Death'; however, their footage 'never made television' even after official restrictions were lifted (Shaw, 1996, p. 75). The press published some images from this road only after the active phase of the operation, including a photo taken by Ken Jarecke of an Iraqi soldier who had been burned alive (Hoskins, 2004, p. 79). Overall, the media in Britain 'cleaned' the footage from the Gulf, constructing a picture where 'the dead become undead for photographic purposes; the hills and deserts are swept clean' (Lennon, 1991; Preston, 2003).

Reflecting on the coverage of the Persian Gulf War, philosopher Jean Baudrillard in his thought-provoking book *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* argued that this coverage created an 'unconditional simulacrum of war' because it depicted this conflict as 'a virtual war without any visible casualties' (Baudrillard, 1995, pp. 43–4). To sustain the idea of a 'clean' war, the Western media used such euphemisms as surgical strikes, collateral damage and friendly fire. However, as Vernon notes, 'our language

of smart weapons and surgical strikes relied on misleading metaphors from science and medicine as if we were removing a belligerent cancer. But that's a lie … We [were] killing people' (2001, p. 72). The media coverage of the Gulf War masked this gruesome reality by creating an illusion that 'the hundreds of dead Coalition Forces and the thousands of dead Iraqis, the maimed, and the sufferers of Gulf War syndrome can apparently restore their lives with the push of the button'; Vernon continues with a wake-up call to the audience: 'Get real' (2001, pp. 73–4). In Britain, this wake-up call came with the death of nine British soldiers killed by friendly fire.

2.2.2 The casualties of friendly fire

The Gulf War brought about a substantial change in Western military fatalities. The losses of the Coalition Forces comprised slightly over 200 service personnel against thousands of dead Iraqi soldiers. The reduction in military fatalities problematised the circumstances under which the soldiers of the Coalition Forces had been killed. For example, the American contingent announced 148 combat-related deaths, including 35 soldiers and Marines killed, and 72 soldiers wounded in 28 friendly fire incidents (Shrader, 1992, p. 29). In addition, the American contingent lost 11 soldiers who died as a result of unexploded allied munitions, 18 as a result of unexploded Iraqi munitions and 28 personnel who were killed by a Scud strike on a barracks in Dhahran. This meant that less than a third of American fatalities can be attributed to direct attacks by Iraqi soldiers (Mueller, 1994, p. 158). The British contingent lost 47 service personnel in the Persian Gulf War, including nine soldiers who had been killed in friendly fire incidents. The media's attention focused on the death of nine soldiers from the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers who had been killed on 27 February 1991 by an American air-to-surface Scud missile. As a result of these deaths: 'The triumphalism of the Falklands War found no echo at the national Gulf service of remembrance and thanksgiving in Glasgow Cathedral … Beneath the faded colours of old Scottish regiments, Dr John Habgood, the Archbishop of York, strove to resolve the moral contradictions of the "whole wretched business" of the Gulf conflict' (Bell, 1991). Following the swift end of the Gulf War, for the next two years the media regularly reported on the efforts of the bereaved families to investigate the friendly fire episode.

During this whole period of protracted media attention, the position of government and military authorities converged into a relatively coherent narrative. The officials expressed 'great sympathy' and 'great

sadness' for the deaths of the soldiers and described the episode of friendly fire as a 'mistake', a 'tragic error' or an 'incident' that could have happened during any war. These words were repeated in the official immediate reports on the deaths of the soldiers, re-broadcast during the national ceremony of remembrance and repeated by officials during the 15-month-long investigation into the episode of friendly fire. The following quotation exemplifies the official response:

> Colonel Barry Stevens, British forces spokesman in Riyadh said: 'It is a matter of particular sadness both to ourselves and the American forces. The cruel fact of war is that no matter how many procedures you put in place, this sort of incident does happen.' (*The Guardian*, 1991)

In this quotation, the death of the British Fusiliers is introduced as a matter of shared 'sadness' for both the American and the British authorities. In the media, this shared concern was often framed within the popular metaphor of the special relationship. Initially, this metaphor implied the same compassionate reaction of both governments to the incident, whilst stressing unity of the USA and Britain in the fight against 'common enemies, and common interest in defeating and containing them' (Danchev, 1996, p. 739). Over time, and the progression from the coverage of the official remembrance ceremonies to the coverage of parents' inquest for the truth, the construct of the special relationship has defined the power relations between the two countries. For example, an article in *The Independent* began with the sentence: 'The special relationship between this country and the United States is at its worst when the American authorities demonstrate arrogance and insensitivity and their British counterparts are supine' (*The Independent*, 1992). As Danchev explains, 'in keeping with the multiple fractures of the post-Cold War world … "specialness" is, and always was, self-deception, "special relationship" not so much a creation as a construct – a British construct' (Danchev, 1996, p. 740). The construct of the special relationship could justify military cooperation, but it also displayed the fragility of these relationships in the post-Cold War context.

In spite of this fragility, it is important to recognise that the illusory nature of the special relationship legitimated rather than undermined the power of the state institutions. After all, both the American and British authorities agreed not to reveal all the circumstances of the deaths of their soldiers and they equally strongly denied their ability to assign any responsibility for the friendly fire episode to the authorities of either country. During the course of the investigation, both

governments used the same discursive formulae to legitimate their position. For example:

> The US offered deep compassion for the families and loved ones of these courageous soldiers who died defending the cause of freedom. (Oulton, 1992)

> To read the report of the British board of the investigators made to Parliament is to enter a world in which everyone has done his duty, everyone has followed orders, everything 'was in accordance with established procedures', there was 'no blame and responsibility' for either the Fusiliers, nor for the British Assistant Air Liaison Officer … The board did not establish whether the US Air Force (USAF) personnel involved were at fault. They delivered the missiles but the board could not establish precisely why they attacked the wrong target. (Macshane, 1992)

The officials of both countries offered their sympathy to the bereaved families, then emphasised that the dead soldiers had done their duty and died for democracy and freedom, but they also denied any possibility for holding anyone responsible for the deaths of the soldiers. This situation demonstrated that the construct of the special relationship could legitimate the military and political alliance, but it could not encompass bereaved families and it could not help to ascribe responsibility. The official narrative offered a decontextualised explanation for the death of the soldiers in the friendly fire episode, instead of responsibility and accountability. This discussion brings us to the second trait of the official discourse.

Contrary to the framework of a 'clean' war as a technologically advanced conflict with targeted destruction and with limited civilian casualties, the officials of the USA and the UK described friendly fire as a mistake and an incident that might happen during any war. On 27 July 1991, General Norman Schwarzkopf, supreme Allied commander in the Gulf, gave a talk at the Imperial War Museum on the opening of the Gulf War exhibition in London. General Schwarzkopf 'offered his deepest sympathy to the bereaved families but also said that … we have not come across any hint of negligence or failure to carry out procedures. War, unfortunately, is very chaotic. It is not clean' (Alderson, 1991). This quotation introduces the 'chaos of war' commonly known as the 'fog of war' as the main explanatory cause of the friendly fire episodes. To anchor this argument, the media and officials used rhetorical strategy of 'contextualisation' by military experts and military

historians (Carpentier, 2007, p. 111). In this instance, historical parallels with the Second World War enabled the normalisation of friendly fire.

The logic of this narrative is explained in the article by Shrader with reference to Major General Ridgway, the US commander of the 82nd Airborne Division in 1943. Ridgeway said that in cases of friendly fire, 'responsibility for the loss of life and material resulting from this operation is so divided and so difficult to fix with impartial justice, and so questionable of ultimate value to the service because of the acrimonious debates which would follow efforts to hold responsible persons or services to account, that disciplinary action is of doubtful wisdom … The losses are part of the inevitable price of war in human life' (Shrader, 1992, p. 43). This explanation encourages us to accept friendly fire as an inherent characteristic of any war and strongly discourages any public deliberation into the circumstances behind friendly fire, due to the potential damage this may cause to the 'normal' functioning of the military machine. Without a doubt, this explanation prioritises the interests of the military and the government over the interests of civilian society.

From 1991 to 1992, officials repeatedly referred to the 'fog of war' as a main cause of the friendly fire episode (HC Report, 1991a, 1992). On 8 May 1992, when the Coroner's Court in Oxford classified the deaths of the British soldiers as an 'unlawful killing' committed by the American pilots, the official discourse once again resorted to the 'fog of war' argument as a main reason for discouraging public enquiries into the case (Urban, 1992). Although the metaphor of the 'fog of war' implies the irrationality of warfare, it was used by officials to underline the rationality of the state and the military. This concept of rationality urges us to accept this voice of reason as a comfortable alternative to the controversies of friendly fire. However, if we accept this alternative, it means that we also agree that the casualties of friendly fire will be incorporated into the pantheon of military heroes as soldiers who did their duty and died for their country. As Altheide points out, 'the politics of fear needs heroes to hold up to audience members as role models, who not only do "heroic things" but more importantly support the political order without question, including dying for it' (2007, p. 185; see also Altheide, 2006). The normalisation of the casualties of friendly fire enables the normalisation of war by turning the dead into supporters of war and the military. As Wasinski explains, 'the dead soldiers are often "ventriloquated" to prompt other soldiers to behave with professionalism and continue their task in the name of the deceased' (2008, p. 121). Any public deliberation in the episodes of friendly fire distorts

these relations of power, challenging the right of the officials to 'speak through' the dead by using them as objects for inspiring patriotism and military mobilisation.

A challenge to the dominant state-led narrative arose from the efforts of the bereaved families, who fought for their right to know how and why their sons had been killed. Families initiated sessions in the House of Commons (HC Report, 1991a, 1991b, 1992), submitted a petition with 10,000 signatures to the Prime Minister on the anniversary of soldiers' death, sent open letters to President Bush and instigated an investigation in the Coroner's Court of Oxfordshire County Council in 1992. As the bereaved relatives were often depicted as victims of war or of the negligence of authorities, this representation legitimated their moral right to contest the official narrative at the Coroner's Court and in the media.

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, the media interviewed the family members of the soldiers who were killed and reported on their feelings of grief and devastation, but also their anger, resentment, bitterness and unfairness. In an interview with *The Times*, the mother of one of the soldiers said: 'It really hurts that he was killed by what they call "friendly fire". I feel bitter and angry about it' (Gill and Victor, 1991). In this instance, the death from friendly fire emerges as an 'unnecessary' and 'needless' death, and a death which aggravates grieving due to its controversial nature in the context of post-heroic warfare. The reporting on the official ceremonies of remembrance, the thanksgiving service and Remembrance Sunday brought a reconciliatory message, mixed with expressions of 'great sadness' from the authorities. This reporting created the illusion that the bereaved families were ready to accept the decontextualised version of events. However, soon after the official ceremonies, the controversies of the friendly fire episode came to the forefront of the media's attention. In the media, the bereaved families criticised the special relationship between the American and British governments, perceiving it as the reason for concealing the details of the incident. As a father of one of the soldiers said: 'I am disgusted that the MoD has not been able to apportion blame … Someone made a fatal error and they are seeking to cover it up for sake of good relations with America' (Frost, 1991). In this instance, the metaphor of the special relationship not only describes the subordinated position of the UK with regard to the USA in the realm of international politics, but also introduces the idea of a power opposition between the representatives of both governments and the bereaved families.

Contesting the idea of decontextualised commemoration, personal statements of the bereaved families revolved around a search for the 'truth' as a main discursive category. This focus on the 'truth' transferred the circumstances of the deaths of the soldiers into an important condition for a 'proper' commemoration – the only type of commemoration that could help the families to reconcile themselves with the loss of their sons. Moreover, it also implied that only through the release of all the information about the incident would it be possible to attribute moral responsibility for friendly fire. For example:

> Peter Atkinson, whose son Paul, 19, was killed, said 'relatives were not seeking revenge but just wanted to know what had happened. "We've had letters of sympathy from his friends and his regiment but nothing to say what happened … I can't understand why a cover-up should be necessary. There may be blame on both sides, British and American, it doesn't really matter. All we want is the *truth*"'. (Palmer and Furbisher, 1991, emphasis added)

> Patricia Atkinson, whose son Paul was killed, will ask Mr Bush to declassify a report that supposedly clears the pilots of two A-10 jets of blame. 'My message to President Bush is to let the *truth* come out.' (Stacey, 1991, emphasis added)

> Nothing can bring our boys back to us. But surely we are entitled to the *truthful* version of why their lives were needlessly lost instead of contradictions and cover-ups. (Waterhouse, 1991, emphasis added)

> Malcolm Rifkind, the Defence Secretary … is expected to pass on the sentiments from a letter from the parents of the nine dead to the US Defence Secretary, Richard Cheney, asking him to be big enough to accept his responsibility. Unless he does, we cannot feel peace of mind as we remain helpless victims of two governments. Who appear more keen to hide the *truth* than to tell nine sets of relatives, how and why their sons lost their lives. (Myers and Walker, 1992, emphasis added)

In the depiction of the friendly fire episode, the mainstream media described the efforts of the bereaved families as being driven by 'sentiments' and 'feelings'. Although this representation echoed the official narratives, which contrasted 'feelings' of civilians with 'reason' of the government and the military, it also provided some scope for public deliberation. Most importantly, it legitimated the right of the families to question the decontextualised explanation of friendly fire.

Unlike the official narratives, the bereaved families defied the historical parallels between the Second World War and the Gulf War. On

the contrary, their position referred to the Gulf War as a 'new' type of warfare. As the mother of the youngest soldier to be killed said: 'Never in this world should it have happened with all the technology they [the Americans] have got' (Mullin, 1991; see also Frost, 1991). In this instance, we can observe the application of a framework of post-heroic warfare which implies both sophisticated technology, and the moral responsibility of the authorities (the government and the military) for the lives of soldiers. For example:

> Mel Gillespie, whose son Richard, aged 19, died, said: 'I don't know what more we can do to discover who is telling the truth and who is lying. To the military mind, it seems to be a perfectly acceptable part of warfare that these things happen. Pilot error obviously played a part but the American government won't accept responsibility.' (Gill, 1991)

This quotation challenges the decontextualised interpretation of the incident by treating it as a form of disrespect and lie. The response of the families implies that friendly fire cannot be legitimated by historical excursions or accepted as a 'normal' characteristic of modern warfare, but, instead, the mistakes of service personnel in modern conflicts can and should be investigated and subjected to civilian oversight. From the perspective of bereaved families, the context of the modern – post-heroic – warfare suggests a responsibility of the authorities (the military and the government) for the deaths of service personnel.

   To summarise, the media coverage of the Gulf War departs from the narrative of British national mobilisation. For the legitimation of the Allied efforts, the media used the 'old' myths from the Second World War to stress the military cooperation and the special relationship between the USA and Britain. The media attention towards the British casualties of friendly fire revealed the inherent controversies in the official frames of the Gulf War. The fallen soldiers of modern conflicts came to be seen as victims of accidents and mistakes, whose deaths led to public inquiries and contested commemoration.

   Despite a long search for the truth, the families of the British soldiers killed in the friendly fire episode did not get access to all the documents or information about the death of their sons. The American pilots received immunity from the US government and did not give evidence in the Coroner's Court in Oxford. However, it would be wrong to say that these efforts were in vain. They inspired the families of American soldiers to instigate public inquiries into the deaths of American soldiers

killed in friendly fire incidents during the Gulf War and in subsequent conflicts. In 2002, the killing of four Canadian soldiers by an American pilot resulted in the Tarnak Farm Board of Inquiry, instigated by the families of the killed soldiers (Friscolanti, 2005). In Britain, since 1992, the deaths of service personnel have been investigated in coroner's courts and led to creation of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. This document protects the rights of bereaved relatives by stating that the families must be 'fully informed' about the investigation into the deaths of service personnel (MoD, 2013). Although these investigations have only extremely rarely led to the official conviction of service personnel in the UK or in the USA, the institutionalisation of public inquests into the death of service personnel signifies a revision of the social contract between the military, the state and civilian society. This contract recognises the public's right to know the truth about the circumstances of soldiers' deaths in modern conflicts.

2.3   Iraq and Afghanistan: the mediatised deaths

Since the 1990s, the media coverage of modern conflicts has been undergoing drastic changes due to advances in telecommunications technologies, the growing role of the Internet, and the intensive development of social media and 'citizen' journalism. In Britain, these changes gave birth to 'mediatised' war commemoration when the mass media name the British soldiers killed in military campaigns soon after their death, report on the repatriation process, circulate images of fallen soldiers and publish personalised obituaries. The mediatisation of remembrance corresponds with the mediatisation of modern conflicts in Western societies. According to Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 'to write of the mediatization of the conduct of war is to refer to the manner in which media are integral to those practices in which actual coercive or kinetic force is exercised, such as the guiding of troops and vehicles, the use of drones, the symbolic acts of violence central to terrorism' (2010, p. 5). Throughout the 2000s, the mediatisation of war commemoration has been shaping society's response to modern conflicts and has been defining the public perception of its commitments towards the national military. Although there is a view held within the literature that the media coverage of Afghanistan in 2001 differed from the coverage of the Iraq War in 2003 (Hoskins, 2004), these differences appear to be secondary in the case of war commemoration. As King explains, 'neither the majority of the British public nor the media have distinguished between the treatment of the dead of either theatre [Iraq or Afghanistan]' (2010, p. 4).

Treating this argument carefully, the following discussion refers to the commemoration of British military fatalities in both campaigns.

2.3.1   Framing war in the age of uncertainty

Since 2001, the British armed forces have been deployed in two subsequent campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, creating a vision of a never-ending war which has attracted a great deal of controversy over its purposes and results. Officially, both campaigns are not 'wars', but 'operations'. The Afghan campaign is called *Operation Enduring Freedom* in the USA and *Operation Herrick* in the UK. The conflict in Iraq is officially entitled *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in the USA and *Operation Telic* in the UK. The reporting on both operations largely disregards the particularities of military terminology and introduces both campaigns as wars.

In the media, both wars are intrinsically linked with the framework of the global War on Terror, which was proclaimed by American President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon outside Washington DC on 11 September 2001. The rhetoric of the global War on Terror enabled the representation of international terrorism as a new security threat to Western democracies (Howard, 2006; Morgan, 2008). The British media responded to these attacks with a demonstration of unity and historical references to the 'battle-hardened' friendship between the USA and the UK forged during the Second World War. As Wykes explains, both left-wing broadsheets like *The Guardian* and tabloids like *The Sun* 'used Pearl Harbor as a point of comparison to try and explain events which conjured up memories, myths, and stereotypes, linked the United Kingdom and United States, and presented danger as coming from the East' (2003, p. 126). In the same manner as during the Gulf War, the media used the metaphor of the special relationship for stressing the common vulnerability of both countries in the face of international terrorism and also laid down the foundation for a common military response to the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and the subsequent unification of British and American military efforts in the fight against the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. These symbolic associations enabled the representation of Britain as a nation whose existence was endangered by the terrorist attack on the USA. This idea is particularly prominent in a public address given by Prime Minister Tony Blair:

> I also want to say very directly to the British people why this matters so much to Britain. First let us not forget that the attacks of September 11 represented the worst terrorist outrage against British

citizens in our history … But even if no British citizen had died, we would be right to act. … We know the al-Qaida network threaten Europe, including Britain, and indeed any nation throughout the world that does not share their fanatical views. So we have a direct interest in acting in our self-defence to protect British lives. It was an attack on lives and livelihoods … We act also because the al-Qaida network and the Taliban regime are funded in large part on the drugs trade. (Blair, 2001)

Blair re-frames the 9/11 attacks as an attack on the British state and society. By emphasising the danger, he legitimates military response as the only viable option. The framing of the attack in the rhetoric of national survival reinforces this argument. He also appeals for the support of the armed forces: 'I want to pay tribute at the outset to Britain's armed forces. There is no greater strength for a British prime minister and the British nation at a time like this to know that the forces we are calling upon are amongst the best in the world' (Blair, 2001). In this instance, in a similar fashion to the context of the Falklands War, the British military emerges as a symbolic construction, which both represents the military as a profession and serves as a vehicle for strengthening nationalistic sentiments and rallying support for war.

Soon after Blair's announcement of the British military deployment in Afghanistan, over 20,000 people joined an anti-war protest in central London. Since this moment, the controversy over the military involvement of British forces in Afghanistan has been slowly evolving. In 2002, the media coverage of the first anniversary of 9/11 resulted in far more pluralistic media coverage than in 2001 (Wykes, 2003). In 2009, it was recognised that in Afghanistan, 'the UK has experienced the mission creep from its initial goal of supporting the USA in countering international terrorism, far into the realms of counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, protection of human rights and state-building' (BBC News, 2009b). In the British media, the campaign in Afghanistan has been continuously losing its conceptual focus, becoming an operation of multiple and often unclear purposes and questionable results (Forster, 2012).

From the start, the military campaign in Iraq did not generate even a temporary consensus in the newspapers. In 2003, 'patriotism met plurality' and the media coverage departed from the 'demonisation' of Saddam exercised during the Persian Gulf War and moved towards a discussion of the variety of reasons for the intervention in Iraq (Goddard *et al.*, 2008, pp. 16–17). These reasons included speculations

about the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), commentaries on the growing threat of Islamic terrorism, violations of human rights, and the increasing danger of the illegal drug industry to Britain and other Western countries. During the two months prior to the intervention, 'overall 86 per cent of the reports [on television] referred to weapons of mass destruction, suggested that Iraq had such weapons, and only 14 per cent raised doubts about their existence or possible use' (Lewis and Brookes, 2004, p. 135). Blair, in his address to the nation, explicitly said that the mission of British forces was 'to remove Saddam Hussein from power and disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction' (Blair, 2003). As he had done two years previously, Blair resorted to praising the British armed forces and called for the unity of the country in support of the forces as a means of dispelling public controversy:

> I know that this course of action has produced deep divisions of opinion in our country but I know also the British people will now be united in sending our armed forces our thoughts and prayers – they are the finest in the world and their families and all of Britain can have great pride in them. (Blair, 2003)

In this excerpt, Blair refers to a series of large-scale anti-war protests. In February 2003, millions of people joined the Stop the War Coalition and marched through the streets of London, Glasgow and Belfast (Shaw, 2005b; Murray *et al.,* 2008). However, as soon as British soldiers went to Iraq, the media responded with a significant reduction in critical coverage (Couldry and Downey, 2004, p. 280). Furthermore, almost 50 per cent of the population had changed their opinion on the war in Iraq, from a previously critical response to a neutral one, 'because they wanted to support the troops during wartime' (Lewis, 2004, p. 300). According to Lewis, this response sprung from coverage that largely ignored the difference between support for the troops and support for war. The events of the following years slowly undermined the already shaky support for British involvement in the Iraq conflict. The claims about WMDs were soon discredited and, in September 2004, Tony Blair officially acknowledged that 'the evidence about Saddam having actual biological and chemical weapons… has turned out to be wrong' (Blair, 2004). However, only in 2009 was the British contingent withdrawn from Iraq. Blair's decision to join the Coalition Forces in Iraq was repeatedly questioned and subsequently evolved into the Iraq War

Parliamentary Inquiry in 2010–11. During this inquiry, the bereaved parents of 179 British soldiers openly expressed their anger with the 'dishonest behaviour' of Blair by holding him personally responsible for the deaths of British service personnel (BBC News, 2012b).

To overcome the controversy of the Iraq campaign, the media often resorted to Blair's inspired rhetoric strategy. In 2003, during the first three months of the campaign, 'battle/strategy' reporting dominated the coverage in British press, far outweighing other topics such as the existence of WMDs or the human rights of Iraqi civilians (Goddard *et al.,* 2008, pp. 16–17). In other words, reporters refrained from discussing the controversies of the conflict by shifting the focus of public attention towards the exceptional qualities of the British service personnel, whose efforts were described as 'highly skilled, efficient and, at times, heroic' (Goddard *et al.*, 2008, p. 26; see also Barton, 2010, p. 121). This media coverage corresponded with public support for the armed forces. In the UK, the armed forces are traditionally counted amongst the most trustworthy of social institutions (Manigart, 2001, 2003; Populus Limited, 2004; YouGov, 2006; Ipsos MORI, 2007, 2009a). Britons rival only Americans in their support for the armed forces and their readiness to accept military options as a response to security threats (Asmus *et al.*, 2003, p. 5). One of the few cases of critical coverage resulted from a court appeal filed on behalf of Iraqi civilians against British soldiers (BBC News, 2010a; Towsend, 2010). In this instance, 'the media debate over where responsibility for the abuse lies has largely avoided blaming the ordinary soldier' (McCartney, 2011, p. 48). While reports on the British deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan have occasionally raised questions about the limited technical, financial or political support for the armed forces, such media accounts have never questioned the exceptional qualities of the British soldiers or the professionalism of the military (Barton, 2010, p. 122; see also the documentary *Why Did My Son Die*?, which aired on ITV1 on 12 October 2009). As Edmunds and Forster explain, 'though the British public remains uneasy about the UK's involvement in conflicts in Iraq and to a lesser extent to Afghanistan, these are seen to be primary responsibilities of politicians rather than the armed forces. Scandals *within* the armed forces are similarly dismissed' (Edmunds and Forster, 2007, p. 61, emphasis in original). By 2011, despite a growing 'feeling of uneasiness' about the 'seemingly unwinnable operation in Afghanistan' and dissatisfaction with the outcome of the operation in Iraq, the armed forces maintained strong public support (Edmunds, 2012; Forster, 2012).

2.3.2   The faces of the fallen and remembrance of the best

According to Susan Sontag, 'the memory museum is now mostly a visual one. Photographs have an insuperable power to determine what we recall of events' (Sontag, 2004; see also Sontag, 1979). It is hardly possible to find any national media producer in Britain that is not involved in the commemoration of fallen British soldiers. Immediately after the death of soldiers, the MoD informs the families of the deceased and releases a photo with a short obituary. Although all mainstream media are also subject to the wishes of deceased's next of kin, the influence of the MoD in the framing of fatalities should not be underestimated (King, 2010, p. 4). The MoD 'names' fallen service personnel and sanctions the release of information about the circumstances of their death, thereby exercising symbolic power over media commemoration. Following the MoD's release, the media '(re)-mediate' the images of fallen soldiers throughout the media environment (Bolter and Grusin, 2000).

As of July 2014, the numbers of British fatalities in both campaigns include 179 UK service personnel killed in Iraq (2003–9) and 453 British soldiers killed in Afghanistan (2001–14). The following analysis explores the BBC News website as an example of media-led commemoration which is performed by one of the main national media producers (BBC, 2013).

Media-driven commemoration creates a visual memory-museum. National newspapers in Britain most frequently publish images of named soldiers 'when those soldiers have died' (Woodward *et al.*, 2009, p. 219). Before death, only generic photographs of un-named, anonymous soldiers 'during operations, or [when] battle-ready, or in various stages of preparation' are released into the public domain (Woodward *et al.*, 2009, p. 215). However, after death, cropped images of smiling soldiers 'looking their best' (Sontag, 1979, p. 85) are transmitted across the media environment. The aggregation of the photos of the fallen soldiers creates the impression of a virtual memorial wall that is somewhat reminiscent of the famous Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC; it constructs a 'text- and image-heavy response to the now terse-seeming list of names on the low granite memorial itself' (Grider, 2007, p. 274).

The replication of the images of fallen soldiers is a popular concept of artistic commemoration in the USA and in Britain. In the USA, one virtual art project, entitled 'The Faces of the Fallen', commemorates the lives of American soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan (Grider, 2007; see also Faces of the Fallen, 2010; Reagan, 2010). Two British artists, Steve McQueen and Arabella Dorman, exploit the same concept of

commemoration. McQueen created enlarged facsimile postage stamps with the photos of British soldiers and insisted that 'an official set of Royal Mail stamps [is] an intimate but distinguished way of highlighting the sacrifice of individuals in defence of our national ideals' (McQueen, 2010). Dorman, working on a commission from the Army, created a painting, 'The Faces of the Fallen', which the artist sees as a 'memorial … to those who sacrificed their lives doing their duties' (Dorman, 2009). Both artists denied that their art memorials communicated any political messages, either pro-war or anti-war. However, as Woodward points out, 'the photograph of the soldier is never just a photograph of a soldier' (Woodward *et al.,* 2009, p. 222). The preoccupation of the British media and, we might add, artists with the faces of fallen soldiers can be seen as a reflection of 'anxieties about the legitimacy of the conflicts' (Woodward *et al.*, 2009, p. 219; Walklate *et al.*, 2011; Edmunds, 2012; Forster, 2012). These anxieties are expressed via the face-accentuated commemoration because in this case 'any context given to the exhibit in terms of its function as a memorial is provided simply by the aggregation of faces of the dead, all of whom died in the same cluster of conflicts and occupations' (Grider, 2007, p. 275). Fundamentally, this visual commemoration decontextualises the death of soldiers in modern conflicts.

The photographs humanise the military fatalities without giving us much information about the deceased soldiers. Obituaries legitimate the death of soldiers by 'historising' and editing their lives. As Hume explains, 'an obituary distills the essence of a citizen's life, and because it is a commemoration as well as a life chronicle it reflects what society values and wants to remember about that person's history' (2000, p. 12). The obituaries in the mainstream media 'distil' the lives of British soldiers by explaining why their lives are worthwhile to remember. Scholars of obituaries from the MoD website dedicated to the British soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan have previously suggested that the language of obituaries has been shifting from identification with the nation-state to the commemoration of soldiers as individuals and military professionals (Zehfuss, 2009; King, 2010). In particular, King argues that this shift has already produced a new framework of commemoration where 'the dead soldiers are no longer identified in the first instance with the nation and its armed forces'; they are only 'remembered for their individual professionalism' (King, 2010, p. 20).

To test King's hypothesis, the analysis examines 308 obituaries, including 154 obituaries for 179 soldiers killed in Iraq, and the same number of obituaries is selected for representing the British fatalities in

Afghanistan (all the obituaries from 2001–6, all obituaries for 2009 – the year with the highest death toll for British military – and all obituaries for fatalities in 2012 and 2013). Each obituary was manually coded as a single unit of analysis and saved as a separate .txt document and analysed with the Yoshikoder software. By using computer-assisted content analysis, three analytical codes were identified within obituaries: 1) national identifications, constructed via references to the 'British' identity, the UK, a country, sacrificed/sacred, hero/heroes, honourable citizen and so forth; 2) personal identifications that underpin family relationships and personal qualities of soldiers; and 3) service identifications to the armed forces, service values and military professionalism. The results are presented in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 demonstrates the dominance of service identifications and therefore signifies the emergence of a military service-based commemoration. This commemoration prioritises the military identity of deceased individuals over their representation as family members or
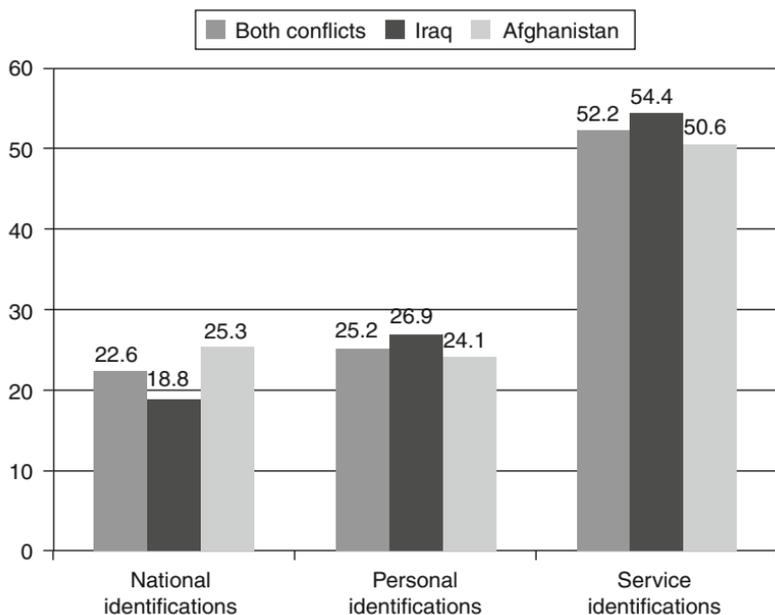
Figure 2.2   Content analysis of the BBC News obituaries for the UK fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan (in percentage of the total number of references to key identifications)

national heroes. In many senses, the BBC News obituaries do not differ from those on the website of the MoD. According to Zehfuss, the MoD online obituaries to British fatalities in Iraq represent 'soldiering as a career … and professionalism' (2009, p. 17). However, the obituaries construct an idealised vision of military professionalism. Like the MoD tributes, the BBC News obituaries describe the military profession as a non-violent activity and the fallen soldiers as 'consummate profession-als working hard to help bring peace, who are gentle … could "never hurt a fly"', and "who do not kill, but are killed"' (Zehfuss, 2009, p. 19). Obituaries 'sentimentalise' the military profession by representing service personnel as professionals and as 'innocent victims' of the oper-ations in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Sturken, whereas the con-cept of 'innocent victimhood' is popular in modern Western culture, it holds an inherent contradiction because it implies weakness as well as heroism. The instability of this concept necessitates the rewriting of 'victims in a context like 9/11 into narratives of heroism' (2007, p. 8). Applying Sturken's interpretation, we observe the construction of 'innocent' professionalism of hero-victims which underpins the high value of the lives of British soldiers while stressing their professional dedi-cation, exceptional individual qualities and sacrifice for their country.

King suggests that the MoD website dedicated to the fatalities of Afghanistan effectively 'personalises' and 'domesticates' commemora-tion because in these obituaries, soldiers 'are primarily defined by their personalities and their domestic [family] relations' (2010, p. 20). King sees this domestication in commentaries of fathers, mothers, wives, sweethearts and friends of the fallen. This domestication is not a com-pletely new phenomenon and, as discussed above in this chapter, the media published commentaries from the families of deceased soldiers during the Falklands War and the Gulf War. However, during these conflicts, personalised obituaries were rare and were seen mostly in exceptional cases of death. In modern Britain, the scape of personalisa-tion and domestication of commemorative discourse in mainstream media is more visible. The media commemoration encompasses the deaths of all soldiers by reporting on soldiers' individual qualities and family relations.

Like the idealistic representation of military professionalism, the obit-uaries censor 'real' personalities of the deceased soldiers. They describe soldiers as people 'who were immensely caring', 'gentle', 'superb', 'skilful', 'strong', 'intelligent', 'fit and ambitious', exploring predominantly the 'traditional genre of obituaries' (Fowler, 2005, p. 64). Editing is typical in obituaries. Butler found that in the obituaries to victims of 9/11,

'their lives were quickly tidied up and summarised, humanized, usually married, or on the way to be, heterosexual, happy, monogamous' (Butler, 2003, p. 32). According to Butler, the main purpose of censoring obituaries is a need to create a feeling of compassion with someone 'who might be like us'. In this manner, the representation of fallen British soldiers as distinguished individuals constructs sympathetic familiarity with hero-victims. Yet the language of 'sentimental politics' is not devoid of political meaning. According to Berlant, empathetic and sentimental obituaries 'promote and maintain the hegemony of the national identity form … in the face of continued widespread intercultural antagonism and economic cleavage' (2001, p. 53; cited in Sturken, 2007, pp. 25–6). Developing this argument, we can suggest that both service-orientated and personalised identifications sustain the hegemony of the national identity.

As Figure 2.2 shows, the national identifications in the BBC News obituaries comprise 22.5 per cent of references. In view of this result, it is difficult to agree that modern obituaries illustrate 'an erosion of state authority and even the concept of nationhood' (King, 2010, p. 20); on the contrary, we observe the persistence of national identifications. Furthermore, the in-depth analysis shows that the references to the military service and national identity reinforce each other. For example:

> The soldier, from 33 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), Royal Engineers, died from wounds suffered in the blast near Patrol Base Blenheim, near Sangin, in Helmand Province, yesterday afternoon. His family has been told. His death takes the number of British service personnel who have died since the start of operations in Afghanistan in 2001 to 245. Lieutenant Colonel David Wakefield, spokesman for Task Force Helmand, said: 'He was part of the counter-IED task force, leading the fight against the improvised explosive device [IED] in Helmand … His sacrifice and his courage will not be forgotten … His death took last year's grim tally to 108 – the bloodiest 12 months for British forces since the 1982 Falklands War.' (Johnson, 2010; reproduced without changes in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun*)

Here, the 'objectification' is achieved through the recalling of the position of a deceased soldier within the military hierarchy and the detailed technical description of the circumstances of his death. The use of military language helps to limit 'the psychological effects of the tragic events' (Horne, cited in Wasinski, 2008) and to 'tell persuasively

what has happened' (Wasinski, 2008, p. 121). According to Wasinski, 'the recourse to military language, be it technical, tactical, operational or strategic, is very helpful in this context. Using it, it is then possible to speak objectively of an attack by mentioning locations, movements, weapons used, order given, objectives aimed for' (2008, p. 121). Essentially, the military language normalises and legitimates the death of soldiers; it gives a reason for the death. The impact of this rhetorical strategy is reinforced by the position of the military commander. The rhetorical strategies, 'appeal to expert knowledge' and 'contextualisation by the military' have already been discussed in relations to the Gulf War earlier in this chapter (Carpentier, 2007, p. 111; Fairclough, 2010, p. 249). The passage above uses this strategy; it concludes with a comparison between the fatalities of Afghanistan and of the Falklands War. This comparison allows for the historical contextualisation of fatalities. However, it can be argued that a key sentence of this passage refers to an act of 'sacrifice' and a reason for eternal remembrance. This sentence situates the death within the context of the traditional national war commemoration in which the dead soldiers are hailed for being both a hero and a martyr (Mosse, 1990; see also Chapter 1). This sentence demonstrates that obituaries to British fallen soldiers evoke the idea of the nation through often 'unnoticed' signposts of the national identity and traditions (Billig, 1995). Although the media obituaries rarely contain direct references to the 'wider national purpose' of the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan (King, 2010, p. 9), they evoke, normalise and legitimate the language of nationalism.

From April 2007 to September 2011, the bodies of British soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan arrived at RAF Lyneham airport, close to the town of Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire. Local members of the Royal British Legion initiated a ceremonial ritual of paying tribute to fallen soldiers. They lined the main street of the town when the hearses with the bodies passed through. The media attention to this initiative turned the repatriation of the soldiers into 'a spectacle, regularly reported as a news item on television and in print media' (Jenkings *et al.*, 2012, p. 358). The intensive media coverage of the repatriations opened up a new space 'where contemporary engagement with militarism and the meanings of war [were] negotiated' (Jenkings *et al.*, 2012, p. 357; see also Walklate *et al.*, 2011).

From 2007 to 2011, the media coverage of the repatriations in Wootton Bassett was as homogeneous as the published obituaries. The reporters commented on the presence of the members of the public, depicted the solemn faces of the members of Royal British Legion in parade uniforms

and then paused for a moment on the trembling faces of the families and friends of deceased soldiers. During the short ceremony, the arrival of the hearse triggered repetitive photo shoots with video cameras directed straight at the faces of the bereaved families. The cameras caught every sign of emotion and despair on the faces of relatives, transferring their tragedy into a mediatised phenomenon. From the start, the media and local politicians emphasised the community origin of this ceremony and stressed its apolitical essence. However, the media reporting on the 'pride and patriotism' of the locals elevated the repatriations to a national level (Adams, 2008; see also the documentary *Wootton Bassett: The Town That Remembers*, which aired on BBC1 on 14 June 2011). Eventually, the national significance of the repatriations at Wootton Bassett was officially recognised and, in 2011, the town was re-named Royal Wootton Bassett (Cabinet Office, 2011). The members of the Royal British Legion in Wootton Bassett received national awards (RBL, 2009b).

According to researchers, the repatriations 'provoked a range of responses across a spectrum from outright condemnation of the military engagements that caused the fatalities through to "apolitical" positions that sought to deny explicit recognition that the repatriation could be understood in those terms' (Jenkings *et al.*, 2012, p. 361). However, the condemnation of military campaigns was extremely rare. The most famous case of political protest resulted from a provocative statement of a leader of the radical Islamic group Islam4UK, who called for a march through Wootton Bassett with empty coffins, which would symbolise the civilian casualties of the war in Afghanistan. In January 2010, this planned yet unrealised march became 'a front page story' with all the national newspapers wholeheartedly criticising this initiative. The *Daily Telegraph* accused the group's leader of madness and discussed the threat of Islamic extremism (Wardrop, 2010), whereas the reporter from *The Guardian* accused the protestors of moral degradation, a lack of humanity and their incapability to 'pay respect to those who have given their lives for our freedom' (Morris, 2010; O'Neill, 2010). As Barton ironically points out, this coverage ignored the fact that 'the stated purpose of the march – to draw attention to the deaths of others besides the British service personnel that result from their continued presence in Afghanistan – is a legitimate one and one that is obscured, rather than exposed by most of the reporting on the conflict' (Barton, 2010, p. 124). The reporting on Wootton Bassett, however unintentionally, corresponded with the interest of the political and military elite in the late 2000s (see Chapter 4). As Jenkings *et al.* note: 'The emergence of the Wootton Bassett phenomenon may have

been spontaneous, but it occurred at a time when the government and military were deliberately attempting to "reconnect" the military with the public in the wake of the unpopular Iraq war' (2012, p. 361). In this context, the media attention to the repatriations helped the government cause by ensuring support for the armed forces and, indirectly, compliance with military operations.

Thus, the paradox of the media commemoration lies in the decontextualisation and depoliticisation of soldiers' death. As Barton explains, in Britain, 'every new injured or slain hero has her or his allocated five minutes of news space but there is not time to ask why their heroism was necessary in the first place' (Barton, 2010, p. 117). This process exemplifies itself in a shift from *war* to *military*-centred commemoration, which praises military professionalism without questioning the necessity of sacrifice for the nation.

2.4   Concluding thoughts

This analysis has demonstrated that from the 1980s to the 2000s, the efforts of bereaved families brought changes in commemoration, such as the repatriation of fallen soldiers to the UK, public inquiries into friendly fire incidents and a public inquiry into the political decision to deploy British forces in Iraq. Although the attention of the mainstream media to the contested practices of war commemoration is limited and comparable only with the limited media coverage of anti-war protests (Lewis, 2008), the coverage of these efforts has been altering the established practices and discourses of war commemoration.

This military-centred commemorative coverage decontextualises modern conflicts by replacing the confusing complexity of modern 'wars of choice, not national survival' (Kaldor, 2001) with seeming simplicity and certainty about the strength and professionalism of the British armed forces. The media depicts the armed forces as a protector of the nation. This image is sustained through the usage of cultural imagery and myths of the Second World War, including the metaphor of the special relationship between the USA and the UK. The emerging focus on the commemoration of military service shows that the military in Britain is not just an institution of defence, but is a complex social construction, charged with cultural, historical and political associations (Woodward and Winter, 2007, p. 101; see also Edmunds, 2006). This construction encourages the representation of professional soldiers as heroes, professionals and individuals, yet also as victims of modern warfare.

The military-centred and also decontextualised and depoliticised commemoration meets the interests of many groups, including the government, the military, veterans and bereaved families. The focus on the military ensures that critical discussion of government foreign policies will be offset by the need to pay tribute to the fallen soldiers. To an extent, the media commemoration helps veterans and families of the deceased to be re-assured of the moral support and compassion for their tragic loss. It is important not to downplay the gains of this decontextualised and seemingly depoliticised commemoration, but it also important not to underestimate its drawbacks. As Sturken warns us, 'we must look carefully when that comfort comes as a kind of foreclosure on political engagement' with political events (2007, p. 26). The media commemoration of British military fatalities encourages the separation of the cause of modern wars from their participants, whilst also encouraging a foreclosure of public debate on the dilemmas of modern conflicts. As Barton explains, coverage that 'concentrates on the experience of the British armed forces, to that extent is complicit in obscuring a wider and greater tragedy – one that is being carried out in the name of the British electorate' (2010, p. 124). Therefore, it is important to uphold a sense of perspective while grieving for the lives of British soldiers.

3
The Story of War Memorials

3.1 Identity politics in British war memorials

In Britain, First World War memorials are the most prominent and also the most studied sites of war commemoration (Berg, 1991; Winter, 1995; King, 1998; Moriarty, 1999; Connelly, 2002; Marshall, 2004; Todman, 2005, Abousnnouga and Machin, 2011a). These memorials occupy the focal point of almost every village, town and city across the UK. Their prominence in the public landscape defines their impact on identity politics. Memorials inscribe in stone political choices to 'name' wars, pay tribute to the fallen soldiers and explain the reason for public remembrance. In this regard, memorials represent the modes 'in which identities are constructed and reproduced in different historical contexts' (Bell, 2003, p. 69). The unveiling of the story of war memorials can help us to trace changes in identity politics and in the relationship between the military, the state and civil society.

This chapter investigates the major shifts in war memorialisation from the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries. This analysis explores memorial inscriptions from the digital database of the UK National Inventory of War Memorials (UKNIWM) and examines the National Memorial Arboretum in North Staffordshire as a new site of military-centred commemoration. This chapter concludes with an analysis of virtual memorialisation, followed by reflections on the politics of war memorials.

3.1.1 The sacred dead of modern times

The First World War drastically changed the discourse and practice of war commemoration. Prior to this war, British soldiers were primarily buried near battlefields in anonymous common graves without

identification or any other details (Capdevila and Voldman, 2006, p. 155). In 1915, 'common soldiers ceased to be "buried where they fell – in the fields, in the roadsides, sometimes singly, sometimes together"; a member of a British Red Cross unit in his war diary writes that it became his, and his colleagues' job "to search for graves, identify soldiers, mark them with a cross, register their position"' (Lacquer, 1994, pp. 150–67). The repatriation of the bodies of the fallen to the UK was not considered appropriate or practical during the First World War, despite numerous protests from bereaved families (Lacquer, 1994, pp. 155–6; Moriarty, 1997, p. 126). The government took responsibility for organising overseas military cemeteries, including the identification and burial of almost a million soldiers (volunteers and conscripts) from the UK and Commonwealth countries.

The First World War brought another important change in memorialisation. Memorials reflected the democratisation of war memory by shifting the focus from the deeds of distinguished commanders to the sacrifices of the private (common) soldier (Mosse, 1990, p. 155). The most famous examples of these memorials are the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in London (unveiled in 1919 and 1920 respectively). These memorials are often considered to be condensed symbols of nationalism (Anderson, 1983), which came into existence during 'the zenith of an imperial Britishness' (Macleod, 2013, p. 649). This interpretation downplays the impact of these memorials on British society. As the majority of British soldiers were buried in overseas cemeteries, the Cenotaph, for example, 'created a place for the bereaved families, women and children in Britain to remember missing and fallen soldiers' (Gregory, 1994, p. 35; see also Winter, 1995; King, 1998; Edkins, 2003). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, countless cenotaphs, crosses and obelisks emerged across the British Isles. Unlike the national monuments to the unknown 'glorious dead', this community-driven memorialisation personalised the fallen by engraving the names of local residents. However, despite their primary focus on community, the aesthetic forms of local memorials 'rarely challenged official interpretations of the war' and, even more, community-driven memorialisation 'often complemented the forms of remembrance established by the government' (Moriarty, 1997, p. 126). In this respect, local memorials 'allowed grief to flow but at the same time' they also 'buttressed a socially conservative message' (Connelly, 2002). In essence, the First World War memorials brought communities together to grieve for their loved ones, but they also served as instruments to unite the country and strengthen national identity.

The role of war memorials in framing national and local identities is well-documented, but much less is written about the contribution of war memorials to military identity. Following the Cardwell-Childers Reform of the Regiments at the end of the nineteenth century, 'every regiment had a permanent depot and a geographically defined recruiting area from which it was supposed to draw all of its recruits' (French, 2005, p. 85). Regiments could seldom recruit more than 30–40 per cent of soldiers from their own regimental district, but their initial localisation constructed a strong sense of the symbolic belonging of soldiers to a certain geographical location. Regiments inspired locally based patriotism by cementing the unity of Britain by 'county rather than country' (French, 2005, p. 47). In this instance, memorials commemorated the heroic deeds of the county regiments by providing their members 'with a ready means of identification and solidarity' (French, 2005, p. 85). The conscription of 1916 did not alter this principle of military memorialisation and, furthermore, prior to conscription, community-inspired patriotism was a main engine for recruiting volunteers. The most prominent example of the convergence between national, local and military identities can be found in the phenomenon of the Pals' Battalions, when volunteers from the same workplace, street, village or city district joined locally based regiments (Gough, 2004; Todman, 2005; Finn, 2010). Consequently, First World War memorials found along the Western Front in France tended to be dedicated not to British soldiers, but to the members of local regiments from the UK and the Commonwealth (Gough, 2000, pp. 213–29; Macleod, 2013).

The aftermath of the Second World War did not alter this pattern of memorialisation. As Furlong *et al.* point out, 'casualty figures were much lower in the Second World War than in the First, and, in many instances, erecting another memorial was considered unnecessary' (2002, p. 13). Most importantly, according to the Local Authorities Power Act 1923, local communities could only alter existing memorials through 'the addition of names in conjunction with subsequent wars' (Furlong *et al.*, 2002, pp. 27–8). As a result, during the 1940s and the 1950s, new names of locally born soldiers who died in the Second World War were carved onto the First World War memorials. This practice ensured that the original intersection of local, national and military identities in war memorials was preserved. Furthermore, this practice laid a strong foundation for the successive memorialisation of military fatalities. However, researchers found that Korean War memorials did not represent the county-based regiments deployed in Korea; instead, the geographical positioning of these memorials was 'random'

and more likely reflected the personal choices of survivors rather than being inspired by community-based patriotism (Furlong *et al.*, 2002, pp. 24–5). This example suggests that post-1945 conflicts encouraged a trend towards the diversification of memorial practices and the wider pluralisation of identities in war memorials, whilst marking broader societal shifts in identity politics.

To visualise the scope of the contemporary memorialisation, it is enough to go for a short stroll through the streets and parks of London, paying attention to the new memorials built from the late 1990s onwards. The new memorials retrospectively commemorate the experience of various subgroups of fallen soldiers during the World Wars and post-1945 campaigns. For example, three memorials in different corners of Hyde Park commemorate the efforts of contingents from Africa, the Caribbean and India (unveiled in 2002), Australia (2003) and New Zealand (2006) during the World Wars. The main message of these memorials is to express gratitude to the contingents from Commonwealth countries, while also forging cultural and political links between Britain and these regions. Undoubtedly, these memorials reflect the imperial essence of the British military legacy by depicting the Commonwealth soldiers as dedicated supporters of the military and political union between Britain and these regions.

To a certain extent, a memorial to the Brigade of Gurkhas (unveiled in 1997) projects the blend of ideas by merging the imperial imagining with the contemporary pluralistic military memorialisation. This monument sits opposite the main entrance to the UK Ministry of Defence and commemorates the service of Nepalese soldiers in the British armed forces from the eighteenth century onwards. It has an inscription, 'Bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never has country more faithful friends than you', by Sir Ralph Turner, MC. This inscription smoothes over the fact that the 'conditions of service for the Gurkhas have never been the same as for the British soldiers, and in the late 20th century this resulted in an explosion of Gurkha rights movements' (Wohl, 2013, p. 34). It was only in 2007, ten years after the construction of this memorial, that 'pay and conditions of service for Gurkhas were finally brought to line with British soldiers' (Bellamy, 2011, p. 81). In 2008, after a long public campaign, some categories of the former Gurkha soldiers were allowed to settle in the UK; in the British media, 'the retired Gurkhas and their dependants were cast as deserving entrants of the national collective' (Ware, 2010, pp. 313–30). Whereas the Gurkhas' memorial presents the Nepalese soldiers as devoted 'friends' of Britain, it is a symbol of the prolonged

unequal treatment and the subordinated position of this group within the British armed forces.

To an extent, the current wave of memorialisation illustrates moves towards gender equality in war commemoration (Noakes, 1998; Summerfield, 2000). In 2005, Queen Elizabeth II unveiled a memorial dedicated to the women who participated and died in the Second World War. This memorial is situated in close proximity to the Cenotaph in London, underpinning its national significance. However, it could be noted that the theme of gender equality in war memorialisation is marginal in British memorials; the majority of new war memorials re-introduce ideas of male bonding and male-dominated military comradeship (Abousnnouga and Machin, 2011b). One of the most visible illustrations of the persistence of the male bonding imagery is a memorial dedicated to the RAF Bomber Command near Hyde Park (Figure 3.1).

The construction and unveiling ceremony of this memorial generated a great deal of controversy as this military unit participated in the devastating bombing of Dresden in 1945 with over 135,000 civilian casualties (BBC News, 2012c; see also Fuchs, 2011). To conclude our overview of recent memorialisation in London, we can also mention the Animals in War Memorial (unveiled in 2004), and memorials to

Figure 3.1   RAF Bomber Command Memorial, London (photo courtesy of Robert Lenfert, 2012)

post-1945 conflicts, such as the Falklands War Memorial, which is situated near the Tower of London (unveiled in 2005), and the Korean War Memorial, which is located on the Victoria Embankment near the Ministry of Defence (unveiled in 2014).

The current interest in war memorialisation raises questions about their timing and message. As Ian Jack points out, it is curious that 'all of them [the new war memorials in London] are long after the fact, some of them may be explicable as long-overdue remedies to unjust neglect, but why did the spate of building happen when it did, in the first few years of the present century?' (Jack, 2012). In 2000, Ashplant *et al.* associated public interest in war commemoration with four factors: 1) the growing visibility of the Shoah expressed in a large number of new museums and films about the Holocaust; 2) an increase in both demand and public recognition of the survivors' memories of the World Wars due to the survivors having aged or died; 3) an anniversary boom fuelled by extensive media coverage; and 4) regional ethnic conflicts across the world rising from the end of the Cold War (Ashplant *et al.*, 2000, pp. 3–5). Two of these factors can be applied to the British context and position memorials as both an expression of gratitude to a declining group of survivors and a symbolic gesture of marking the anniversaries of major wars and conflicts. Recognising the importance of these factors, it seems that they alone cannot explain the current passion for constructing war memorials. One might argue that contemporary memorialisation underpins the specific socio-political context of the continuous deployment of the British armed forces in overseas operations. Since 1997, British contingents were deployed in five military conflicts (Iraq, 1998; Kosovo, 1999; Sierra Leone, 2000; Iraq, 2003–9; and Afghanistan, 2001–14), more times than the army of any other European country (Forster, 2011, p. 55). The continuation of military deployments normalises British military fatalities and also enhances 'a national military myth' (Shaw, 1991). According to Shaw, the national military myth 'allows its state and its armed forces to control resources, land, resources and people at home and across the globe because of its role in defending the UK from constant threats' (Shaw, 1991, cited in Basham, 2013, p. 21). The re-iteration of past military experiences in new war memorials sustains this myth by highlighting the idea of national mobilisation and the dedication of the military to the protecting the country.

The dominance of conservative aesthetics and 'reminiscent forms of war memorialisation from some 70 years previously' in such memorials as the Animals in War Memorial (Kean, 2011, p. 66) or the RAF Bomber

Command Memorial re-iterate innocence, courage and 'the triumph of the youth' by reproducing rather than challenging the conventions of the 'Myth of War Experience' (Mosse, 1990). It is interesting to note that the concept of the RAF Bomber Command Memorial is similar to *The Three Soldiers* composition at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington in the USA (Figure 3.1). Both memorials promulgate the imagery of the 'youth, innocence and vulnerability of men at war, ostensibly honouring "sacrifice" while ignoring the war's imperial, arguably genocidal, certainly self-destructive character' (Johnson, 2012, p. 362). Therefore, if the current wave of nostalgic and conservative memorialisation aims to right the wrongs of the past, it does not want to achieve this goal through new aesthetic choices about the tragedies of wars and the destructive nature of military-assisted violence. Instead, modern memorials welcome 'a symbolic return to the past [which] acts as a retreat from the uncertainties of the present' (Tilley, 2006, cited in Kean, 2011, p. 66).

Thus, at first glance, contemporary war memorialisation reflects a move towards particularistic and pluralistic commemoration as described by Nora (1998). New memorials feature the identities of different service communities and attempt to compensate for the long period of 'silent' commemoration of the 'forgotten' heroes of the World Wars and post-1945 conflicts. This pluralisation of war experiences in memorials reflects the work of multiple actors in war commemoration, but it does not defy the association with the idea of the nation or the country. On the contrary, memorials to women, the Gurkhas, RAF pilots or even animals in wars represent wars as being the unified efforts of various social groups who fought and died for the British cause. In this regard, modern war memorials are powerful vehicles of national identity because they re-iterate values of national mobilisation and military preparedness.

3.1.2   Killed while on service

Although many recently built memorials reproduce conventional forms and discourses, the systematic analysis of memorial inscriptions reveals significant shifts in the language of memorialisation. This section explores the UKNIWM, which contains a digital archive of over 100,000 war memorials in the UK and overseas. The content of the database expands continuously and covers a wide range of memorials, including additions to gravestones, monuments, sculptures, windows, trees, benches and church-seat fittings. The database classifies memorials according to their location, type, association with certain wars and

conflicts, date of construction, date of unveiling ceremony, textual dedications and other characteristics. Potentially any physical object can be recorded as a 'memorial' if it has a textual dedication (UKNIWM, 2014). This concept of cataloguing war memorials transforms the database into a memorial in the making and reflects the pluralisation of identities and diversification of commemorative practices.

It is commonly accepted that the 'commemoration of the First World War set a model for the commemoration of most wars subsequently fought by Western nations' (King, 1998, p. 2; King, 2010, p. 7). In Britain, as mentioned above, the names of soldiers who died in the Second World War were added to First World War memorials. The commemoration of the fallen of post-1945 campaigns is not so straightforward. According to Leonard, due to the political uncertainty in defining the military campaigns of the post-1945 period, the names of British service personnel killed, for example, in Malaya, Kenya or Northern Ireland were not added to local memorials until the early 1990s. Leonard refers to the official decision of 'a district council in Cheshire in 1993' as a turning point, after which 'the recording of casualties from Northern Ireland on local cenotaphs is now permitted' (Leonard, 1997, p. 17). Another example relates to the experience of the Gulf War, when the family of one deceased soldier could not receive permission for a memorial stone in the local cemetery. As the father of the deceased soldier said: 'We have been trying to find a spot to put my son's ashes and erect a stone in his memory. There is a war remembrance section in our local cemetery but we have had no success. My wife was also told that the Gulf conflict was not a war, so the War Graves Commission could not help' (Gill, 1991). These examples demonstrate that the First World War model of war memorialisation cannot always encompass the post-1945 experiences. These limitations gave rise to new discourses and practices of memorialisation.

The following analysis explores the discursive strategies used to commemorate the British fatalities of the Falklands War, the Gulf War and the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this instance, we do not distinguish between the various physical forms of memorials, and consider inscriptions sourced from plaques, obelisks, sculptural compositions, church windows or memorial benches. On 16 March 2010, the UKNIWM database contained the recording of 453 memorials to the fatalities of four conflicts. In 186 memorials (41.1 per cent of the total number of memorials), the names of the fallen were added to First World War memorials, demonstrating the pattern of successive

memorialisation. However, in 221 cases (48.7 per cent), separate memorials were created for marking the experiences of soldiers killed in either of these campaigns. Finally, in 46 cases (10.2 per cent), the names of the fallen in modern conflicts were added to new memorials, which are dedicated to the fallen of the Second World War onwards (mostly constructed in the 2000s).

The first group of memorials (41.1 per cent) shows a tendency for historical continuity in war memorialisation. Initially, these memorials commemorated fallen soldiers – participants of the First World War – who were born or recruited from the same locality (village, district or town) and sometimes served in the same locally based regiment. Today, these memorials pay tribute to the participants of various wars and military campaigns altogether. They do not make a distinction between the military ranks of fallen soldiers or the principle of their recruitment to the armed forces (conscripts or professionals). The fallen in these memorials share only one common characteristic – they were born or recruited from the same geographical location. The important feature of these local war memorials is their discursive dependency on the original inscription, which commemorates, first and foremost, the sacrifice of those killed in the First World War, rather than soldiers killed in subsequent conflicts. Memorials of this kind depict fallen soldiers of all wars as the 'glorious dead' by mapping their belonging to both local and national communities. This discursive strategy constructs a sense of continuity in the national tradition of war commemoration which persists despite changes in the institutional structure of the armed forces, changes in the nature of warfare or wider changes within British society.

Meanwhile, the analysis reveals that the most popular strategy is to construct separate memorials to the fallen of the Falklands, the Gulf War or the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and decorate these memorials with unique inscriptions. In this instance, memorials illustrate a departure from successive memorialisation and introduce new discursive choices for recording and legitimating military fatalities. The same departure from tradition is visible in generic memorials to the participants of all conflicts from the Second World War onwards. Table 3.1 compares the inscriptions on the original memorials to the First World War with the added names of the fallen of recent campaigns, and inscriptions on separate memorials to the fallen of the Falklands War, the Gulf War or the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Table 3.1 demonstrates that both types of recording struggle to 'name' modern campaigns either as 'wars', 'conflicts' or 'operations'. Instead,

Table 3.1 Inscriptions on British war memorials to the fallen in the First World War and memorials to the fallen in the Falklands War, the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan (inscriptions are sourced from the UKNIWM database and a personal collection of war memorials, 2010)

	First World War memorials with added names of the fallen of modern campaigns	**New memorials to the fallen of either the Falklands War, the Gulf War, Iraq or Afghanistan**
The naming of the event	The Great War (1914–18) World War [WWII] (1939–45) Indication of geographical location for post-1945 campaigns (the Falkland Islands, the Gulf, Iraq or Afghanistan)	Conflict Campaign Active service or action Operations Indication of geographical location War [only for the Falklands and the Gulf; no cases for Iraq and Afghanistan]
The agency of fallen soldiers	Who gave their lives Who made the supreme sacrifice Who [gloriously] fell/laid down their lives Who died for …/serving their Country/ in the service of the King Who lost their life/lives	Who was killed in [geographical place] Who served in [place]/served with the British Contingent… Killed on service/active service in [place] Killed in action during service Killed in the line of duty Killed by friendly fire Who lost his/her/their life/lives Who died in [location]/in the service of their country/who gave their lives
The purpose of death or for what the soldiers died	For God, King and Country For the Sacred Cause of Justice and Freedom	Serving their Country For Freedom No explanation <u>Rare options are:</u> They have done their duty Helping Kuwaitis flee their country Killed bringing peace to the people of Iraq

the inscriptions on First World War memorials often indicate only the geographical location without adding any other details (no time period, for example). In these memorials, the original inscription introduces the idea of the fundamental similarity in the war experiences of fallen soldiers – participants of World Wars and participants of the Falklands War, the Gulf War or the campaigns in Iraq or Afghanistan. This concept of memorialisation underpins a sense of continuity in the national tradition of war commemoration. Newer war memorials cannot exploit the past in this way. Instead, these memorials use a variety of terms for the naming of military campaigns, either as 'wars' (only for the Falklands War and the Gulf War) or as 'conflict', 'operation', 'action' or 'service'. In this instance, memorials reflect the discursive confusion and the lack of public consensus in describing modern warfare (Chapter 2), but they also show that this contextual confusion can be avoided by changing the language and frame of commemoration.

Memorial inscriptions reveal a change in the linguistic construction of marking the agency of fallen soldiers. The First World War memorials describe the deaths of soldiers as a voluntary action of 'giving life' and 'making a sacrifice'. This construction represents fallen soldiers as active subjects and dedicated citizen-soldiers. In contemporary memorials, a passive grammatical construction describes the death of British soldiers, who are 'killed on duty, in action or while on service'. Zehfuss, applying Butler's idea of the hierarchy of grief to the analysis of MoD obituaries to British soldiers, comes to conclusion that this passive construction reflects the hierarchy of grief between the lives of Western service personnel 'who do not kill, but are killed' and 'non-Western non-lives' (Zehfuss, 2009, p. 19). According to Zehfuss, this change in the representation of military deaths encourages us to take 'pride in these [our] soldiers' service and underlines the grief at their "tragic" death' (2009, p. 19). However, the comparison of modern and First World War memorials problematises another aspect of this transition from active focus to a passive construction. One might argue that the passive grammatical construction 'to be killed while on service' introduces a new focus on professional/vocational duty which allows the nature of the conflict to be omitted and ignored. In memorial inscriptions of modern memorials, the distinctive characteristics of contemporary conflicts are largely unarticulated and are replaced by the decontextualised concept of military service.

Table 3.1 contrasts 'old' and 'new' reasoning behind what soldiers died for. As Moriarty explains, in the inscriptions on the First World War

memorials, 'great emphasis was placed on the communal act of remembrance, which focused on what the dead had died for and their example of self-sacrifice, rather than on isolated personal memories which would have recalled them as individuals' (Moriarty, 1997, p. 128). Confirming this point, Table 3.1 shows that the popular inscription 'Lest We Forget' in the First World War memorials coexists with clearly articulated reasons for what the fallen soldiers as a group had died. These reasons are attributed to sacrifice for traditional national values – God, King and Country (Kumar, 2003; Mandler, 2006), and liberal values such as freedom, peace and democracy. Contemporary memorials do not mention God and King or Queen, and therefore demonstrate the abstraction of memorialisation from religion and monarchy. Interestingly enough, inscriptions in modern memorials also seldom engage with liberal justifications of death at war such as the fight for freedom, peace and democracy. This result can be due to ideological ambivalence and public criticism of aggressive humanitarian liberalism in foreign affairs exercised by the British state from the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s (Basham, 2013). But memorial inscriptions show that the confused nature of modern warfare can be omitted and replaced by the concept of 'service for the country'. This frame solves two discursive problems; it does not require an accurate description of modern warfare or an ideological justification of the purpose of the death. The National Memorial Arboretum in North Staffordshire exemplifies this format of military-centred commemoration.

3.2 The National Memorial Arboretum

This extraordinary and unique place is Britain's living and growing tribute to the service and sacrifice of so many for our freedom. (NMA, 2009, p. 2)

My first visit to the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) took place on a drizzly morning in November 2009. Although I have never visited the Arlington National Cemetery in Washington DC, I felt that the NMA must share some commonality with the American site of national remembrance. This was indeed the case. In 1988, a retired Royal Navy Commander, David Childs, after visiting the Arlington National Cemetery, became convinced that Britain also needed 'a focal point of remembrance', and a place 'where tribute to those who had lost their lives defending one's country future could be made by planting a tree, a living symbol of a future of hope' (Childs, 2011).

3.2.1 Forging military commemoration

The idea of creating a 'British Arlington' received the support of the public and the political and military elites. This accumulative support for the project can be explained by the unique convergence of circumstances and the interests of the groups involved. The idea of the Arboretum fitted within the programme of the re-development of the former sites of mining and mineral extraction. In 1995, the government established a nation-wide organisation, the National Forest, with the purpose of developing 'woodland landscape for the nation' (National Forest, 2014). The Arboretum is situated on a former gravel extraction site in the Midlands region of Britain, and David Childs, the founder of the Arboretum, considered the planting of remembrance trees on this site as 'the best scheme for the betterment of the English landscape in the whole of the 20th century' because it 'can help to cover up and heal scars from centuries of mining and mineral extraction', while bringing the story of the courage and sacrifice of those killed in wars and conflicts (Childs, 2011).

Initially, the Arboretum was intended to host memorials to 'those who served during and since the Second World War' (Gough, 2005), but this condition was soon lifted in favour of a wider military-related memorialisation. This military-centred concept of the Arboretum meshed well with the interests of the service-related communities. As Childs recalls, regimental organisations and service-related communities across Britain were among the most dedicated supporters of the Arboretum, and all British regiments, including regiments from Scotland and Northern Ireland, now have memorial trees or memorials at the Arboretum (Childs, 2011). The official support of the UK Ministry of Defence was secured in 2001, after the decision to transfer the construction of the National Armed Forces Memorial from London to the Arboretum. This memorial elevated the political importance of the site and ensured the support of the military elite. Political support for the Arboretum was crucial for the success of the whole project. In November 1994, Prime Minister John Major launched a National Lottery appeal, which he saw as a main source of raising public funds for innovative projects in culture, sport, heritage and nationwide charities, including the construction of the National Memorial Arboretum (Major, 1994). Defending the project in the House of Commons in November 1994, Major said that: 'I think it will be a fitting, a remarkable and a sympathetic memorial to those people who suffered in wars and their families both in the short term and the long term' (Major, 1994, cited in Childs, 2011). The favourable position of the government towards the Arboretum can

also be explained by the correspondence of the Arboretum's concept with two government policies of, first, enhancing a sense of British national identity through cultural heritage and war commemoration, and, second, raising support for the armed forces (see Chapter 4). Both policies need to be considered in the context of the continuous military deployments of the British armed forces from the late 1990s onwards. Therefore, although the success of the Arboretum sprang from the efforts of many organisations, charities and passionate individuals like David Childs, it could hardly have come to fruition without the specific political context and the support of the political and military elites. In 2001, the NMA was officially opened to the public. Currently, it covers 150 acres of land and hosts over 200 memorials and around 50,000 memorial trees (NMA, 2014). The principal difference of the Arboretum from its American prototype is that it does not contain actual graves of fallen soldiers. This Arboretum is for memorials and cenotaphs only.

The existing memorials and trees at the Arboretum commemorate a wide range of experiences and identities. Memorials mark national military service during wars and military operations, commemorate the history of county regiments and display dedications to civil services such as police forces, fire brigades and ambulance units. The Arboretum also host memorials which commemorate a range of non-military activities from an active engagement with charities, a devotion to the idea of peace or a respectable length of marriage (such as the Diamond Wedding Anniversaries Memorial). The latter reflects the fact that many volunteers and strong supporters of the Arboretum are elderly individuals, veterans and survivors, or relatives of these groups.

This diversity of memorials at the Arboretum shows the pluralisation of memorial practices and discourses. At the Arboretum, communities and individuals can mark their distinctive identity through a different choice of trees, unique forms of memorials and unique inscriptions. This diversity demonstrates a departure from the traditional and relatively uniform First World War memorialisation, and it also breaks with the concept of localised war memorialisation. The Arboretum features the experiences and identities of locally dispersed communities, which come from different corners of the UK.

According to the NMA's website, around 60 per cent of memorials at the Arboretum have direct military connections (NMA, 2014). To this number we can add memorials with broader service associations. An overview of these sites allows us to distinguish between: first, memorials to regiments and other military units; second, memorials to veterans' associations and service charities; and, third, memorials to individuals

who served in or supported the armed forces. This focus on military-related institutions mirrors the interests of the MoD and the Royal British Legion (RBL), one of the main members of the Board of Trustees. This board also includes the representatives of the National Forest (which is responsible for the trees) and the Lafarge Corporation (which is responsible for the site). The representatives of the MoD and the RBL, together with the administration of the NMA, allocate the plots for memorials. The MoD represents the interests of regiments, branches of the armed forces and service personnel. The RBL works with veterans' associations, service charities and non-governmental groups. Therefore, these groups ensure the preservation of the military-centred concept of the Arboretum.

The grounds of the Arboretum host sites of regimental histories, military culture and identity. As was noted above, the majority of active and currently disbanded regiments of the British Army marked their presence at the Arboretum either through a memorial tree, a grove or a physical memorial (Childs, 2011). All branches of the Armed Forces are represented at the Arboretum. Regimental memorialisation is particularly striking because it marks the significant changes in the military history of the British Army, including the disbandment of regiments and the emergence of the new military units (French, 2005). For example, the Arboretum hosts one memorial to a local county regiment, the Staffordshire Regiment, along with over 100 memorials to squadrons, regiments and main branches of the armed forces. The examples of such military memorials are: the Royal Artillery Garden, the Royal Tank Regiment, the Royal Engineers Memorial, the Royal Green Jackets and the 10th and 11th Royal Hussars.

Contrasting with local county-based war memorialisation, the regimental memorials at the Arboretum do not mention the names of fallen soldiers; instead, they commemorate the military achievements of the regiments, from their inception to the present day. This concept of memorialisation demonstrates a principal shift from a personalised commemoration of local residents towards collective, military-centred and national commemoration of the regiments. Masking this conceptual shift in memorial practice, memorials at the Arboretum place particular emphasis on the continuity of British military traditions. In turn, this emphasis constructs an illusion that the military as an institution preserves its professionalism and military culture in the twenty-first century, despite changes in its organisational structure, changes in the nature of warfare or changes in the societal attitudes of British society.

This illusive continuity is achieved through references to military culture. For example, the flagpoles in the section commemorating the RAF are 'donated by those serving at RAF Stafford, these flagpoles are dedicated in tribute to those who have served in years gone by'. In this instance, the flagpoles introduce the values of military comradeship by ensuring that group bonding and 'esprit de corps' continues to be 'of prime importance to the identity of the British soldier' (Woodward and Winter, 2007, p. 67). This memorialisation defies the difference between military service during colonial wars, World Wars or recent military campaigns, and the experience of citizen-soldiers (conscripts or volunteers) or professional soldiers. Memorials decontextualise wars by replacing the historical complexity of warfare and national military service with the 'timeless' values of military culture.

The second type of service-related memorials covers memorials to veterans' associations and service-connected charities. The examples of these memorials include the Royal British Legion Memorial, a memorial to British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association, a memorial to British Korean Veterans and memorials to British Nuclear Test Veterans, the Association of Jewish Ex-Service Men and Women, Polish veterans and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association. Like the First World War memorialisation, these types of memorials exemplify 'a highly symbolic act of communal ownership, approval and coop-eration' (Moriarty, 1997, p. 129). This cooperation can be seen as a form of healing and reconciliation with the traumatic experience of war (Winter and Sivan, 1999, pp. 6–39). Unlike regimental memorials, these memorials contextualise war and military experiences because the specific context allows for a distinction between the different identities of members of service-related associations. Through the depiction of specific identities, these memorials sustain the unique organisational culture and unite communities through remembrance. Furthermore, the location of these community-inspired memorials at the Arboretum, a 'self-designated national site of remembrance', integrates these diverse identities within the wider context of national commemoration.

The third type of memorials encompasses thousands of memorial trees and a significant number of memorial benches. These 'living' and solid tributes commemorate individuals, and the sheer diversity of these tributes illustrates a move towards the pluralisation of com-memorative practices and identities of deceased individuals. Memorial trees create 'treescape memories' which 'can afford emotional responses and serve as spaces of much more intimate and reflexive practice and performance' (Cloke and Pawson, 2008, pp. 107–22). For the founder of

the NMA, a memorial tree is the most powerful symbol of commemoration (Childs, 2011). Trees enable the emotional connection between the generations while also transferring the landscape into a treescape of national, local and individual memories. This treescape of memory transforms the Arboretum into a garden in its own right. As Gough points out, 'the Arboretum is quintessentially a place of floral and arboreal display', which expresses the regional, local or private identities of British people (Gough, 2005). According to Gough, the identification of the Arboretum as a memorial garden dominates the other meanings attributed to this place; it will be always more 'a garden that contains a monument [the Armed Forces Memorial], rather than a monument surrounded by a garden' (Gough, 2005). The Arboretum embodies the idea of garden as a quintessential component of British national identity, but it also re-instates this tranquil space as 'the rightful, natural home of the British military' (Woodward, 1998, p. 28, cited in Basham, 2013, p. 29). The military-centred focus is reinforced through the physical prominence of the Armed Forces Memorial (AFM).

Queen Elizabeth II unveiled the AFM in 2007. Whereas references to the monarchy have disappeared from memorial inscriptions, the members of the Royal Family remain the important symbolic figures in British commemoration. The Queen acts as a symbol of tradition and national identity whose presence at unveilings and remembrance ceremonies legitimates and nationalises new war memorials (Wardle and West, 2004; see also Billig, 1992; Blain and O'Donnell, 2003). In the guidebook, the AFM is introduced as 'a striking and emotive tribute giving recognition to and thanks for those who have died whilst on duty or as a result of terrorist action since the end of the Second World War' (NMA, 2009). Liam O'Connor, the architect of the AFM, mentions that he was inspired by the ancient monuments of prehistoric Britain, such as Stonehenge and Silbury Hill (O'Connor, 2010; see also Figure 3.2).

However, it might be argued that the concept of the AFM does not reflect the 'old' monuments, but introduces a recently 'invented' concept of a military service-centred memorialisation. Through artistic and discursive choices, the AFM embodies a 'national military myth' described by Shaw (1991) and discussed earlier in the chapter. The very name of the AFM represents the changed concept of memorialisation. Although the central inscription dedicates the memorial to 'the men and women of the armed forces killed on duty since the Second World War', it does not group the fallen according to a specific war experience, but only marks the year of their death and their belonging to one of the three main branches of the armed forces. This style of

Figure 3.2   The Armed Forces Memorial, NMA (photo by the author, 2009)

recording prioritises military experience over the context of wars, and therefore it favours a decontextualised commemoration. In a sense, this concept is unsettled. One record for the AFM in the UKNIWM database (Ref: 55449) re-classifies the fallen according to their participation in 'wars' (the Korean War), 'emergencies' (Malayan, Suez and Cyprus), 'conflicts' (the Falklands and the Gulf), 'confrontations' (Indonesia) or 'campaigns' (Palestine, Aden, Northern Ireland, the Former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq). The actual memorial does not use terms such as wars, conflicts, confrontations or campaigns, indicating the ambivalence of these descriptions. Instead, the memorial refers to 'duty' as a legitimate reason for remembrance.

The names of the fallen on the AFM are structured according to their affiliation with the Royal Navy, the Army or the RAF. The first classification demonstrates the historical significance of the branches within the British military. The names of the fallen from the Royal Navy (the oldest military institution) begin the list of casualties. The fallen who served in the Army and the RAF follow the Royal Navy. This principle of recording constructs a timeline from 1945 onwards by creating a seeming continuity in both the British military casualties and the dedication of

the armed forces to the protection of the country. This decontextualised and military-centred concept of memorialisation normalises the idea of abstract warfare by constructing a timeline from the past, through the present to the future. To reinforce this timeline, the AFM has an empty space for engraving the names of service personnel who will be killed whilst on service in future conflicts. Unlike the First World War monuments, many of which are engraved with the words 'Never Again', this memorial suggests the perpetuity of war.

The final principle of recording the names of fallen soldiers reflects the collective essence of the military culture in Britain. The list records the names of soldiers who were killed in the same episode or on the same day, constructing a chronological line of military deaths throughout the last five decades. This principle of recording underpins the idea of comradeship or, in Woodward's words, 'mateship', which dominates the narratives of modern service personnel in the UK. Woodward concludes that 'the celebration of the bonded, cohesive unit … could be read as a celebration of citizenship, when the nation (the potential object of citizenly actions) is uninterested' (Woodward, 2008, p. 378). Commitment to fellow soldiers replaces narratives about the national importance of military service in self-identification interviews of British participants of the Iraq campaign. Applying this argument to the AFM, the grouping of the names according to the same episode of warfare might be seen as a way of reinforcing ideas of unity in death and brotherhood-in-arms.

Most importantly, the AFM does not distinguish between conscripts who died in, for example, the Korean War and professional soldiers who died in Iraq or Afghanistan. It dismisses the difference in the recruitment of soldiers in the same way as it omits commentary on the context of warfare. By directing the focus on the sacrifice of all service personnel without distinction (conscripts and professionals), this memorial constructs a sense of the historical continuity of military culture and also the continuous dedication of the armed forces to the nation and the country. Considering the memorial through a theoretical lens, we do not observe a clear departure from institutional (national) professionalism towards occupational military professionalism (as is suggested by Moskos *et al*., 2000; King, 2010), but rather we see the emergence of hybrid military professionalism, which represents the military as both a unique profession and a protector of the nation (see discussion in Chapter 1).

The sculptural compositions inside the AFM depict wounded and dying comrades, representing modern soldiers as hero-victims (Figure 3.3). The figures of soldiers do not hold any weaponry or maintain a defensive

Figure 3.3   The Armed Forces Memorial, NMA (photo by the author, 2010)

stance. The conservative message of this memorial is expressed through the engagement with ideas of 'the triumph of the youth' and 'suffering purifies', which are both prominent ideas in First World War memorials (Mosse, 1990; see also Chapter 1). The expression of suffering helps to transform modern soldiers into 'saints of the nation' by stressing their dedication to both the military and the country. The novelty of this memorial lies in its ability to construct and 'invent' the idea of the continuity in the role of the British armed forces from 1945 onwards by brushing over the controversial peculiarities of many conflicts, from attempts to preserve the British Empire to Northern Ireland and Iraq. The AFM represents the military as an institution that helps, protects and suffers by striving to keep security and peace in the UK and abroad. The war memorial in Royal Wootton Bassett (unveiled in 2007) projects the same concept through the imagery of two hands holding a globe. Although this memorial is officially dedicated to the fallen of the First World War, its imagery and inscription imply that this frame of commemoration encompasses the experience of all British service personnel who died while 'keeping the peace' around the world from the First World War onwards. Therefore, imagery and discourse of both the AFM

and the memorial in Royal Wootton Bassett 'is consistent with notion of liberal militarism', which legitimates the right of the British armed forces to 'protect' and 'to police the world order' (Basham, 2013, p. 29).

The AFM also includes the figures of grieving parents and a woman with a boy, presumably her son (Figure 3.3). These figures 'domesticate' the discourse of commemoration in a way that is similar to media obituaries (see Chapter 2). The death of soldiers, while on service and for the country, is represented as a source of reconciliation for bereaved families. Civilians in the AFM mourn the wounded and fallen soldiers, but their grief is superseded by the wider concept of nationalistic and military-centred commemoration. The figures of grieving civilians encourage compassion and support for the armed forces. Thus, it can be argued that the AFM concept decontextualises warfare, normalises military fatalities and glorifies the armed forces sustaining a 'national military myth' (Shaw, 1991) rather than engaging with the complexities or moral dilemmas of modern warfare.

3.2.2   The social life of memorials

According to the guidebook: 'The National Memorial Arboretum honours the fallen, recognises sacrifice and fosters pride in our country … Visitors to the National Memorial Arboretum can enjoy a wide variety of trees, many of which have a relevance to the memorials around them' (NMA, 2009, pp. 2, 6). In other words, the Arboretum is introduced as a place for paying tribute to the fallen, inspiring the younger generation of Britons and enjoying nature. These three social functions of the Arboretum bring together remembrance, patriotism and landscape by signposting the identity politics in modern Britain. The concept of the Arboretum implies that to enjoy the landscape populated by memorial trees assists in the development of a strong sense of belonging to the body of the nation.

Paying tribute to the fallen is the traditional function of war memorials and the Arboretum provides a platform for this activity. Memorials at the Arboretum remind the public about the sacrifice of the armed forces and also about the contribution of individuals and organisations to the war efforts. From March to June 2010 at the Arboretum, out of 22 occasions, 14 events were arranged by service-related and civilian organisations for acts of remembrance. These acts covered official unveiling ceremonies, the dedication and re-dedication of war memorials, the commemoration of anniversaries of wars or regiments, and acts of remembrance associated with specific occasions. The ritual of paying tribute includes a special ceremony at the 'corporative'

memorial, a service at the Millennium Church and a closed reception. These tributes are usually organised by and for the members of a particular association, and therefore they contribute to the solidarity and cohesion of these groups. The public impact of these events is limited as they are often closed to outsiders. A specific cluster of memorials commemorate the efforts of employees of civilian institutions, like the Royal Mail and the Lloyds TSB Finance Group. For these institutions, the annual ceremonies of remembrance at the Arboretum have a two-fold function. On the one hand, they help to sustain organisational memory through the remembrance of employees who have served during the wars of the twentieth century (Gough, 2004). On the other hand, the commemorative events communicate ideas of moral responsibility and the patriotic duty of these organisations. Both activities construct a complex intertwining between the organisational and national identities.

Until recently, members of organisations, associations and the armed forces constituted the majority of the visitors to the Arboretum. The unveiling of the AFM in 2007 changed this situation. The number of visitors increased from 130,034 visitors in 2007 to 294,792 in 2008. In 2010, the Arboretum welcomed its millionth visitor (BBC News, 2010b). It also became one of the central locations in Britain for the commemoration of the casualties of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The media attention to the fallen of these campaigns has increased public awareness about the Arboretum. In this sense, the construction of the AFM was a key event, which has transformed the Arboretum from a regional to a national site of memory.

The Arboretum includes the Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness. The presence of the Chapel symbolises the integration of religion in the modern ritual of war remembrance, but it also symbolises its transformation. The speciality of the Arboretum is a regular commemorative service which takes place daily at 11 am. The idea behind this is to reproduce the atmosphere of the Service of Remembrance on Armistice Day, 11 November (see Chapter 4). This repetition of the service demonstrates the modernisation of remembrance. A recording plays the Last Post, Reveille and the voice of a presenter reads the introduction for the Two Minute Silence. This recorded service desacralises the service, which becomes both an 'everyday event' and a part of performance at the 'memorial museum' (Williams, 2007). The service in the Chapel can also be read as a sign of the 'Disneyfication' of remembrance. This trend is prominent in battlefield tourism and Holocaust museums around the world, and it expresses itself through

the transformation of remembrance into a form of interactive entertainment (Lloyd, 1998; Iles, 2006; Sturken, 2007; Dunkley *et al.*, 2011).

The practice of paying tribute at the Arboretum includes the ritual of laying poppy wreaths, flowers and poppy crosses. A visitor can buy these tokens of remembrance in a shop at the Centre of Remembrance, which also offers a wide range of commemorative memorabilia. The purchase of poppy crosses and wreaths has a twofold function: poppy wreaths serve as a symbol of gratitude to the fallen whilst also contributing to the support of veterans, military families and wounded service personnel (see Chapter 4). Commemorative memorabilia such as ceramic plates, calendars and mugs in the shop reflect a popular trend towards the commercialisation of war remembrance in Western societies (Sturken, 2007; see also Nora, 1998). At the Arboretum, visitors purchase crosses and wreaths at the shop and can then personalise their tributes by attaching photos and personal messages (Figure 3.4).

These memory tributes have a limited time on display; in national and local memorials in Britain, fresh flowers and poppies used to be removed 'by the shadowy custodians of remembrance' (Marshall, 2004,

Figure 3.4   The Armed Forces Memorial, NMA (photo by the author, 2010)

p. 48). According to the internal regulations of the Arboretum, the fragile tributes to the dead should be disposed after a week. This practice is common for national sites of war remembrance, such as the Arlington National Cemetery. At the Arlington Cemetery, the strictness of internal regulations in preserving the uniformity of tributes to the fallen soldiers has provoked organised resistance from the bereaved families (McElya, 2011). In this instance, private and institutional logics collide together by claiming the space of memory. At the Arboretum, the removal of memory objects allows for keeping a site 'clean' and 'open' for new tributes to the fallen, while also ensuring consistency in the public contribution to service charities through the purchasing of poppy crosses and wreaths.

The Arboretum officially presents itself as a place of fostering patriotism among youngsters. For this purpose, it runs a range of educational programmes for secondary schools with a focus on remembrance, conflict and Britishness. These programmes are offered as a supplement to the National Curriculum and specifically to programmes in History, English and Citizenship (DfE, 2014a). The possibility of converting the Arboretum into a place both of learning history *and* of inspiring patriotism has ensured a continuous increase in the popularity of these programmes. If, in 2005, 185 schoolchildren visited the NMA as a part of their education in history and citizenship, in 2009, 3,840 schoolchildren attended the NMA educational programme. Currently, the demand for these courses is higher than the existing facilities allow for (NMA Education, 2009).

The successful cooperation of the Arboretum with secondary schools and youth organisations like the Scouts, the Girl Guides and the Cadets can be attributed to a series of government initiatives to foster British national identity through the programme of citizenship and a series of remembrance-related activities centred on the anniversaries of the World Wars (see Chapter 4). The Arboretum received substantial government support, including grants of more than £2 million towards the construction of a Centre for Remembrance, with a total cost of £12 million. According to Major General Patrick Cordingley, the Chairman of the appeal: 'Our country will at last have a centre for remembrance which is worthy of the sacrifice made by so many, whether in the military or civil services. The additional space will help us educate many more children and provide extensive facilities for family and group visits' (BBC News, 2012a).

For educational visits, the Arboretum uses learning materials prepared by the RBL and its own resources, such as *The National Memorial*

Arboretum: Kid's Guidebook (2009). This booklet introduces remembrance at the Arboretum as a place 'where people pay tribute to something or someone they are proud of and want to remember'. To become acquainted with these stories, children are invited to visit memorials and 'have fun' at the Arboretum. The entertaining character of learning at the Arboretum is emphasised through smiling images of children. Thereby, remembrance is introduced as a playful and enjoyable activity, and a game through which to explore national war history and military culture.

The Arboretum publicises itself not only as an excellent classroom for lessons in history and citizenship, but also as an opportunity to encounter the memorials as physical embodiments of history and tangible traces of the lives of real people. In this sense, the Arboretum functions as a complex museum, in which memorials represent war and military experiences, tell stories about courage, sacrifice and suffering, celebrate military culture, and the dedication of soldiers and citizens to the defence of the country. Children, by means of these educational visits, are taught how to remember the fallen, respect the losses of soldiers' lives, support the British armed forces and be proud of being British.

The means of entertainment encompass the third function of the Arboretum. This site advertises itself as a place for bird-watching, gardening and other social activities. The administration of the site organises a Wildlife Watch Group for children and other interested individuals two or three times a month. The site also publicises itself as a location for such events as weddings, anniversaries, conferences, Christmas and Valentine's Day. The infrastructure of the complex includes a café, shop and other facilities for these purposes. This customer-orientated environment demonstrates the complex 'relationships between mourning and consumerism' (Sturken, 2007, p. 4). At the Arboretum, a visitor can take part in various activities, from tribute and contemplation to enjoyment unrelated to war remembrance. These activities underpin the notion of community cohesion as the Arboretum functions as a day centre for children or a community club for local residents. The engagement of the Arboretum in non-remembrance activities enables it to compensate for a lack of funding. The lack of funding pushes many museums worldwide towards commercialisation of their activities. However, financial constraints alone cannot explain this process. In many senses, the diverse social life of the Arboretum reflects the widespread convergence of places of mourning into sites of entertainment and patriotic education (Sturken, 2007; Williams, 2007).

3.3   Private memories and virtual lives

Undoubtedly, the NMA is a unique site of contemporary memorialisation. However, this site has a clear physical limitation. This section explores virtual memorials by focusing on 'digital network communities' (Hoskins, 2009, pp. 91–106) instead of media producers (see Chapter 2). Initially, scholars of American online memorials perceived the 'web-based memorialisation' as 'an emerging set of social practices mediated by computer networks, through which digital objects, structures, and spaces of communication are produced' (Foot *et al.*, 2005, p. 2). The American virtual memorialisation of 9/11 demonstrated the increasing engagement of the public with virtual memorialisation, and in this sense virtual memorials are interpreted as democratic and citizenry projects (Ulmer, 2005; Hess, 2007). Participation in virtual memorialisation can assist the bereavement process and, in this regard, virtual tributes perform the same function as virtual cemeteries – websites dedicated to recently deceased people (Roberts, 2004, 2006; de Vries and Rutherford, 2004). There are a number of virtual memorials for the families and friends of fallen British soldiers, including the webpages of the RBL and Help for Heroes (H4H), but this chapter examines The Lasting Tribute (www.lastingtribute.co.uk), a website which initially published only online obituaries to civilians and service personnel. This website does not have any direct association with the armed forces and in this regard it represents a civilian source. From 2011, a click on the aforementioned link re-directs the user to a new virtual platform entitled 'This is Announcements' (www.thisisannouncements.co.uk) with announcements on birthdays, weddings, retirements and deaths. This change in the concept, the layout and target audience of this resource demonstrates 'the temporality, fluidity and availability of digital data' (Hoskins, 2009, pp. 102–3). If physical memorials can be destroyed by forces of nature, virtual memorials can also be 'victims to the weathering of time' (Hess, 2007, p. 821). The Lasting Tribute exposes the ephemeral nature of virtual memorialisation, which can easily change its shape and content.

The Lasting Tribute was created in 2008 by members of the local media in the East Midlands region of the UK. Since then, the website continues to hold a high popularity rating on the Internet through hosting announcements and online tributes to members of the public and fallen soldiers. The following analysis discusses the original version of The Lasting Tribute and covers the period from May to July 2010. Corrections to the data were performed in 2011 and January 2013.

The original version of The Lasting Tribute had a colourful design with photos of smiling, recently deceased people and audacious messages to users, inviting them to 'celebrate life together' and 'start a brand new tribute'. The web editors do not dwell on the representation of death as an irreversible loss and tragedy, but rather introduce bereavement as a process of sharing positive memories about the lives of the deceased. This approach to death and bereavement reflects wider attitudes, which became popular across modern Western societies at the end of the twentieth century (Walter, 1999; Cook and Walter, 2005).

This optimistic representation of death corresponds with the advertising strategy of The Lasting Tribute. The website advertises online tributes as sellable products and encourages users to buy a memorial bench, a memorial tree, a virtual candle, a virtual poppy or a virtual wreath and other products unrelated to bereavement. In this regard, The Lasting Tribute, like the Arboretum, mixes mourning with consumption (Sturken, 2007, p. 4). The commercialisation of virtual memorials is often seen as a 'necessary evil' because it ensures revenue for the upkeep of an online domain (Hess, 2007). In the case of The Lasting Tribute, the users can donate to charities while buying virtual commemorative products from the RBL and H4H. The RBL website encourages the user to 'donate in memory'; it also informs the user that, since 2008, 'there has been a huge response to our virtual poppies' (RBL, 2013). The H4H website urges the user to 'remember the fallen: care for the living' (H4H, 2013). This intersection of bereavement and donations to charities continues the national tradition of war remembrance (Gregory, 1994; see also Chapter 4). The transferral of service-related charities to the Internet does not alter this traditional principle of war commemoration, but it significantly extends the period of raising donations.

The Lasting Tribute re-publishes obituaries, sourced from the mainstream media, and contains a section with private tributes (described as 'memories'). More entries are dedicated to soldiers killed in Afghanistan (7,495 entries) than to the British fallen from the campaign in Iraq (523 entries). As Hess explains, web memorialisation 'achieves its high point after the death of a person and ebbs afterwards' (2007, p. 34). The majority of online tributes for Iraq could be completed post factum as the website was only created in 2008. The analysis of the agency of the users of The Lasting Tribute was made possible because the users often identify their personal relationship to the fallen soldiers. The analysis of entries for the fallen of the conflict in Iraq shows that the most significant percentage of textual entries (51 per cent of entries) covers ritualised messages, such as 'at the going down of the sun and

in the morning we will remember you'. These entries are introduced by the moderator. Comments from people without personal connections with the fallen soldiers or their families cover six per cent of entries. In these entries, participants express their compassion through references to their own experience of being in combat, or having a close family member in the military or a family member who was killed during a modern conflict. The family members of the deceased soldiers are also engaged in online memorialisation and their responses comprise 11 per cent of entries. Finally, the memories of civilian and military friends generate a substantial number of comments in this community-led memorialisation (23 per cent and nine per cent from the total number of entries respectively). The engagement of these groups in online memorialisation could be prompted by the media commemoration of fatalities. The mainstream media attracts the attention of the public to the deaths (see Chapter 2), but it gives voice only to military commanders and close family members of a deceased soldier. For many civilian or military friends, or other people with loose personal connections with a deceased soldier, an online memorial is the only way to express their grief and compassion and to share personal memories.

Civilian and military friends tend to introduce their memories in a storytelling format, which is common in online memorialisation (Roberts, 2006). According to Walker, this format encompasses 'little stories' about memorable events when a deceased person and the owner of the memory interacted (Walker, 2007). The 'little stories' introduce first the owner of the memory and explain his or her relation to the deceased or to their families. This self-introduction is important because it legitimises both the person's participation in the virtual memorial and personal memories about a fallen soldier. The second part of these stories describes activities in which both parties were involved. This part contains comments on the positive, individual qualities of a deceased person. The final part of 'little stories' includes expressions of grief and/or a declaration of willingness to help the bereaved families. The users might leave their contact details (email or phone number), demonstrating their readiness to transfer online communication to the offline environment. The quotation below illustrates this storytelling narrative:

> My family and I have known Baz and family for 6 yrs [sic], we met through our children who played together while camping, and have met up every year since in Somerset for a week and more if we could arrange, and it would be like we had seen each other yesterday (even if it had been a year/6 months) and the first thing to do after setting

up would be shop and set up the BBQ, have a beer and talk about who was going to catch the biggest fish on the beach, (he loved fishing) he often spoke about his life in the RAF, and the stories that came with it, he loved life and he loved his family, we only ever knew him as Baz on holiday not the brave man in the uniform. Looking at the picture now while typing this I can't believe we will never see this wonderful man again, a truly great man who we and others will miss more than words can say, (The Lasting Tribute, 2013)

These 'little stories' privatise the discourse of commemoration more effectively than the obituaries from the media-driven memorials. Moreover, the format of the 'little stories' prioritises the personal qualities of fallen soldiers over their professional characteristics, which are dominant in the media-driven memorials. By applying the same computer-assisted content analysis as in Chapter 2, Figure 3.5 shows a different hierarchy of references to national, personal and service identifications in 523 online tributes to fallen British soldiers in Iraq. In particular, the analysis illustrates that the obituaries from The Lasting Tribute commemorate fallen soldiers more as individuals and family members (64 per cent of references) than as national heroes or service personnel (Figure 3.5).
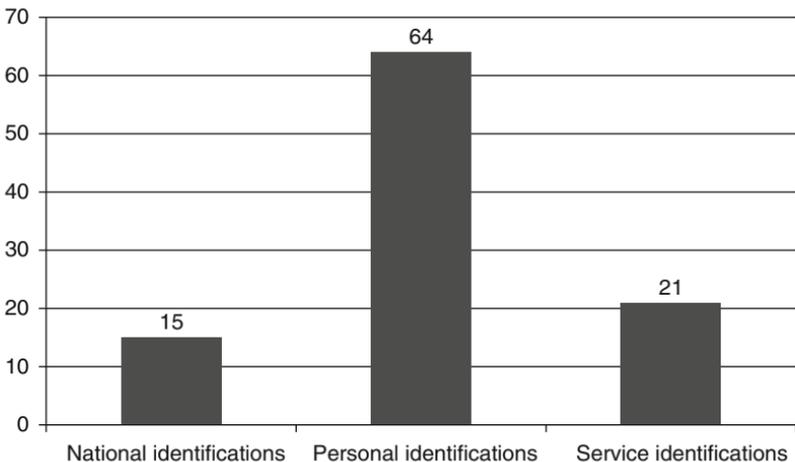
Figure 3.5 Content analysis of the entries/'memories' from The Lasting Tribute for the UK fatalities in Iraq (in percentage of the total number of references to key identifications)

The users of The Lasting Tribute rarely mention the country in their 'little stories'. The language of 'banal nationalism' is mostly appropriated by unknown well-wishers or reproduced in the excerpts of the re-published official obituaries. The authors of these 'little stories' describe fallen British soldiers as members of local communities, family members, good friends, housemates or simply people with whom somebody went to school, had a barbeque or lived on the same street. These memories represent service personnel as people with various interests and eventful lives beyond the military service and sacrifice for the country.

Some scholars believe that virtual memorials can escape the pressure of social conformity because the Internet can function as a milieu for 'extremely individualised behaviour' (Geser, 1998, pp. 18–19). While the users of The Lasting Tribute can post a variety of memorable accounts about the lives of fallen soldiers, including negative memories, they prefer to abstain from this opportunity. Their 'little stories' explore the civilian lives of service personnel from the perspective of 'the traditional positive genre' of obituaries, which is also the main genre of the media-driven memorialisation (see Chapter 2). The recollection of private memories offers emotional support to bereaved families and friends of the deceased because these stories emphasise the personal worthiness of service personnel. However, it is important to recognise that The Lasting Tribute, whilst privatising and domesticating the discourse of commemoration, also makes its own contribution to the decontextualisation and depoliticisation of modern warfare.

In a sense, The Lasting Tribute resists the politicisation of memory in the same way as YouTube commemorative videos on the deaths of Danish soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq (Knudsen and Stage, 2013). Researchers found that 'polemical reactions are not present in the rare cases where tributes are personal' and also came to the conclusion that 'political contestation appears only when official framings of the war are uncritically adapted by the videos' (Knudsen and Stage, 2013, p. 431). This conclusion suggests that personalised framings could challenge the official framings of war. Contrary to this thesis, we might suggest that the privatisation and domestication of remembrance facilitates consensual forms of war remembrance, but it does not necessarily mean the questioning of official framings of wars. As Zehfuss concludes in her analysis of the MoD obituaries to British fatalities in Iraq: 'The despair at the loss of an irreplaceable life does not necessarily predispose us to question the frames that make violence and war possible' (2009, p. 22). Virtual memorialisation discloses the despair of the digital network community at the loss of soldiers' lives and facilitates interpersonal

communication and shared mourning between spatially dispersed communities. However, these virtual memorials also decontextualise warfare and encourage us to separate the cause of wars from their participants. The Armed Forces Memorial at the Arboretum offers a similar concept of decontextualised and seemingly depoliticised commemoration.

3.4   Concluding thoughts

In Britain, the current wave of memorialisation exposes the pluralisation of memorial practices and identities of the fallen soldiers. This pluralisation recognises individual contributions to the well-being of the nation, and in this regard it is sympathetic to veterans, survivors, bereaved families and all those who have suffered in wars. However, the pluralisation of commemorative practices does not dismiss associations with the idea of the nation; on the contrary, new memorials bring up the idea of national mobilisation and introduce the national armed forces as a locus of modern commemoration.

British service personnel killed in recent campaigns are commemorated in memorials as either the 'glorious dead' or 'soldiers killed on duty'. On the one hand, the names of fallen soldiers are added to First World War memorials, integrating their experiences within the national tradition of war commemoration. On the other hand, new memorials commemorate service personnel for their belonging to the armed forces more generally, not for their specific war experience. These *military* (not *war*) memorials construct a seeming continuity in the role of the armed forces in British society. Both discursive strategies demonstrate an elegant solution for the very difficult problem of conceptualising the nature of modern warfare. Like media commemoration, the context of modern warfare disappears from memorials. This emerging military-centred memorialisation separates the cause of death from the participants, demanding respect and tribute to soldiers – participants of wars – while disregarding the causes of these wars.

Memorials construct a twofold representation of soldiers by depicting them as both victims and national heroes. Their belonging to the armed forces constructs their position as victims *of* their service and as heroes *because of* their service on behalf of the country. This concept of memorialisation directs public attention away from the context of ambivalent warfare to military service, while also reflecting public anxiety about the legitimacy of modern conflicts (McCartney, 2010; Edmunds, 2012). Like the media commemoration, memorial inscriptions construct a hybrid concept of military professionalism. This outcome demonstrates that

the all-volunteer essence of the armed forces in Britain does not diminish its ability to nationalise the discourse of remembrance by linking the idea of the nation with the military duty. Moreover, this nationalisation of remembrance in Britain legitimates and normalises the perpetuity of modern warfare. If the Arlington Cemetery 'releases Americans from a shameful past while implicating us all in a triumphant paranoid future of limitless war' (McElya, 2011, p. 61), the NMA prepares British society for never-ending war and future deaths of British service personnel in the service of the country.

4
Remembrance in Modern Britain: Support the Armed Forces!

4.1   Patriotism and the Military Covenant

Contemporary commemoration in Britain has evolved into a military service-based and decontextualised commemoration. This chapter explores how national ceremonies of remembrance adapt to this change. Originally, Armistice Day was held on 11 November, but after the Second World War, the main ceremony was moved to Remembrance Day (also known as Remembrance Sunday, the Sunday nearest to the Armistice). In the middle of the 1990s, Armistice Day was brought back thanks to the efforts of the Royal British Legion (RBL). This chapter discusses the political aspects of changes in the ritual and discourse of the national days of remembrance in modern Britain.

Over the last two decades, academics and politicians have been debating the 'fuzzy content' of British national identity (Cohen, 1995; Mandler, 2006; Tilley and Heath, 2007; Wetherell, 2008). This discussion has touched upon many issues, such as national values, citizenship and the principles of living in a democratic and multicultural society such as the UK. Following the General Election of 1997, Prime Minister Tony Blair repetitively called for 'a new modern patriotism', which needed to be established in order to cope with the growing diversity of British society, globalisation and new security threats, including extremism and terrorism (Blair, 2000, 2006). In 2006, Gordon Brown, in his speech to the Fabian New Year Conference in London, outlined the endangered state of the British national identity and mentioned Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday as days of national unity and patriotism:

> But think for a moment: what is the British equivalent of the US 4th of July, or even the French 14th of July for that matter? What

> I mean is: what is our equivalent for a national celebration of who we are and what we stand for? And what is our equivalent of the national symbolism of a flag in every garden? … Perhaps Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday are the nearest we have come to a British day that is in every corner of our country – commemorative, unifying, and an expression of British ideas of standing firm in the world in the name of liberty, responsibility and fairness. (Brown, 2006)

Brown's appeal received criticism as many argued that although it is important to celebrate Britishness, it is inappropriate to do it during remembrance days because of their strong commemorative appeal (Letters to *The Guardian*, 2006; Wintour, 2006). However, this point does not deny a detail noticed by Brown – that remembrance days are deeply engrained within the concept of British national identity. In Britain, Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday have functioned as days of national unity and also as days of confirming national belonging and expressing patriotic sentiments from the 1920s onwards (Gregory, 1994, p. 111). To an extent, the patriotic essence of Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday is often hidden, and perhaps it can be better described through the concept of 'banal nationalism', which, while introducing strong 'ideological habits, can be often unnoticed' (Billig, 1995, p. 6). In his speech, Brown articulated this 'unnoticed' yet powerful function of remembrance days. Furthermore, he expressed a political will to exploit these days for the rhetorical production of citizenship. The practical implications of this discussion can be found in the reforms of secondary school education during the 2000s.

The history of the First World War is a traditional component of school education in such subjects as History and English Literature. In 2002, the school curriculum was extended, adding Citizenship as a new compulsory subject. This subject aimed to introduce children to the values of democratic and global citizenship, popularise national values and educate children in the debates about immigration, race, gender and ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, terrorism, conflicts and peace (Osler and Starkey, 2006, pp. 20–2; see also Osler, 2009). The policy report for the UK Department for Education included a point that the efforts to enhance British identity among children should be intensified due to the threats posed by 'major international events such as 11 September 2001 and the London bombings in July 2005' (Ajegbo *et al.*, 2007, p. 18). Experts suggested that the curriculum on Citizenship could be enhanced via a focus on common British identity, history and local context, which subsequently should improve community cohesion and

a sense of shared values. While this document did not directly mention the armed forces or rituals of commemoration, it acted as one of the many factors that opened the door to the militarisation of British secondary school education. This militarisation has been developing, first, through the initiatives in citizenship and remembrance and, second, through the direct intervention of military institutions into the educational system.

Since 2008, major national museums such as the Imperial War Museums in London and Manchester, the National Army Museum in London, regional museums and cultural institutions like the BBC have been offering educational materials on topics such as History, Citizenship and Remembrance. The role of the RBL in education is particularly interesting as this is one of the most prominent nationwide non-governmental service-related organisations for veterans, military families and ex-service personnel. The RBL considers itself 'a National Guardian of Remembrance' and, in accordance with this status, it offers its support to secondary schools across Britain. According to official reports, there has been a steady increase in the popularity of the RBL Learning Pack. In 2008, the RBL provided Learning Packs to 43,000 schools and 20,000 face-to-face interactions between members of the RBL and teachers (RBL, 2008). In 2009, 65,000 educational packs were requested by teachers (RBL, 2009a) and in 2010, it delivered 68,500 learning packs, plus 20,000 learning CD/DVDs, estimating that 'over 2.5 million young people in the UK benefited from them' (RBL, 2010). These materials are advertised as a supplementary source to the secondary school classes on Citizenship and Remembrance, History and English Literature.

The version of remembrance popularised in the RBL Learning Pack has three important characteristics. First, the Learning Pack, while extensively covering the history of the First World War and the Second World War, now includes information about subsequent conflicts involving the British armed forces. In this instance, the RBL version of military history blends together a war-centred and military-centred commemoration by stressing the responsibility of children to remember the 'men and women killed on active Service since 1945' (RBL, 2009, 2010). Second, the RBL Pack includes a section on the gender, ethnic and racial identities of fallen soldiers by illustrating the pluralisation of identities and adjustment of remembrance to the policies of social diversity and multiculturalism popularised in education and within the broader political context from the late 1990s onwards. The interest paid towards remembrance is encouraged through stories about individuals

and communities who survived the heat of battle and enriched the lives of British society. Third and most importantly, the Pack introduces remembrance as a participatory act; it reiterates the moral commitment of children to pay tribute to the fallen, and to respect veterans and the armed forces. These actions are introduced as crucial for enabling citizenship and demonstrating a belonging to the national community. Children are taught that the best way to express these sentiments is to wear a red poppy on Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. Consequently, this teaching strategy introduces the red poppy as a national symbol of remembrance, dismissing the conceptual controversies of this form of commemoration.

The efforts of the RBL to popularise military history through remembrance garnered strong support from the government in view of the centenary of the First World War. In 2012, Prime Minister David Cameron announced the allocation of £50 million for the marking of this date through the opening of an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum:

> Let me start with why this matters so much … For me there are three reasons. The first is the sheer scale of the sacrifice … Second, I think it is also right to acknowledge the impact that the war had on the development of Britain and, indeed, the world as it is today. Third, the fact is, individually and as a country, we keep coming back to it, and I think that will go on … Our ambition is a truly national commemoration, worth of this historic centenary. I want a commemoration that captures our national spirit, in every corner of the country, from our schools to our workplaces, to our town halls and local communities. Remembrance must be the hallmark of our commemorations, and I am determined that the government will play a leading role, with national events and new support for educational initiatives. (Cameron, 2012)

In his speech, Cameron, like Gordon Brown, connects war remembrance with the demonstration of British national identity and confirms the commitment of his government to this war- and military-centred concept of citizenship. Cameron explicitly introduced the commemoration of the First World War as a vehicle for forging patriotic feelings by emphasising its central importance for national history and identity. In this instance, the national master narrative of war helps to normalise warfare and legitimate a militarised concept of citizenship (Ware, 2010).

This government-inspired and war-centric remembrance needs to be considered together with another government initiative of bringing a

military ethos into secondary schools. Kelly points out that: 'In 2008 the Ministry of Defence began "advising" teachers on what to include in history lessons, resulting in the National Union of Teachers accusing the MoD of behaving "unethically"' (2013, p. 728). However, this protest did not discourage the MoD or the government from bringing the values of military life to teachers and schools. On the contrary, in 2010, the UK government in its White Paper on *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010* confirmed its support for engaging ex-service personnel in secondary school education (DfE, 2010). Government officials and policy advisors referred to the experience of the reintegration of ex-service personnel in the USA as a model for reforming education in Britain (Burkard, 2008). In 1994, the US Department of Defence established 'Troops to Teachers' as a way of 'improving public school education by providing funds to recruit, prepare, and support former members of the military services as teachers in high-poverty schools' (Owings *et al.*, 2006, p. 104). It was suggested that the experience of military service personnel would benefit schoolchildren from disadvantaged areas and would give them knowledge, discipline and a strong sense of purpose and teamwork. By 2008, 'approximately 16,000 ex-service personnel have qualified as teachers' and most of them are currently employed in state schools in the USA (Chadderton, 2014). One of the most controversial issues of this programme is the reduced period of training. The length of training is based on the assumption that the military background compensates for a lack of training in teaching and learning. The UK version of 'Troops to Teachers' adopted the same principle when it was introduced in 2013 (DfE, 2014b). In addition to this programme, in 2011, £1.5 million of government funds was directed to the re-training of ex-service personal as mentors and teachers for secondary schools. Announcing this funding, Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, said that:

> There is a huge opportunity for those people who have served their country in uniform to serve their country in our schools. They have many of the virtues that parents across the country feel have disappeared from our schools and need to be restored: self-discipline, a sense of purpose and a belief in the importance of working as a team. (Gove, 2011)

Despite reports on the success of the American version of the 'Troops to Teachers' programme (Burkard, 2008), some experts have already expressed concerns about the impact of military-inspired educational

initiatives. Dermott concludes that the 'Troops to Teachers initiative alerts us to a difference in views about the purpose of education, between learning restraint and respect for authority versus the developing of educational potential to its full extent' (2012, p. 236). Dermott also notices that the concept of this programme prioritises the construct of 'military masculinity' by emphasising discipline and authority over other expressions of gender identity (2012, p. 237). Consequently, the military intervention into secondary schools through the 'Troops to Teachers' programme, 'Military to Mentors' and 'Zero Exclusion', which work with disadvantaged children, the 'Cadet Programme' and the 'Military Ethos Alternative Provision Programme' for schools in England (launched in 2012) (Plastow, 2011; MoD, 2013) encourages the replacement of respect for creativity, diversity and a critical education with respect for military values and a conservative version of national values (Dixon, 2012, p. 144). As a result, Chadderton argues, 'rather than a critical education, for those subordinated along class and race, a military education is to be provided – patriarchal, hierarchical and authoritarian' (2014, p. 423). The actual outcomes of the current policies remain to be seen, yet they have already exposed a trend towards the militarisation of British society.

The education programmes target the new generation of Britons. The political debate about the position of the armed forces in British society aims to change the perceptions of the British public as a whole. From the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, policy experts, academics and representatives of the armed forces and service-related charities have regularly reported concerns over the 'damaging relationships between the military, the government and the British public' (McCartney, 2010, p. 411; see also Edmunds and Foster, 2007; McCartney, 2011). This 'damage' is often associated with a growing civil–military gap and tensions in the relationships between the military and society caused by the ambivalence of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Within the policy-making and military communities, it is widely assumed that the civil–military gap expresses itself through the misunderstanding and mistreatment of service personnel by members of the public (Davies *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, it is suggested that this 'misunderstanding' can lead to the withdrawal of support for the armed forces and therefore damage military performance in overseas operations. There is another rarely mentioned yet important reason for these concerns. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was a decline in interest in security and military affairs in British society. According to Shaw (1991), this trend was part of a broader demilitarisation in Western European societies.

Although by the late 2000s these attitudes were reversing (Shaw, 2005a), they were a source of anti-war protests in the 1990s and in the early 2000s in the UK. These protests, which brought millions of people onto the streets of London, could possibly be seen as a latent yet influential factor which facilitated the convergence of the concerns of the military and political elites into a range of practical measures to bridge the gap in civil–military relations and inscribe a sense of moral responsibility in civil society for the national armed forces.

In 2006, the British armed forces fought in two ambivalent conflicts: an unpopular war in Iraq and a war in Afghanistan. The growing number of casualties coupled with concerns over declining public support for both missions brought the idea of the Military Covenant into the spotlight (Forster, 2012, p. 277; see also McCartney, 2010; Mileham, 2010). According to Forster, since 2006, 'the Military Covenant has provided an important social, political, and quasi-legal reference point in shaping almost every debate about civil–military relations in the United Kingdom' (2012, p. 277). In 2007, the RBL led the campaign under the banner 'Save the Covenant' by urging the public to repay its duty to the armed forces (Kelly, 2013, p. 728). A newly created charity, Help for Heroes (H4H), also organised a nationwide campaign, 'To Honour the Covenant', by donating money to go towards the rehabilitation of wounded and disabled service personnel. As a reporter for the *Sunday Times* summarised in his review of the draft of the Military Covenant, 'Britain [is] urged to love a man in uniform again' (Chittenden, 2008).

By 2008, as Forster ironically notes, the three main national parties, the Labour Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, pledged their support for the idea of the Covenant (Forster, 2012, p. 278). This declaration of political commitment to honour the Covenant is somewhat puzzling because the initial concept did not contain any specific practical measures to achieve this goal. In a sense, these political declarations were unsubstantiated statements of limited practical importance to the armed forces as they did not engage with the issues 'of balance between defence commitments and expenditure' (Forster, 2012, p. 283). The whole debate over the Covenant has evolved into a discussion of how to encourage society to respect and support the armed forces without engaging in the debate of how to solve the problems of the armed forces which are deployed in overseas military operations while also undergoing significant budget cuts. In this instance, there is a transfer of focus from the military as an institution to the military as a cultural construct and a condensed expression of conservative political values.

The government report into the *National Recognition of Our Armed Forces* (2008) formulated the main areas where the image of the armed forces could improve. According to this report, 'so far as the public is concerned, what we think is needed is not so much exhortation as more opportunities for contact and for the expression of that strong latent feeling of appreciation and admiration which so evidently exist' (Davies *et al.*, 2008). While the authors do not doubt the public's regard for the British armed forces, they would like to ensure that this regard will not become diminished over time. To achieve this goal, the report recommends that more opportunities for the interaction between local communities and the armed forces should be created and that new traditions need to be encouraged or 'invented', in Hobsbawn's words (1983a; see also Chapter 1). The proposed traditions included home-coming parades in cities, towns and local districts, increasing the visibility of the armed forces in civil society, the extension of the scope of annual celebration on Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday, and the creation of Armed Forces Day. In 2009, the government introduced Armed Forces Day as an annual national event to be celebrated on the last weekend of June. The official advertised materials, published by the MoD, express the main purpose of this day: 'Show your support!' and 'I am supporting!' (MoD, 2010). As McCartney points out, 'the military's expectations of the British people can be summed up in a single word: support' (2010, p. 419).

My ethnographic observation of the Armed Forces Day in Nottingham in 2010 suggests that the main practical aspects of this 'support' are two-fold; they include donations to service-related charities and a military recruitment exercise through publicising a range of interactive and military-centric activities for children, youngsters and other potential recruits. With regard to the first function, the RBL, H4H and other service charities 'present the recipients of its support as victims', while being reluctant 'to address the wounds of war not just as issues for palliative care but also as matters for preventive actions' (Strachan, 2009). According to Strachan, the activities of service charities during Armed Forces Day are 'paradoxical' because they demand support for the armed forces without engaging the public in the broader debates about military expenditure or military operations. In Britain, as Strachan reminds us, 'Christian and liberal opinion is not opposed to curing the sick, but it is reluctant to do anything to glorify war' (2009). This argument leads us to the second point regarding the implicit function of Armed Forces Day. In its current state, Armed Forces Day acts as a de facto military recruitment fair with each branch of the UK armed forces publicising

its services as 'opportunities' 'to see the world' and 'be the best'. This recruitment drive expresses itself through a range of militarised activities directed at children and the wider public. It encourages support for the armed forces and implicitly glorifies wars.

A similar concept of engagement with the British armed forces is introduced in the Military Covenant. In 2011, the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant have been enshrined in law in the Armed Forces Act 2011, and subsequently received support in government funding with a budget of £30 million (Prime Minister's Office, 2011). The 2011 document defines the Covenant as 'a statement of the moral obligation which exists between the nation, the Government and the Armed Forces' (MoD, 2011). The major *moral* obligation of the public towards the armed forces is a demonstration of its support (MoD, 2011, p. 57; see also Strachan *et al.*, 2010). The content of this document does not mention Iraq or Afghanistan, but it is implied that the moral obligation of civilian society is to support the armed forces, 'even if they do not support the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan' (Forster, 2012, p. 280). Therefore, the Covenant encourages a decontextualised and depoliticised commemoration as society is urged to forget the causes of these conflicts, while showing respect and support for the armed forces. McCartney and Forster notice that this expectation of the military is more wishful thinking than anything else as it does not take into account 'what the public might be willing to give' (McCartney, 2010). Developing this point, Forster suggests that 'the Covenant set out an argument rather than a dialogue and there was certainly no agreement' (2012, p. 280). Any seeds of political disagreement with the development of the military campaigns in Iraq or Afghanistan were dismissed and pushed aside or considered as unpatriotic and even damaging for the morale of the armed forces. Instead, the public was urged to engage in 'deference and demeanour ceremonies of support' (Kelly, 2013, p. 729), without political deliberation over the role of the armed forces or the nature of modern conflicts.

Thus, the contemporary political discourse considers remembrance days as instruments for revealing a sense of British national identity and popularising support for the armed forces. As demonstrated above, in these areas, there is significant convergence between the interests of the political and military elites. The concerns of politicians about British national identity merged with the aspirations of the military elites in building support for the forces deployed in unpopular missions. Consequently, as Dixon concludes: 'The militarisation of British society during the "long war" – to build support for the missions in Iraq

and Afghanistan – has bolstered a conservative nationalist interpretation of "British values" … In response to the threat from "predatory Islamic vision" it demands British "self-confidence" about its imperial past, Christian values and national identity' (2012, pp. 143–4). Essentially, a programme aimed at inspiring patriotism has gradually evolved into a programme of building a military-centred concept of citizenship. Rituals of remembrance are central to the success of this programme because they ensure an uncritical attitude towards wars and ultimately they normalise wars as a part of national identity and mythology. Moreover, within this framework, the figure of the fallen soldier emerges as a model of citizenship. The militarised version of citizenship discourages any public deliberation about both the role of the armed forces or the causes of modern wars. As Dixon notes, the current political context in Britain favours 'military values that are hostile to democracy's valuing of dissent and debate, which are portrayed as disloyal if not treacherous in a time of war' (2012, p. 144). As the end of this long war is nowhere in sight, the public is encouraged to exercise a decontextualised and apolitical remembrance by supporting the armed forces on their missions.

4.2   Armistice Day and Remembrance Day in popular opinion

In Britain, the marking of Armistice Day and Remembrance Day are well established. According to a public opinion survey, in 2009, 96 per cent of the population considered Remembrance Day as a 'very' or 'fairly important day' (ComRes, 2009). This survey also revealed that the public associates this day with the remembrance of the fallen in the World Wars (32 per cent of the nationwide representative sample), but also considers this day as a day 'honouring those who are dying in wars happening now' (18 per cent) (ComRes, 2009). This result demonstrates that a significant proportion of the population accepts the inclusive concept of remembrance which covers the fallen of both World Wars and modern conflicts. To further uncover the popular meanings of contemporary remembrance in Britain, we turn to the Internet forum 'What Does Armistice Day Mean to You?' set up by the BBC in 2009 (BBC News, 2009c). This forum contains 1,177 published comments each of which is considered as a separate entry. Although this forum cannot be regarded as a valid representation of British public opinion as a whole, it helps us to gauge the main public associations with remembrance days. While the main question was concerned with

opinions about Armistice Day, an analysis of the entries shows that the public referred to both remembrance occasions, Armistice Day and Remembrance Day, at the same time. In a sense, in the public imagination, these two days represent a singular event as they are united by the same message and associations.

As the entries indicate, the public shares a range of opinions about the meaning of remembrance days. At one end of the spectrum, there is a large group of active supporters and participants of remembrance. At the other end, there is a much smaller group of people for whom remembrance days 'mean nothing' or who do not celebrate them because of their pacifistic views or for other reasons. In total, the negative views on Armistice Day form no more than two per cent of the total number of entries. A similar result is observed in other studies of the Armistice in Britain. When Imber and Fraser interviewed 75 young people aged 18–19, only three individuals articulated objections towards remembrance, citing the 'glorification of war' and an all-volunteer principle of the armed forces (2011, p. 393). In both the BBC News Forum on Armistice and Imber and Fraser's study of youngsters, the absolute majority were ready to pay their respects to the 'men and women who have given their lives' and 'all soldiers past and present who have served and still serve today'. A further analysis of entries on the BBC Forum helps us to extract five substantial aspects of public attitudes towards remembrance days in modern Britain.

First, the forum illustrates the existence of tension in the meanings and ways of marking remembrance. For the majority of the participants of the forum, remembrance days are a time for 'sombre commemoration', in contrast to such joyful occasions as holidays or celebrations. The modern scale of marking Armistice Day and Remembrance Day through the medium of popular entertainment (for example, through *The X Factor* or fundraising during national sport events) is criticised by both the supporters of remembrance days and their opponents. Both groups consider recent changes such as the 'lightening-up' of Armistice Day as a sign of its averted or false message. Here, we observe tension over the 'Disneyfication' of remembrance in Britain (see Chapter 3).

If the political debate considers remembrance days as days of recalling moral commitments towards both the nation and the armed forces, the public perceives these commitments through personal associations and connections with family members who served during the Second World War or one of the post-1945 conflicts. There is certainly a paucity of direct references to Armistice Day or Remembrance Day as being

specifically *British* days or a *British* tradition. At the same time, the supportive comments with regard to remembrance days are written in the language of 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995, p. 49) because they are signposted by such words as 'our fallen', 'our service personnel', 'our day', 'we remember them' and 'they have died for our country'. These references construct a collective projection of a national culture of war remembrance where the fallen are integrated within a national imagining.

Second, a significant number of the participants of the BBC forum perceived remembrance days as days when British people have 'remembered the fallen of the First World War and ALL SUBSEQUENT conflicts' (E., Hampshire, 2009). In this instance, we observe the responsiveness of the public to the concept of inclusive remembrance. As Hutchinson explains, this broader concept of commemoration is predisposed by the popular uses of First World War imagery, which has been 'used by poets, novelists and film makers as the backdrop for so many themes, it became lodged in popular and high culture so that it was seen to begin a new master narrative, one reinforced by later conflicts' (Hutchinson, 2009, p. 415). Therefore, in British culture and popular imagination, the First World War functions as a national master narrative of war, but it also encompasses other conflicts. As explained above, throughout the 2000s, the political and military elites in the UK have encouraged an inclusive and decontextualised concept of commemoration with a shifted focus from wars to military service. This frame of commemoration allows for a seeming sense of historical continuity by reinforcing the idea that Britain in the twenty-first century is quite similar to Britain in the 1920s.

Third, the mythical nature of First World War commemoration exposed itself in the lack of comments on the context of war. Those commenting in the forum, while recognising the link between remembrance days and the First World War, rarely refer to the circumstances of this war or any subsequent conflict. The context of the conflict itself with its victories or defeats disappears from the public discussion of remembrance days. Instead, the participants of the forum develop their associations with the Armistice through their engagement with popular culture and retold stories about their relatives, fathers or grandfathers. In a sense, this focus on the soldering and popular war imagery further decontextualises remembrance days in the popular imagination.

The participants in the forum favour certain social identifications of the fallen over others. There exists a strong sympathy for gender equality in remembrance. Much less sensitivity exists in the perception

of fallen soldiers of different religious, ethnic and racial backgrounds. These identifications only appear in the entries which stress the marginalised position of non-white and non-Christian minorities in war remembrance. Here, one of the participants writes about Armistice as a day that reminds him about 'the lack of recognition of other people than whites who did their part yet their experience of fighting for King and Country was forgotten' (Mukeye, 2009). The same attitude is expressed by another contributor, Jawad, who writes: 'when we remember the dead, please, give a thought to the Muslims who sacrificed their lives for us – including my granddad' (Jawad, 2009). In this instance, the BBC News Forum exposes an unarticulated hierarchy in the ritual of remembrance days which implicitly prioritises the experiences of white and Christian soldiers and, unintentionally or not, 'forgets' the participation of other communities in wars. This perception of remembrance reflects a wider ambiguity with regard to race and colour in the British armed forces (Hussein and Ishad, 2002; Basham, 2013; Qureshi and Zeitlyn, 2013).

Fourth, the BBC News Forum shows a shift from commemoration to support of the armed forces. The example of popular entries for this position are: 'Respect the Soldier for he/she is man/women who actually make a difference', 'very great respect for those brave lads and lasses who fought' and 'this is a good time for everyone to stop and pay respect for the service men and women around the world past and present'. This change from remembrance to support is justified by references to traditional liberal values, security and safety, and military service as a national institution. The popular grounds for this support are 'they fight for freedom and democracy', 'soldiers help to build a better and safer world' or 'they serve in the British armed forces'. In this regard, this forum shows that a part of the British public is ready to pay its respects to British service personnel, not for their distinguished military achievements or an act of heroism, but on the grounds that they served in the armed forces. The entries of the forum on remembrance days reflect the strong association of the British military with the idea of the nation. The members of all-volunteer forces are perceived as individuals who have already made a sacrifice on behalf of the country by joining the military. This perception of the military contradicts the 'occupational' concept of military professionalism (Moskos, 2000; see also King, 2010) and suggests the applicability of Kreb's argument in the context of Britain where, as in the USA, British service personnel of all-volunteer forces can be enthusiastically hailed for their sacrifice for the country (Krebs, 2009; see also Chapter 1).

Fifth, service personnel are seen as being in a twofold capacity as both heroes and victims:

> As the minute's silence passed I thought about our servicemen with nothing but pride and admiration despite the lack of support they get. Then I thought of our politicians with nothing but loathing and contempt, who act like spoiled children when they have they perks taken away. The best and the worst of the country. (N., London, 2009)

In this quotation, service personnel are positioned as 'the best of the country', who heroically perform their mission yet suffer from the decisions of irresponsible politicians. This oppositional representation contrasts politics with the armed forces by assuming that the military is an apolitical institution. Following this predicament, soldiers are perceived as victims because they do not make decisions about wars, defence expenditure or equipment, while politicians make the decisions that start wars, 'cause the confrontations in which those men died or were maimed' and 'just pretend to care about soldiers or their families' (James, 2009). This rhetorical condemnation of politicians places the military within a hierarchical model of relations of power, predisposing the public towards sympathy for service personnel as hero-victims. As demonstrated above, this is exactly the attitude expected by those in power. Politicians realise the political potential of this sentimental and 'apolitical' support for the armed forces because they have cultivated it over the last few years.

Thus, the BBC News Forum reveals the complexity of the public's attitudes towards remembrance days. On the one hand, forum participants perceive remembrance days as commemorative occasions when 'the individuality of the fallen' (King, 2010, p. 6) can be recognised and respected. On the other hand, this humanistic recognition is set tightly within a conservative version of national values and military-centred commemoration. Although the forum contains entries with criticism towards political leaders, all critical comments firmly exempt the military from any guilt or criticism. Remembrance days are perceived by many as days not only of remembering, but also of demonstrating their support for the armed forces. In many senses, the BBC News Forum reveals much more about the overall consensus in British society than it does in terms of displaying any tensions within relationships between the military, the state and society.

4.3   Silence, wreaths and red poppies

What people think about remembrance days is only a part of the com-memorative process and, as Connerton explains, commemoration 'is more than a story told and reflected on; it is a cult enacted' (1989, p. 70). The following section studies commemoration as a re-enactment performance which consists of participatory actions and specific prac-tices. From this perspective, the next question is: what do people do on Armistice Day and Remembrance Day in Britain? According to a ComRes survey, the list of popular practices includes the Two Minute Silence on Armistice Day, watching TV broadcasting of the national ser-vice of remembrance at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, attending religious services and other remembrance-related events, and, finally, the buying or wearing of a red poppy (ComRes, 2009). The analysis below explores three popular rituals of British commemoration: the Two Minute Silence, which is also known as 'The Two Minutes Silence' or 'Silence' (Gregory, 1994, p. 9), the national service at the Cenotaph in London and the Poppy Appeal.

4.3.1   Re-framing the 'old' traditions

The rituals of remembrance came into being with the construction of the first national war memorials, the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which were unveiled in London in 1919 and 1920. The first national ceremony was held on Armistice Day, 11 November 1919 at 11.00 am. This day and time has a symbolic significance. They were chosen to 're-enact' the end of the First World War, which had occurred a year before in 1918. This act produced a 'chronological similarity' which 'entails or permits the repetition of the same actions' (Connerton, 1989, p. 66) and therefore reinforces the symbolic impact of the ritual. The Two Minute Silence, proposed by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, became a key ritual of Armistice Day. This ritual included the cessation of any activity for two minutes, during which the public was supposed to recount feelings and thoughts on the end of the war 'to end all wars'.

According to Gregory, the social functions of this 'invented' tradition were to unite the British society after the war, legitimate 'the position of "the man who won the war"', meet the interests of bereaved women and also exercise a pedagogic indoctrination of children and wider civilian society (1994, p. 10). The main components of the original ritual on Armistice Day included the signalling of the silence by church bells or other means (The Last Post and Reveille), religious services,

the Exhortation, followed by a silence with a closing ceremony of laying remembrance wreaths. In 1919, the public enthusiastically supported the idea of this ritual (Gregory, 1994, pp. 16–17).

The Second World War brought an end to this version of Armistice Day. Armistice was not celebrated during the war and in 1946 disappeared as a public event, being replaced instead by a national service of remembrance on the nearest Sunday to the Armistice. According to Gregory, this change was the result of the mutual efforts of the Church of England and the RBL, which lobbied for this change 'for entirely practical reasons' as both 'had a clear vested interest in maintaining the commemoration on a Sunday' (1994, pp. 215–19). The transfer of Armistice Day to Sunday ensured public participation, while also assisting with fundraising campaigns in the name of disabled veterans. During this period, local branches of the RBL continued to mark Armistice Day in addition to Remembrance Day by organising a private ceremony on 11 November for its members (Barr, 2005). This practice ensured the preservation of the ritual and assisted in its successful re-invention in the mid-1990s.

The modern version of Armistice Day and the Two Minute Silence began in 1995. The RBL lobbied for the 're-invention' of the ritual from the early 1990s (Braid, 1995; Lawson, 1996). In 1995, the campaign was publicised by *The Sun* as campaign '11:11:11', and the organisers introduced two reasons for the re-introduction of Armistice Day. First, the purpose of the ritual was to 'turn the clock back' and reunite generations of British public around the legacies of the World Wars by educating youngsters and reviving the feelings of gratitude towards a diminishing group of veterans. However, the organisers significantly altered the concept of the original ritual by insisting that Armistice Day and the Two Minute Silence in modern society should commemorate the fallen of 'all those who died for the country'. According to Gregory, the RBL had in fact promoted the idea of Armistice Day as a day of paying tribute to 'all veterans of all wars' since 1939, but the public associated Remembrance Day with the First World War rather than with other conflicts (Gregory, 1994, p. 220). In the 1990s, the RBL was successful in refurbishing the meaning of Armistice Day and the Two Minute Silence.

The new concept of Armistice Day has allowed for the establishment of a sense of historical continuity between the past and the present, which is one of the most important factors in the 'business of inventing traditions' (Hobsbawm, 1983a). This seeming continuity covered two conceptual shifts in the focus of modern remembrance. If the initial version of the ritual was rooted deeply within the context of the First World

War, the modern version of Armistice Day instead used military service as a starting point for commemoration. By 1995, it was obvious that the British armed forces would continue to be involved in overseas operations, often with multiple and ambiguous purposes. The emphasis on military service instead of war experience enabled a decontextualised framing of remembrance and allowed for the incorporation of the fallen of current and future conflicts. Within this framework, the fallen of all wars or those killed while on military service have become the 'glorious dead'. This re-adjustment of the First World War template allowed for the re-nationalisation and militarisation of remembrance in Britain. As a reporter from *The Guardian* described, the re-invention of Armistice Day with the Two Minute Silence was 'a relatively clean way of playing the patriotism game' (Lawson, 1996). In 1996, politicians, members of the Royal Family, the BBC and commercial corporations including British Airways, National Rail and other businesses actively supported the re-introduced ritual of Armistice Day (Culf, 1995; Millar, 1996; News in Brief, 1996). In 1997, the RBL received two Public Relations Awards from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, including 'The Sword of Excellence' for its efforts in bringing the Two Minute Silence back to the nation.

In 2001, the RBL initiated another change in the concept of Armistice Day. This time, it urged the British public to commemorate not only those serving in the British armed forces, but also the civilian victims of the terrorist attacks in the USA (Ferguson, 2001; Walsh, 2001). Noticeably, the RBL's appeal did not cover the civilian victims of all wars, but was positioned as a day of demonstrating solidarity with Americans 'on November 11 about September 11' (Branigan, 2001). This re-interpretation, while showing compassion towards the victims of 9/11, recalled the myth of special relationship and Anglo-American wartime cooperation (see Chapter 2).

At the end of the 2000s, Armistice Day, with the Two Minute Silence, became an established annual ritual of remembrance that is often represented as being a 90-year-long continuous 'tradition'. The revisions and periods of not marking Armistice Day and the Two Minute Silence are hardly ever mentioned during the remembrance period in November. Nevertheless, one might say that the new version of Armistice Day is much more flexible and certainly more entertaining. If Armistice Day falls on a weekday, the RBL organises a ceremony at Trafalgar Square in London. The local branches of the RBL hold the Silence 'on the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the 11th month' in the centre of cities, towns and villages. The modern ritual of Armistice Day features not only the Last Post

and the Reveille, but also the Exhortation, sermons, war poetry, perfor-
mances of popular artists and speeches by politicians. The marking of
Armistice Day has evolved into a show and a televised fundraising event
for the Poppy Appeal. In 2010, the RBL released a CD/DVD entitled
'Two Minute Silence' and a video clip with the same title intended to
inspire people to support this tradition.

To an extent, the public in Britain has been receptive of this version
of Armistice Day and the Two Minute Silence. According to a public
opinion survey, in 2009, around 70 per cent of the respondents in the
nationwide representative sample knew about the Two Minute Silence
and almost 94 per cent considered that this ritual needed to be pre-
served. This overwhelming support contrasts with much lower levels
of participation. According to the same survey, only 30 per cent of the
respondents actually planned to participate in the event (Ipsos MORI,
2009b). This illustrates a gap between the appreciation of the ritual and
a readiness to perform it on an annual basis. Although the Two Minute
Silence is a nationally recognised and respectful tradition, its perfor-
mance is localised around 'memory hot spots', market squares and war
memorials. In the BBC News Forum on Armistice Day, the recalling of
this ritual is often accompanied by the expression of discontent with
the behaviour of 'disrespectful' others who, though they noticed those
observing the Two Minute Silence, did not join them and continued
about their own business. In one instance, a forum participant said:
'I honoured the 2 minute silence as I always do and so should all of the
population. I have recently moved to London and I am totally disgusted
at what I have seen! Many spoke through it, trains kept running, tab-
loid messages continued. Total and disrespect! [sic]' (E., London, 2009).
Therefore, the performance of the ritual is set in the context of modern
society with much more diverse interests and differences in values and
styles of life. The reinstated ritual cannot compete with these diverse
distractions of modern society.

Although there is a trend towards introducing the Two Minute Silence
in secondary schools and workplaces, especially in England, the exist-
ence of the ritual does not necessarily mean that its meanings are shared
by all participants. According to the study by Imber and Fraser, in 2010,
90 per cent of children in their sample observed the Two Minute Silence
at school (Imber and Fraser, 2011, pp. 390–2). However, when asked
about the meaning of the ritual and what they thought about during
these two minutes, the responses ranged from expression of a respectful
attitude to fallen soldiers and their families to critical thoughts about
wars or thoughts unconnected with remembrance (Imber and Fraser,

2011, p. 392). One might suggest that the modern version of the Two Minute Silence seeks to bring society together in a single ritual, but it lacks the potential to impose a single meaning on this ritual. As with many commemorative practices in modern societies, the ritual allows for a diversity of interpretations and forms of participation.

My personal ethnographic observations of the Two Minute Silence on Armistice Day in Nottingham at the Old Market Square in 2009 and 2010 raised similar feelings. The ceremony, although moving, had clear spatial and symbolic limitations. It appeared to be performed on a theatrical stage, set within the normal life of the city on a weekday. In the centre of the main market square, the participants, members of the local branch of the RBL, service personnel, schoolchildren who came for their 'live' lesson in Citizenship and Remembrance, and members of the public stood solemnly after the bell struck 11.00 am. The sounds of the Last Post introduced the Exhortation, when local politicians and the members of the RBL lined up for the ceremony. After the Silence, a cannon shot marked the end of the ritual. This scene stood in sharp contrast to the dynamic consumer environment of the main shopping district, which continued unabated. The participants at the scene of remembrance looked solemn as consumers continued to talk and shop, avoiding looking at those holding the Silence. Thus, the modern face of Armistice Day demonstrates that there are those for whom Armistice Day offers a chance to commemorate tragic loss, family history, support veterans and re-confirm feelings of national belonging. Conversely, it is apparent that the re-invented ritual does not appeal to the feelings, experience or personal identifications of ethnic or religious communities and individuals who are living, working and shopping in modern Britain.

4.3.2   Communities united

The Exhortation
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them
Response: We will remember them.

The traditional ritual of commemoration in Britain includes a televised national service of remembrance at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London. This service was a part of the original ritual on Armistice Day and from 1946 became a major ritual, held annually on Remembrance Day. The

original service included the Two Minute Silence with its attributes, such as the Last Post and the Reveille, religious hymns, the ceremony of laying wreaths and the march of veterans past the Cenotaph (Gregory, 1994). The ritual has not changed significantly throughout the years, demonstrating historical continuity in national war commemoration. This traditional component of the ceremony includes the presence of the honoured guests and, as a result, this ceremony can be seen as 'predominantly Royalist, religious and military in tone and content and attended by the Royal Family, government representatives, military commanders, the Commonwealth High Commissioners and senior religious leaders' (Imber and Fraser, 2011, p. 392). Members of the public do not need special permission to attend and can observe the ceremony from both sides of Whitehall. During the ceremony, one can note the red poppies which the public wear, excited tourists, men dressed like Winston Churchill with Homburg hats and umbrellas, and veterans and cadets lining up before their march past the Cenotaph.

As with the Two Minute Silence, the national service of remembrance has been adjusted to suit the modern context. In 2010, the focus of the modern Whitehall ceremony was not expressed via the ritual itself, but was delivered through the accompanying media coverage, billboards and screens which were set up alongside Whitehall. These screens broadcast images of British soldiers in Afghanistan as well as images of wounded and disabled soldiers, and reproduced the Poppy Appeal posters. Collectively, this imagery contextualised the modern meaning of national service, demonstrating that there has been an 'unsubtle shifting of the meaning of Remembrance – from a symbol of *never forgetting* the victims of the World Wars to symbolising support for *our heroes* in Iraq and Afghanistan' (Kelly, 2013, p. 735, emphasis in original).

One of the main acts of this ritual includes laying commemorative wreaths to the Cenotaph. In Britain, this ritual is performed by members of the Royal Family, leading politicians and veterans whose presence underlines the national significance of the ceremony and legitimises the sacrifice of the fallen on behalf of the nation. The dignitaries do not give speeches during the service; the act of laying a wreath is the only form of their participation. In this context, the order of laying wreaths becomes the symbolic act in itself. The Queen lays her wreath first, followed by other members of the Royal Family and politicians. The participation of politicians in the ritual can generate discussion about their attitudes towards veterans, the fallen soldiers or the armed forces. Who approaches first, who bows or who does not is considered

as a demonstration of either their ignorance or sincerity in performing the ritual of remembrance (Bates, 2010; Carlin, 2010).

Veterans and members of service-connected organisations follow the politicians in this commemorative performance. Their march functions as a symbolic acknowledgement of their sacrifice and belonging to the 'glorious dead' by reproducing the original idea of the ceremony from the 1920s (Gregory, 1994, pp. 53–5). The modern march is popular among veterans, service-related communities and the public. Between 2007 and 2010, the number of participants in the Whitehall ceremony ranged from 7,000 to 8,000 individuals (RBL, 2008, 2009a, 2010). The modern composition of the march reflects the inclusive principle of veterans' policy in the UK, when service personnel and participants of different wars can officially be considered as 'veterans', and join the Cenotaph march (Dandeker *et al.,* 2006). In a sense, participation in the march enhances the collective identity of this diverse social group, while also introducing the complex composition of the population of veterans to the wider society. For members of service-related organisations, including the RBL or the Cadet Forces, participation in the march legitimates their dedication and contribution to the national well-being.

In Britain, the participants of the march represent war and military experiences instead of military weaponry. This organisation of the ceremony sends a humanistic message and provides members of the public with an opportunity to express their feelings towards the participants of the march. During my observations in 2009 and 2010, the public enthusiastically reacted to this personalised face of the past and present of the British military by clapping hands and cheering cries of support.

Any visitor to the Cenotaph ceremony might notice the uniformity of floral tributes from royalty, politicians, veterans and members of the public. This uniformity was established at the end of the 1920s as a result of support for the Poppy Appeal by the Royal Family and other dignitaries (Gregory, 1994, p. 103). Since then, the poppies on wreaths and crosses by war memorials have come to symbolise the inherent connection between the commemoration of the dead and the benevolent support of the living – veterans, bereaved families and service personnel.

4.3.3   The controversies of the Poppy Appeal

As with the other rituals discussed above, the tradition of wearing a poppy on Armistice Day came into being after the First World War in 1921. As Gregory explains, '11 November was not simply about commemoration of the dead; it was also about obligation to the living'

(1994, p. 103). This obligation was articulated via the Haig Poppy Appeal, initiated by Field Marshal Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig and led to a newly established charity, the British Legion. The act of buying and wearing a red poppy was represented as an act of a national duty and a homage to 'the national debt owed to ex-service personnel through their sacrifice in the Great War' (Barr, 2005, p. 97). This representation of the Haig Relief, later re-named the Poppy Appeal, imposed a sense of the public's responsibility to repay this debt. According to Cohen, this ensured the success of veterans' reintegration into civilian life, unlike in Germany, where a special system of state-sponsored benefits separated veterans from the wider public (Cohen, 2001). In Britain during the 1920s, public contributions could not cover the difference between the meagre government allowance and the cost of living expenses for disabled and unemployed veterans, but public contributions to service-related charities demonstrated that the public cared for the well-being of these groups (Cohen, 2000, 2001). Conversely, the Poppy Appeal represented veterans not only as those who had made sacrifices on behalf of the nation, but also as those who were victims of the war. To a certain extent, the Appeal, though giving relief to some veterans, also turned them into passive recipients of public donations. As a result, by the end of the 1920s, veterans 'were moved to the margins, as recipients of Haig Fund relief, as celebrants at the British Legion Festival of Remembrance and as a group who laid wreaths on Remembrance Sunday' (Gregory, 1994, p. 104). As Gregory explains, these symbolic roles become constraints for veterans' groups and associations to communicate their needs to the public. It might be suggested that veterans in modern British society have struggled to overcome the limitations of their symbolic roles as recipients of the Poppy Appeal or the embodiments of national history and identity. To an extent, the irony of the veterans' position lies in the symbolic constraints of the remembrance days as a whole. The presence of veterans during the remembrance days makes them visible to the wider society, but this visibility does not help to further their cause because it is directed at the revival of the commitments of society to the armed forces and the nation.

Unlike Armistice Day and the Two Minute Silence, the Poppy Appeal had survived over 90 years of annual and continuous commemorations. During this time, the popularity of the Appeal has fluctuated in terms of the number of donations and the overall participation of the public (Barr, 2005). The modern history of the Appeal reflects the recent shift towards the military-centred concept of commemoration. For example, the RBL report describes the act of remembrance as 'a key commitment

of the nation and a strong obligation of the government and the public', reproducing the language of the Military Covenant (RBL, 2010). Participation in the ritual of remembrance is introduced as a national duty and a moral responsibility of both the state and civilian society. In this instance, the RBL emerges as a protector and a representative of the armed forces, as well as all those associated with this institution.

In 2001, the RBL launched the Poppy Appeal under the motto 'The Sacrifice Goes On', alluding to the service of British contingents in Afghanistan. The internal slogan 'Serving those who serve', under which members of the RBL visited the British contingent in Basra in 2008, became a key phrase of the national Poppy Appeal in 2010. In 2009 and 2010, the younger generation of British soldiers became the sole visual representatives of the national remembrance.

The Poppy Appeal posters show images of wounded and disabled soldiers who fought in Iraq or Afghanistan, young widows with children, images of newly arrived coffins and British soldiers on missions. These posters urged the public 'for his/their sake, wear a poppy' or to buy a poppy because 'it doesn't hurt' or 'it's not so painful'. The posters contrast the pain of service personnel with the 'easy' gesture of making a donation and wearing a red poppy. None of the posters contained any images of enemies or any signs that might clarify the context of warfare. The nature of modern conflicts disappears from the posters, being replaced by the imagery of the suffering of British service personnel somewhere in the desert. The sufferings of soldiers or their families also lack any ideological explanations. The posters did not mention freedom or democracy, or engage directly with the causes of modern warfare or purposes of soldiers' suffering. Instead, this symbolic imagery refers to the dangers of military service as the main and only legitimate point of national commemoration. This military-centred commemoration positions the armed forces as an embodiment of national values and an institution which cannot function without strong public support. In this sense, both lines of argument enhance each other in communicating the same point. Commemoration thus becomes defined as a demonstration of support for the armed forces, which in turn is one of the best ways to demonstrate unity and British national identity.

As in the 1920s, the modern Poppy Appeal calls the public to contribute to military welfare and popularises support for the forces as a national duty. Although this message came from the context of the First World War with almost a million volunteers and conscripts who fought and died on the fields of France and Belgium or Gallipoli, it was successfully re-applied in the modern context with a relatively small group

of service personnel fighting in Afghanistan. In 2010, the Poppy Appeal asked the public to support service personnel of the all-volunteer forces, for whom military service was a personal choice of profession. However, the Poppy campaign, together with the upgraded version of re-nationalised remembrance, overcomes this detail. This discursive shift set the demonstration of support in the context of ongoing operations by sending out an implicit message of supporting them as well.

In 2010, veterans of the Falklands War amongst other conflicts wrote a letter to *The Guardian* expressing their concerns about the modern Poppy Appeal and its form. The authors remarked: 'A day that should be about peace and remembrance is turned into a month-long drum-roll of support for current wars. This year's campaign has been launched with showbiz hype. The true horror and futility of war is forgotten and ignored' (Bates, 2010). Here, veterans turned the attention of readers to the changed nature of the ritual of remembrance and its shifted focus away from the commemoration of fallen soldiers towards support of the armed forces and the missions themselves. Moreover, this letter revealed that not all veterans had been supportive of the 'showbiz' version of Armistice Day and the Poppy Appeal.

The Poppy Appeal uses a product-placement strategy, exploiting consumer expectations of Britons. A red poppy can be seen on a Poppy Day whisky or a loaf of bread (Birkett, 2010). Although this marketing strategy targets the demands of a modern consumer society, it has a strong historical origin. As Gregory points out, the British Legion used a product-placement strategy for the popularisation of the appeal during the early 1920s (1994, p. 111). It sponsored the production of silk poppies and paper poppies 'for the rich and poor'. The modern version of the silk poppy includes 'glittering' poppies, crystal poppy brooches, poppy T-shirts, poppy umbrellas and other merchandising products with the poppy. The principal difference lies not in the product-placement strategy itself, but in its contemporary focus – whereas in the 1920s it was focused on the process of raising the funds for veterans and bereaved families, from 2007 onwards the Poppy Appeal explicitly promulgates support for the national armed forces and, implicitly, military campaigns.

The modern poppy exists not only in a physical form. In 2008, the RBL created a virtual field of remembrance on the wave of the growing popularity of online commemoration (see Chapter 3). The physical Field of Remembrance is opened annually in November at Westminster Abbey in London and across major cities, towns and villages of the UK. A visitor to these fields can make a donation and dedicate a cross or other commemorative symbols (a Solomon Star for Jewish fallen or a

wooden crescent for Muslims with red poppies). This Field of Remembrance expresses itself as a temporary cemetery with the countless number of fallen in wars and conflicts. It demonstrates the recognition of the multiple identities of the fallen as the same person can be commemorated as a member of a regiment or a participant of a war, a member of a service-connected organisation or a victim of war. In this display, the areas dedicated to the British service personnel who died in recent conflicts (Iraq and Afghanistan) are more visible because their deaths are marked with photos and personalised messages (see Figure 4.1).

This individualisation of soldiers contrasts with the anonymous representation of civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, stressing the hierarchy of grief between the recognition of the lives of service personnel and the lives of unknown others (Butler, 2003). Notably, the very fact that civilian victims are included in the national Field of Remembrance demonstrates recent attempts to broaden the framework of national commemoration.

Over recent years, the donation from the selling of the red poppies has been steadily growing. According to the RBL, the amount donated

Figure 4.1   The Field of Remembrance, London (photo by the author, 2010)

via the Poppy Appeal increased from £24.2 million in 2007 to £35 million in 2010 (RBL, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). Currently, 'veterans' organisations are amongst the most successful in the charitable sector, raising approximately £800 million per year; the largest two organisations, the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes, each raised more than £30 million in their last annual campaigns in 2012' (Gribble *et al*., 2014, p. 50). To date, the poppy as a symbol of remembrance is popularised in schools, by politicians, the mass media and other cultural institutions. Consequently, wearing a red poppy during the remembrance period has become a socially expected practice. Kelly describes an example of the social pressure of wearing a poppy exercised by all English and Scottish Premier League football clubs in November 2008, 2009 and 2010, when all clubs 'were asked to display a specially embroidered Earl Haig poppy on club shirts' (Kelly, 2013, p. 731). This social pressure ensures the compelling effect of this ritual, but it also prompts counter-actions to voice views which are different from supporters of the Poppy Appeal.

The discussion about wearing a poppy revolves around two questions: when and in what situation it is appropriate to wear a poppy, and what colour poppy to wear (BBC News, 2009a). Jon Snow, a popular newsreader at Channel 4, refused to wear a poppy because he strongly believes that newsreaders, TV presenters and possibly other public figures should not wear a red poppy in public during a remembrance period as it demonstrates their ideological preferences and implicitly encourages others to follow their example (*Evening Standard*, 2006; Revoir, 2010). According to Snow, this sets the Poppy Appeal in a preferable position in comparison with other charity calls. It is important to stress that Snow does not oppose the red poppy as such and wears it on Armistice Day and Remembrance Day. However, he and his supporters stand against 'the tyranny of the poppy' and 'poppy fascism', which, from their point of view, exists in modern Britain (Glendinning, 2006; *The Guardian*, 2009; Walters, 2010). The opponents of this view have condemned these labels, arguing that 'a poppy as a token of respect and thanks' and 'a national emblem' has valid reasons for being the dominant symbol of remembrance in Britain (Portillo, 2006). This argument brings the observation regarding the colour of the poppy.

Non-red poppies can symbolise not only a stand against social pressure in practising remembrance, but also a right to express alternative views about war. In Britain, the supporters of this view use a white poppy as a token of remembrance. The white poppy came into being in the 1930s, when the tradition of First World War commemoration and the Haig Poppy Appeal were well established. From the perspective

of anti-war organisations, the Red Poppy Appeal had a nationalistic and militaristic meaning, instead of acting as a call for peace and reconciliation. For example, the Peace Pledge Union introduced the idea of the white poppy as 'a symbol of remembrance of all people – armed forces and civilians of any nationality – who die in war' (Peace Pledge Union, 2011; Stop the War Coalition, 2011). Although the red poppies shape the national face of contemporary remembrance in Britain, the existence of their white and also purple alternatives (Animal Aid, 2007) show that society itself generates alternative forms of remembrance.

`The conflicting messages between red and white poppies were recalled during an online discussion for *The One Show* in 2008. The programme started a blog, asking the public 'does a red poppy glorify war?', 'is it just a form of recognition of human sacrifice?' or 'is it totally neutral on war?' (*The One Show*, 2008). This discussion gives us a glimpse of the public attitudes towards the red poppy. As expected, the vast majority of the bloggers supported the red poppy (83 per cent of entries). Many of them chose to wear a red poppy in memory of their relatives, fallen soldiers, in general or in support of the armed forces. These answers mirror the position of the supporters of Armistice Day and Remembrance Day from the BBC News Forum analysed earlier in this chapter. The supporters of this view tend to perceive the white poppy as a threat that undermines the sacrifice of service personnel or demonstrates disrespect to bereaved families or national traditions. Their opponents (eight per cent of the total number of entries plus those for the 'neutral' view) stood for the right to make a free choice and a right to send a message of peace while remembering the lives of soldiers and civilians. For example, a contributor, Peterblogger, wrote:

> I have a great respect and sympathy for anyone who has lost a close friend or relative in any war. What I don't understand is why television seems to have a 'red poppy policy' whereby everyone seems to be wearing the red poppy. Is this through freedom of choice, the very freedom that these wars were fought? Are guests offered a white poppy? … as respect for those who lost their lives but a voice for peace at the same time. (Peterblogger, 2008)

This quotation shows that although the author has demonstrated his critical attitude towards both the persuasive campaign to wear a red poppy and its pro-war message, he expresses respect and support for bereaved and fallen soldiers. Furthermore, it is important to stress that although this discussion generated a range of emotional and critical

comments, the supporters of the white poppy did not express any nega-
tive views towards service personnel. Wearing a white poppy is per-
ceived as a political act to demonstrate disagreement with the politics
of war exercised by the British government rather than to criticise the
armed forces (see Figure 4.2).

Research regarding the Poppy Appeal conducted by the public opin-
ion agency YouGov indicated that despite the controversy and social
pressure that was created as a result of the Poppy Appeals between
2007 and 2010, 'the vast majority of respondents are wearing their
[red] poppies with pride, and not a single one questioned the brav-
ery of those who have given their lives for Britain in armed conflict'
(YouGov, 2010). Both groups (pro-red poppy and anti-poppy) are ready
to support the armed forces and commemorate the sacrifice of service
personnel. However, the former group is willing to wear a red poppy in
support of the forces and by default shares the implicit message of the
Poppy campaign, which supports military operations. The opponents
of the red poppy would like to practise commemoration that supports
the armed forces, but does not support a particular conflict or war in

Figure 4.2   The peace protestors on Remembrance Day in London (photo by the
author, 2010)

general. In this context, the act of burning a red poppy by the Muslim Radical Group on Armistice Day in 2010 can be interpreted as a radical form of deconstructing the dominant nationalistic and militaristic meaning of the red poppy (BBC News, 2011). Although the protest by the Muslim Radical Group expressed a minority view and the Group's prosecution was supported by the vast majority of the population (82 per cent) (Anderson, 2010), its protest, like many other subtle practices of resisting the pressure of poppy conformity, has revealed the tension and inherent ambiguity in the shifted focus of the Poppy Appeal.

4.4 Concluding thoughts

Overall, there is a great deal of continuity in the ritual and meaning of commemorative ceremonies in the UK. During the early 1920s, remembrance was a time when ceremonies reminded civilians about their commitments towards the 'glorious dead' and to veterans and bereaved families. In contemporary Britain, Armistice Day and Remembrance Day continue to function as days of recommitment when the public is reminded about its *moral obligation* to remember the fallen of wars, share national values and support the armed forces which are currently engaged in military operations.

The modern facets of Armistice Day, Remembrance Day and the Poppy Appeal introduce support for the armed forces as a key national value and the primary form of communication with the national military. Like the media coverage and memorials, the rituals of commemoration decontextualise modern conflicts by replacing their moral complexity with an uncompromising call of 'support!'. Today, as Kelly explains, 'many of the nation's sacred rituals have been "helping heroes" since General Dannatt's plea for increased support and just like high streets, its annual commemoration days, its most popular television shows, its national news programmes, its music industry, its beauty contestants, its royal family and its education system, "the nation's" sport is but one of the fertile sites for aiding the hero-ification process' (Kelly, 2013, p. 731).

Many scholars suggest that in Britain, the experience of First World War commemorations sent a humanistic message, focusing on the human experience of war rather than a war itself (Winter, 1995). The modern ceremonies of remembrance prioritise the human experience of soldiering and war trauma; they express respect and tribute towards war participants. However, as before, the influence of the context of modern warfare is seemingly an unimportant factor. The unconceptualised yet

present context of modern warfare encourages the separation of the cause from the participants, and this aspect of remembrance forms the foundation of a supportive stance towards the armed forces and military campaigns. The decontextualisation of warfare in the rituals of remembrance normalises war and manufactures tacit consent by 'embedding dominant ideological signifiers' and 'militaristic paraphernalia [which is] so central to UK Remembrance' (Kelly, 2013, pp. 731–2).

As with media discourse and war memorials, the ceremonies of remembrance in Britain use the notion of military service as a starting point for commemoration. This shift exposes the nature of 'hybrid' military professionalism, when the military functions as a vehicle for national identity and also a symbol of political conformity (Dixon, 2012).

The ceremonies also demonstrate the deep integration of consumer and entertainment cultures into commemoration. Their intervention dilutes its 'sombre' message, transforming the ritual of remembrance into a commemorative show. As a result, the red poppy has become a multifaceted symbol, demonstrating the national belonging of the wearer, symbolising his or her care for the fallen or service personnel, or merely functioning as a glittering accessory unburdened by any special meaning. The modern version of the Poppy Appeal does not give a better understanding of military life, but it nevertheless embeds the idea of society's responsibility for the armed forces. Most importantly, in British society, despite the dominant discourse of 'support the forces on operations', the alternative idea of 'support the forces but do not support wars' also finds its way into the public domain. Although it is extremely difficult to challenge the emerging nationalistic and military-centric discourses of remembrance, every year the Remembrance frenzy encounters resistance from anti-war organisations, supporters of the white poppy tradition or such groups as a section of the Celtic Football Club, which 'every year distributed leaflets connecting British militarism to civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq' before matches in the English and Scottish League (Kelly, 2013, p. 731). These examples show that British society can, and does, resist the dominant nationalist and military-driven frames of remembrance by developing alternative ways of remembering the tragedies of wars.

5
Media Commemoration in Russia

5.1   Afghanistan: the last Soviet war

The recognition of the media's power in shaping public attitudes towards wars is not sufficient for an understanding of the Russian experience of media commemoration of military fatalities. Our analysis cannot claim any accuracy without taking into account a series of groundbreaking political, economic and societal transformations experienced by the country from the early 1980s onwards. This chapter situates the analysis of the Russian military fatalities within the wider political context and traces changes in the media coverage from the Soviet Afghan War (1979–89) through the first Chechen conflict (1994–6) to the second conflict in Chechnya (1999–2009).

Whereas Britain in the late 1970s struggled with economic crisis, withdrawal from the Empire, societal changes and challenges of political separatism within Northern Ireland, Soviet society lived through a period of stagnation (*zastoi*). Under the leadership of the Communist Party and its General Secretary, Leonid Brezhnev, society aimed towards developed socialism, while relying on 'incessant propaganda about the Soviet's Union lack of unemployment, the gulf between rich and poor, race riots, or the Vietnam War' (Kotkin, 2001, p. 44). In addition to the Soviet propaganda machine, Brezhnev's administration offered 'stability of cadres' and a 'social contract' of political cohabitation with the regime, by allowing the nomenclature and a few fortunate categories of blue-collar workers to access the limited supply of consumer goods 'at the expense of civil and political freedoms' (Bacon, 2002, p. 16). The expectations of the rest of the population were managed through access to universal health care, moderate welfare support, public education and state-provided housing. This picture glossed over the growing

economic and political tensions within Soviet society. By the end of the 1970s, the Soviet planned economy was burdened with expensive foreign aid to socialist regimes, a large military-industrial complex and the humble, yet increasingly significant, consumer expectations of Soviet citizens. Western culture was slowly but surely penetrating Soviet youth culture by shifting the preferences of Soviet youngsters towards Western music, consumer goods and a less rigid and more individualistic lifestyle (Pilkington, 1998). In this context, the Soviet mission in Afghanistan put additional constraints on the regime and led to its subsequent collapse.

5.1.1 The international mission of the USSR

A key starting point for understanding the Soviet Afghan War is through the policy of socialist internationalism. This policy emerged as a main instrument of the Cold War, and justified Soviet economic and military support for socialist regimes and Marxist-Leninist revolutions abroad (Sakwa, 1998, pp. 272–3). Practising this policy, the Soviet media were allowed to report on the revolutions in Nicaragua and Iran, and resistance in Vietnam and Angola, but the Soviet authorities did not go as far as encouraging reporting on the success or failures of Soviet military missions in these countries. Although the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' (1968) legitimated Soviet assistance to other countries striving for socialism, it also implied the propagandistic premise of independence of these societies in their struggle against Western oppression. In the 1970s, this ideological constraint overlapped with changes in the wider context of the Cold War. During this period, the policy of Soviet socialist internationalism was in conflict with détente policy in foreign affairs, which allowed for a tense, yet relatively peaceful, coexistence with the West (Keylor, 2011, pp. 265–75). In this instance, the specific developments in the context of the Cold War discouraged the recognition of the deeds and deaths of Soviet soldiers in such countries as Algeria, Egypt, Vietnam, Angola, Ethiopia and Syria.

This informational concealment policy exercised by the Soviet authorities during the Cold War contradicted the ideological underpinnings of military service in the Soviet Union. In Soviet society, military service was presented as a sacred duty and a prestigious profession (Jones, 1985, p. 150). The social prestige of the military relied upon generous military welfare for cadre officers and continuous state propaganda for potential conscripts. The ideological justification of military service used the myths and cultural imagery of the Second World War. Education and the children's periodical press popularised 'stories glorifying the

military's exploits in World War II' and portrayed 'readiness to defend the homeland as a fundamental aspect of citizenship' (Jones, 1985, p. 151). Examples of Second World War heroism formed a substantial part of the political education for conscripts within the Soviet military (Goldhamer, 1975; Colton Jr., 1979; Jones, 1985). Fundamentally, the Second World War served as 'a foundation myth' to the Soviet regime as a whole (Tumarkin, 1994; Merridale, 2000; Weiner, 2001a, 2001b). The Soviet victory in the Second World War had 'bestowed a substantial legitimacy for socialism as a successful political regime' in comparison with capitalism (Kotkin, 2001, pp. 44–5). In this regard, the frames of the Second World War and the Cold War reinforced each other by stressing the superiority of the Soviet Union over its Western counterparts. However, these frames conflicted with each other when they were applied to Soviet soldiers deployed on foreign missions of socialist internationalism. Prior to Afghanistan, the interests of the Communist Party generally coincided with the 'ideological, material, status and professional interests of the army' rather than contradicting or completely neglecting them (Colton Jr., 1979, p. 280; see also Kolkowicz, 1967). Both government and public support for the armed forces in the Soviet Union were sufficient to cope with the occasional misrepresentations of the 'international duties' of Soviet soldiers from 1945 to the early 1980s. The war in Afghanistan exposed the inherent ideological contradiction and undermined the relatively consensual relationship between the military, the state and society.

Following the difficult decision-making process (Braithwaite, 2012, pp. 37–57), the Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces crossed the border with Afghanistan on 25 December 1979. According to TASS, the main news agency of the Soviet Union, the stated purpose of the Soviet presence in the country was 'to assist the Afghan people in their fight against aggressive invasion' (TASS 177/151, 1979). The Central Committee of the Communist Party instructed political officers of the troops and party activists to explain to the units and members of the public about the strategic importance of Afghanistan as a neighbour of the Soviet Union and about the 'international duty' of the Soviet state 'to help this young socialist revolution' (TASS 177/151, 1979; see also Galeotti, 1995, p. 11). As a result, the Soviet media presented the invasion of Afghanistan as socialist internationalism in compliance with the frame of the Cold War, and the 'Brezhnev Doctrine'. While the media reported on the commencement of the operation, media reports failed to elaborate upon the military duties of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan (Salmin, 2001, p. 24). This was the beginning

of a 'hidden' military campaign which was meant to be concealed, first and foremost, from Soviet society and then from the rest of the world. However, this concealment did not withstand the test of time. The campaign continued for over nine years and cost the lives of over 15,015 soldiers and thousands of Afghan civilians (Krivosheev, 2001, pp. 535–6). From 1979 onwards, the representation of Soviet soldiers and Soviet military fatalities in Afghanistan fluctuated alongside changes in the political regime.

5.1.2 The changing fortunes of the Soviet soldiers

From 1979 to 1984, Soviet propagandistic efforts depicted Afghanistan through the lenses of socialist internationalism and the Cold War. During this period, the Soviet government sent journalists from the leading newspapers – including *Pravda, Izvestiia*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* and *Krasnaia Zvezda* – and from the state television channel to Afghanistan (CT198/9, 1980). The main function of these 'embedded' reporters was to produce propagandistic material about the struggle of Afghan society against 'Western invaders' and 'local bandits'. On the one hand, reporters wrote about an 'undeclared war' in Afghanistan led by the Afghan government and the Soviet Union against the USA, Pakistan and China (Matiash, 1982; Musaelian, 1982; Vinogradov, 1999). On the other hand, the Soviet media reported about the disruptions caused by the actions of local bandits (described in Soviet press as *basmachi* or *dushmany*) to the life of civilians. The naming of enemies as *basmachi* aligned the discourse of this campaign within a wider Soviet historical context. Originally, 'this term was co-opted by the Soviets as a derogatory name for the loose collection of anti-Soviet forces in 1920s–30s Central Asia' (Horsman, 2005, p. 208). In the context of Afghanistan, this term established parallels between the Revolutionary War in Central Asia in the 1920s and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1970s.

Preserving the ethos of the party line, the Soviet media described Soviet soldiers as patriot-internationalists who were bringing 'a bright socialistic future' to Afghanistan (Esenov, 1983). This representation sprang from the complexity of Soviet relationships with the new Afghan leadership. The Soviet Union declared its support to the new socialist government, but it also recognised a need to project its strength and independence. One of the major concerns was the danger that:

> due the internal nature of the antigovernmental opposition, the use
> of Soviet troops in repressing the Afghan counterrevolution would

seriously damage the international authority of the USSR and would set back the process of disarmament. In addition, the use of Soviet troops would reveal the weakness of the Taraki [Afghan] government and would widen the scope of the counterrevolution both domestically and abroad, bringing the attack of anti-governmental forces to a much higher level. (Memo P149/XIU, 1979)

To avoid this danger, in compliance with the Party's propaganda instructions, Soviet reporters emphasised the independence of the Afghan leadership and represented Soviet soldiers as 'helpers' of the Afghan people and the Afghan army. The following quotation exemplifies this normative representation of Soviet soldiers:

An Afghan trader from Kabul said that 'the government helps us but *dushmany* disrupt our lives through the support of foreign imperialistic governments. We should finish with them as soon as possible, and Soviet soldiers help us in this matter. *They are exceptionally disciplined, polite, tactful and honest individuals*; they do not intervene in our affairs. They came to Afghanistan because we asked them to, and they should stay in our country until the threat of external invasion from the USA, China and their partners is removed'. (Il'inskii, 1980, author's translation and emphasis added)

The idealised representation of the qualities of Soviet soldiers in the above quotation borders on the absurd, revealing the propagandistic essence of this narrative. The problem with this propaganda canon is its limitation in acknowledging the military duties of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan. According to the Soviet press, the Soviets rarely carried out any combat duties; their efforts were focused on the construction of civilian facilities (schools, bridges and hospitals) and the training of Afghan soldiers. The following quotation from an interview with a Soviet soldier published in *Izvestiia* gives us a sense of this ideological formula of reporting:

Soviet soldiers help Afghan people to build a new life. Recently, in a *kishlak* [village], not far from our base, we built a community centre for peasants. In the evening, locals went there to watch a soviet film … Although *dushmany* [bandits] threatened people, life goes on. It is a pleasure to see that in the morning Afghan children go to a school built by Soviet workers. (Goltsev and Sautin, 1984, author's translation)

Occasionally, the Soviet media reported that some Soviet soldiers were distinguished by medals for their service in Afghanistan (Teplov, 1983). However, due to the lack of details about the circumstances of their service coupled with propagandistic accounts on their role as 'helpers' of the Afghan population, it followed that Soviet soldiers were rewarded for their 'participation in military training and help to Afghan people in their civilian life' rather than military duties (Seniavskaia, 1999, p. 207). Moreover, the inversion of Soviet propaganda meant that the military achievements of Soviet soldiers were often described as a success of the Afghan army rather than of Soviet soldiers. One Soviet soldier wrote in his diary: 'I was unpleasantly surprised when I read in *Sovetskaia Rossiia* after one of the hardest fights that Afghani soldiers had won this battle. The article did not even mention us [Soviet soldiers]' (Zhavoronkov, 1990).

Therefore, political censorship during the first four years of the campaign repeatedly underrepresented the military accomplishments of the Soviet forces, their courage or human losses. This coverage contrasted with both the pre-deployment propaganda training and the experience of Soviet soldiers. As explained above, Soviet propaganda presented military service as a sacred duty stemming from the context of the Second World War. Moreover, this propaganda encouraged Soviet soldiers to follow their grandfathers in their determination to fight for socialist values. However, the accomplishment of military duties in Afghanistan did not assume the same respect or tribute. Such treatment of war participants demonstrated a growing controversy regarding the position of the military within Soviet society.

From the onset of the Soviet mission in Afghanistan, the depiction of Soviet fatalities was subject to vigorous political control. During the early 1980s, the Party leadership introduced a blanket restriction on any information about the fatalities (Danilova, 2010). Between 1983 and 1986, according to the party propaganda guidelines, the media were allowed to report about single deaths of Soviet soldiers (no more than once a month and without any details); they were advised that these deaths should be associated with self-defence and they should be depicted as 'heroic acts' (Odnokolenko, 1992). The party propaganda instructions also dictated the preferred wording for the reports on Soviet military fatalities. Reporters were advised to report only on 'rare occasions of self-defence' or 'the protection of Afghan civilians against bandits'. They were also instructed to replace the word 'death' with such phrases as 'died in action' or died 'while on military duty in Afghanistan', without indicating where and how Soviet soldiers died (Odnokolenko, 1992).

The specific context of the Cold War gave rise to a practice of repatriation of the bodies of Soviet soldiers from Afghanistan to the Soviet Union. The decision of the Soviet authorities was not driven by sympathy for bereaved families, but was rather as a result of the specific context of the Cold War, exercised through policies of secrecy and concealment (Liakhovskii, 1999, p. 271). If in Western societies the bodies of the dead serve as the symbols of the nation-state to project its power through military burials and memorials (Mosse, 1990; Grant, 2005; Wasinski, 2008), in the Soviet Union the bodies of the dead were as factual evidence of the hypocritical Soviet policy in Afghanistan. Instead of publicly burying fallen soldiers, the Soviet authorities tried hard to conceal their existence. In the majority of cases, the bodies of the fallen were transported to the Soviet Union in sealed zinc coffins and given the military code-name 'Cargo 200'. Restrictions were imposed on the delivery of coffins to the families. As Braithwaite describes with reference to the memoir of an Afghan war veteran: 'Even in 1983 the government was still trying to maintain the fiction that the Soviet troops were not engaged in combat, but merely fulfilling their "international duty" to help the Afghan people. So the coffins were delivered to the families at dead of night' (2012, p. 255). Further restrictions were imposed on the organisation of funerals and the burial of soldiers. There are numerous accounts of families and veterans which reported that, during the 1980s, soldiers' 'graves were scattered around [local cemeteries] in the hope that their numbers would have less impact, and the headstones seldom specified where or why death had occurred' (Merridale, 2000, p. 366; see also Alekseevich, 1990).

By the mid-1980s, more than 7,000 Soviet soldiers had lost their lives in Afghanistan, while around 200,000 soldiers returned to the Soviet Union with combat experience. In addition, during this period, potential recruits became less eager to join the armed forces and serve in Afghanistan (Solnik, 1998). Responding to these issues, the Soviet propaganda machine created a heroisation strategy to legitimise the Soviet Afghan War (Kinsburgskii and Topalov, 1992, p. 106). Prior to this action, the Second World War and its participants were the only legitimate war heroes. Starting from 1984, the ideological canon of war heroism was re-adjusted to the context of the internationalist mission in Afghanistan. This strategy gave the Soviet authorities an opportunity to 'normalise' Soviet military fatalities and to reinstate the imagined continuity in war commemoration by depicting Soviet soldiers as successors of their heroic grandfathers.

In 1984, several national newspapers and popular magazines – such as *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, *Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* and *Znamia* – introduced a regular column about the heroic actions of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan. A typical report reproduced a normative canon of Soviet war heroism. This canon described the Soviet soldier as a member of the Youth League of the Communist Party (*Komsomol*), who went voluntarily to Afghanistan believing it was his international duty to help the Afghan revolution. A Soviet soldier fought and died in Afghanistan while on duty and the Soviet government subsequently distinguished his heroism with medals and commemoration. Streets and parks were named in his honour, and schoolchildren were taught about his heroic death (see examples in Chakhkiev, 1985; Zemskov, 1985; Alimov *et al.*, 1986; Kamanov, 1986). The following quotation from *Sovetskaia Rossiia* illustrates this style of reporting:

> Several times this Soviet soldier defended his position from *dushmany* while also protecting his comrades. Suleiman Khachakuev died in this unequal fight, but he performed his military duty until the very end ... We remember and commemorate a hero, but how can we compare our feelings with the courage of a mother? ... Suleiman's mother, Saiadat said, 'My desperation is unlimited, but I can now look into other people's eyes. Thank you, son! Mothers give birth to sons for the Motherland, and it leads them not to a shameful end, but to glory'. Saidat received a letter from her son's regiment. It said: 'With great respect we inform you that the glorious death of your son will be remembered by every soldier of our regiment. We remember and praise Suleiman as a soldier-internationalist ... His name was included in a regimental book of commemoration, and it was also added to the regimental memorial ... We inform you that your son by the Degree of the High Council of the USSR was awarded a medal for Combat Duties (*Za boevye zaslugi*) and an Order of Lenin for courage and heroism, which he demonstrated while on the international duty in Afghanistan, posthumously.' (Chakhkiev, 1985, author's translation)

This normative story embodied the propagandistic mission of the Soviet media 'to be a teacher, educating the public in the "right" way' and 'acting as the [Communist Party's] publicist' (Renz, 2006, p. 64). The Soviet media taught the public about the international duties of modern war heroes. Whereas the media used the same heroic discourse while reporting on Afghanistan, direct parallels between the Second

World War and the Soviet mission in Afghanistan were rarely drawn. Although both frames were supposed to reinforce each other in facilitating the ideological indoctrination of Soviet youngsters, these frames of the Soviet Afghan War and the Second World War conflicted with each other. Consequently, instead of strengthening the regime, this conflict of narratives created the hidden paradox, demonstrating the 'oddity' of Soviet propaganda with regard to Afghanistan (Galeotti, 1995, p. 43).

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, declared a new political course on re-structuring and openness (*perestroika* and *glasnost*). The application of these principles to the war in Afghanistan meant preparation for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the country and the lifting of the Party's censorship on military issues (Murrey, 1994, pp. 115–18). Since 1987, the same reporters from national newspapers such as *Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and the popular magazines *Znamia*, *Ogonek* and *Uinost*, which had been producing patriotic accounts about hero-soldiers a year before, were now writing about the mistakes of the Soviet military leadership in Afghanistan, taboo issues such as violence and hazing (*dedovshchina*) among conscripts, the extensive consumption of alcohol and drugs, violence against civilians, the difficulties faced when trying to access military benefits and an overall lack of public support for young veterans in the Soviet Union (Studenkin, 1987; Gimpilevich, 1988; Liakhovskii, 1999). These revelations of *glasnost* disclosed the despair of bereaved families who had been struggling with the lack of government support and public compassion for their loss (Alekseevich, 1990).

By the end of the 1980s, 'glasnost turned into a tsunami of unflattering comparisons [between now and then] because of past censorship' (Kotkin, 2001, p. 69). With regards to Afghanistan, selective criticism of certain aspects of the campaign turned into a criticism of its main rationale. On 15 February 1989, the media broadcast footage of the organised retreat of Soviet armoured vehicles being led by General Boris Gromov through a bridge-border between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. In 1990, the Second Meeting of the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union passed an official resolution in which the decision to invade Afghanistan was recognised as 'a moral and political mistake' (Seniavskaia, 1999, pp. 99–100). During this period, the depiction of Afghan war veterans turned from soldier-internationalists and heroes towards killers of civilians, criminals and victims of wrong political decision making and communist ideology. As Braithwaite summarises, for veterans, 'the contrast between the feeling that they had suffered much, but done their duty, and the attitudes of indifference or

even hostility that they encountered among their own people was one of the hardest things the soldiers had to bear when they eventually got home' (Braithwaite, 2012, p. 245; see also Kuritsyn, 1990; Nemirovskii, 1990; Ageev, 1993; Levinson, 2006). The military had also received its share of critical coverage. As General Liakhovskii has reflected, after Afghanistan, 'the army was demoralised as a result of being perceived [by Soviet society] as an invader' (Liakhovskii, 1999). The deep feelings of demoralisation and betrayal experienced by cadre officers in the late 1980s can only be understood in stark contrast to the glorification of military service in the Soviet Union and consistent public support for the military. In Russia, war in Afghanistan was the first instance when both the regime and the public 'betrayed' the military.

In 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist. During this period, the military was subject to a speedy withdrawal from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics, downsizing, deployment in ethnic conflicts and the sporadic decline in social prestige and public support (Ianin, 1993; Naumova and Sycheva, 1993; Baev, 1996; Taylor, 2003; Barany, 2007). The collapse of the Soviet regime and a deteriorating state of the armed forces in the early 1990s meant that the commemoration of Soviet military fallen of the final Soviet mission of socialist internationalism had become a primary concern of their fellow soldiers and bereaved families (see Chapter 6).

Thus, in the Soviet Union, the media commemoration of Soviet military fatalities had been shaped first by the context of the Cold War and then by turbulent domestic changes. If the reporting during the first half of the campaign was regulated by rigid and often contradictory rules of Soviet propaganda, during the second half of the campaign in Afghanistan, the Soviet media, encouraged by Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* (openness), openly criticised the authorities for the political and military mistakes. This context explains why at the beginning of the campaign, Soviet soldiers were depicted as 'unknown helpers' of the socialist revolution then became 'soldier-internationalists' and, finally, 'criminals and victims' of the flawed Soviet foreign policy. During the 1980s, their professionalism, military duties and human casualties were regularly misrepresented. During the Afghan campaign, Second World War imagery was often used controversially. It legitimised military service for Soviet recruits, yet did not assume the same practices of paying tribute to the fallen of Afghanistan. This inherent contradiction contributed to the disillusionment of Soviet soldiers and families of the deceased, and, as a result, influenced public opinion.

Since 2000, cultural representations of the Soviet Afghan War witnessed a new wave of revisionism. As one Afghan War veteran said, 'it seems like we are becoming heroes again' (Grigoriev, 2000). In 2004, President Vladimir Putin, in his speech on the fifteenth anniversary of the withdrawal, said that 'they [soldiers] did their duty in spite of political circumstances of war' and 'they won their battle' (Putin, 2004). He repeated the same statement in 2005 at a private screening of a popular film about the Soviet Afghan War, *The 9th Company* (Putin, 2005a; Liderman, 2006, p. 16). This state-supported revision of the war in Afghanistan emphasised loyalty, combat brotherhood and militarised masculinity of Soviet soldiers. By dismissing the controversial political circumstances, veterans and authorities opted for the decontextualised and depoliticised version of the Soviet Afghan War.

The separation of the ambivalent cause from their participants has enabled the rehabilitation of the armed forces along with the integration of the Soviet Afghan War within the frames of Russian national identity and military tradition. In 2010 President Dmitry Medvedev signed a Federal Law which declared 15 February – the day of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan – as 'a remembrance day of Russian citizens who accomplished their military duties outside the borders of the Fatherland' (FZ No. 320, 2010). The transformation of this date into an official commemorative ritual implicitly prioritised the fallen of the Soviet Afghan War over all soldiers who had been killed abroad since 1945. In this regard, the document illustrated the continuation of a hierarchical and exclusive policy towards veterans and the fallen of different wars (Danilova, 2010).

5.2   The first Chechen conflict

In 1990 and 1991, Russian viewers could watch the footage of the Persian Gulf War, re-transmitted on Russian television from CNN; however, in Russia, the significance of this distant conflict was overshadowed by domestic troubles. In the winter of 1990–1, as the Soviet Union collapsed, the new Russian government was struggling to establish its political legitimacy over the country, whilst fighting rapid inflation and a ruined economy. However, the winds of political change opened the door to the 'shock therapy' of the liberal market and new independent media producers. These media outlets played a key role in the depiction of the first Chechen conflict (1994–6). As Miskiewicz noted, 'Chechnya was the first war to be televised in Russia, and it was televised from several points of view, one of which – NTV [Independent TV] – was

institutionally and financially independent from the government' (Mickiewicz, 1997, p. 7; see also Ellis, 1999; Zassoursky, 2004). During this time, diverse representations of the war resulted not from fluctuations in state politics (as during the Soviet Afghan War), but rather sprang into existence through the wider context of political transition and a war led by a country in crisis.

5.2.1   New country, new media and war without sentiment

The first campaign in Chechnya produced one of the most realistic depictions of war in modern history. Russian journalists 'with honesty, courage, sensationalism or sheer insensibility … show[ed] the unvarnished truth' about the conflict (Ellis, 1999, p. 121; see also Lieven, 1998, p. 205). During this conflict, 'for the first time, Russians were able to see pictures in their living rooms of their own wounded soldiers being interviewed, of Russian officers refusing to advance or of Chechen women begging Russian soldiers not to shoot' (Wedgwood, 1996, p. 472). Contrary to the practice of American or British television during the Persian Gulf War in 1990–1, Russian television and press outlets provided explicit images and descriptions of death, violence and destruction among civilians and combatants in Chechnya – openly and with minimal, 'common sense' censorship (Rikhter, 1995; Wedgwood, 1996; Mickiewicz, 1997). This realism in the depiction of war was a consequence of the development of the media in Russia, coupled with the inability of the Russian state to control new independent media, the military and the territory of Chechnya. According to Koltsova, 'In 1994–95, the situation in Chechnya was infinitely remote from such a set-up [as in the Gulf], above all because the federal elite was unprepared and fragmented, but also for other reasons, such as the impossibility of introducing a visa regime [no protected border between Russia and Chechnya] and the opportunistic behaviour of ordinary recruits, who often assisted the journalists' (Koltsova, 2006b, p. 5; see also Tishkov, 2001; Koltsova, 2006a). In Chechnya, Russian and Western journalists could enter a war zone, and they could also report about different truths and tragedies of this conflict without being restricted by official censorship.

The media coverage of this conflict reflected the ideological divisions within the media environment in the mid-1990s. During the first stages of the campaign, media sources sympathetic to the government criminalised Chechen fighters by depicting them as mercenaries, bandits, Mafiosi or 'mentally ill lunatics' (Russell, 2002, pp. 78–9). *Krasnaia Zvezda*, a newspaper published by the Ministry of Defence, reported

that 'in Chechnya, the Russian forces encounter[ed] resistance from the well-trained and well-equipped armoured formations of foreign mercenaries and professionals', who came to Chechnya to pursue their own political goals (Falichev, 1995a). The pro-government media (The First Channel – *Pervyi Kanal*) depicted the campaign as a large-scale police operation of restoring constitutional order within Russia and preserving the territorial integrity of the country (Mickiewicz, 1997, pp. 254–5; Tishkov, 2001, pp. 186–7). These reports mirrored the government statement, according to which:

> Russian military forces in Chechnya reinstate[d] constitutional order and prevent[ed] the activity of illegal armoured formations which violate[d] the human rights of Russian citizens in the Chechen Republic and some regions of North Caucasus … and threaten[ed] the security and integrity of the Russian Federation. (Yeltsin, 1994, author's translation)

On the contrary, the independent media outlets broadcast interviews with civilians and combatants, while putting a particular emphasis on the Chechen right to national self-determination (Tishkov, 2001, p. 186; see also Mickiewicz, 1997, pp. 249–50). This perspective represented the conflict as aggression on behalf of the Russian state and a violation of the rights of ethnic Chechens to determine their national belonging. The framing of the campaign as 'ethnic warfare' (Ignatieff, 1998) traced the origins of the conflict back to the repressive policies of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union towards the population of Chechnya (Lieven, 1998, pp. 120–1; Zassosky, 2004, pp. 58–9).

Thus, during the conflict, a range of arguments had been posited by broadcasters and reporters, from the preservation of the unity of the Russian Federation to the fight for ethnic self-determination, and mistakes made by the first Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, together with the military leadership of the country. For the first time in modern history, the population in Russia witnessed the struggle of narratives and interpretations.

5.2.2   Russian soldiers: lives lost and bodies unburied

As discussed above, during the Soviet era, the coverage of military issues was subject to the most vigorous censorship. Since the late 1980s, political reforms had placed the military at the centre of the media's scrutiny. In post-Soviet Russia, 'many journalists were eager to prove their new independent credentials by voicing loud criticism about

the State and its organs, including the military throughout the 1990s' (Renz, 2006, p. 64). The first campaign in Chechnya gave many solid reasons for this demonstration. The official information policy was to give as little information as possible. This strategy to 'tell nothing' or 'tell lies' (Lieven, 1998, p. 121) was ineffective, as independent media sources contested information from official sources without hesitation. The independent media reported about incidents of unprofessionalism in the Russian military, the corruption of generals and politicians, and of an overall lack of discipline and motivation among conscripts and professionals. According to *Kommersant*, the outbreak of the campaign in Chechnya in 1994 'demonstrated not only an unsatisfactory organization of military operation … but also previously unseen disorganization of the General Staff' (Bulavinov, 1995). Meanwhile, national newspapers (including *Izvestiia*, *Pravda*, *Segodnia* and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*) published articles regarding a growing feeling of dissatisfaction amongst cadre officers and overall disorganisation within the Russian forces. The following quotation from an *Izvestiia* reporter illustrates this predominantly critical coverage:

> I've tried to write something … but I couldn't. I felt anger and a burning desire to blame someone. Officers were swearing, mentioning god and the devil, and joking around that it would be great to have here [in Chechnya] Zhirinovskii with the whole State Duma and with a President on a white tank … This was a joke, of course but through many tears … My main conclusion was that we didn't have a combat-ready and professional army anymore, what we had was a poorly equipped mass of poorly trained people. But how could it be otherwise, as for the last five years the armed forces haven't seen any large-scale training. (Frolov, 1995, author's translation)

Criticism of the military was widespread in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Notably, a number of cadre officers during this period actively participated in politics and were democratically elected to the first Russian Parliament (Dose, 1996). These cadre officers openly criticised authorities for both a lack of planning in the operations in Chechnya and support of the armed forces during the post-Soviet period. However, as the above excerpt demonstrates, the author, himself a retired colonel, does not doubt the loyalty of officers to their military duty or their professionalism. Moreover, Frolov suggests that the military will remain under political control and will continue to follow the orders

of 'irresponsible' politicians, despite the feelings of demotivation and betrayal shared by frontline officers in Chechnya. Taylor explains this attitude by an 'apolitical organisational culture', which meant that 'military attachment to a norm of civilian supremacy, although somewhat weakened during Yeltsin's reign, remained quite robust given the revolutionary changes in the country and in the army's political fortunes' (Taylor, 2003, p. 319; see also Herspring, 1996; Taylor, 2001; Simonsen, 2009).

If cadre officers could rely on their professional dedication and military culture, conscript soldiers did not have this support. During the first campaign in Chechnya, the independent media depicted Russian conscripts as 'miserable, poorly-trained, and demoralised individuals' (Lieven, 1998, pp. 120–1). This victimised representation of Russian soldiers was somewhat undermined by reports from the independent broadcasters about acts of cruelty and violence committed by Russian soldiers, but, even in such cases, they were presented as involuntary victims of flawed political and military decisions (Frolov, 1995; Tishkov, 2001, pp. 364–75; Eichler, 2012).

On 11 January 1995, a deputy of the Russian Parliament and film director, Stanislav Govorukhin, with the support of other politicians, accused the independent media of betrayal in its depiction of the Russian military and not acting in the country's best interests (State Duma, 1995; see also Ellis, 1999, pp. 114–17; Belin, 2002, pp. 15–16). In his statement, he stressed that the army was blamed for the mistakes of political leaders and years of total neglect of the situation in the military. Although Govorukhin stood up for the military, in his speech the Russian armed forces also emerged as a victim of political decisions and a crisis within the armed forces. The same narrative appeared in *Krasnaia Zvezda*:

> There are many examples of the heroism and selfless dedication of Russian service personnel. For example, in 131 Brigade from Maikop, a lieutenant led over 50 out of the encirclement. Another officer from another division from Volgograd decided to stay on duty, even though he received a relief order … Today many in the media accused our service personnel in their lack of professionalism, poor training and unpreparedness to the combat operation in Chechnya. But let's talk about how our armed forces lived during the last few years? It struggled without any financial support ... But even in this situation, it could perform the assigned task. (Falichev, 1995b, author's translation)

This quotation underpins the ambivalent relationships of the Russian military with both the government and wider society in the mid-1990s. The first section of this passage re-uses the Soviet canons of military reporting through examples of heroic actions of cadre officers and their loyalty to military duty. These examples are introduced in order to counteract critical coverage about the poor performance of Russian troops in Chechnya. However, the first passage is followed by an accusatory statement towards the authorities which implicitly legitimates the possible mistakes of Russian troops. In the final section, the author transfers blame from the military to politicians and the broader context of political transition. In this instance, attempts at the heroisation of service personnel are superseded by the representation of the military as a victim of politics and government's neglect.

Moreover, the above excerpt does not introduce any broader ideological justifications of the Chechen conflict, resorting to the language of military duty, professionalism and loyalty. During the first conflict in Chechnya, even the media that was supportive of the government and the military refrained from explaining the actions or deaths of Russian service personnel in Chechnya by traditional ideological canons such as 'sacrifice for Motherland or Fatherland'. In mid-1990s Russia, earlier ideological values were discredited, but new national values had not yet crystallised (Tolz, 1998; Urban, 1998; Adler, 2001). The focus on dedication to military duties and militarised masculinity allowed the decontextualisation and depoliticisation of the Chechen conflict by avoiding passing comment on its ambivalent purposes or 'fuzzy' national identity. The most problematic aspect of this military-centred rhetorical strategy was its marginality within the broader mostly critical coverage of war. Without a doubt, the majority of media producers in the mid-1990s represented both Russian soldiers and the military as victims of warfare rather than dedicated professionals or national heroes.

The emphasis on victimhood is particularly prominent in the depiction of Russian military fatalities in Chechnya. After coverage of the fireworks and New Year's celebrations of 1995, the public was faced with gruesome coverage from Groznyi, the capital of Chechnya. This coverage showed the results of an infamous attempt of Russian forces to occupy Groznyi on New Year's Eve. An example of this reporting follows:

131 Brigade occupied the railway station in Groznyi on New Year's Eve, and within 24 hours it was completely destroyed by Dudaev's paramilitaries. All brigade officers were killed, including its

commander, a colonel, Ivan Savin. From 26 tanks, 20 were com-
pletely burnt, from 120 armoured personnel carriers, only 18 came
out of the battle, six missile-launchers were destroyed, and 74 sol-
diers were captured by Dudaev's forces. Several dozen of their burned
comrades' bodies were left on the square in front of the president's
palace. These bodies were broadcast on all television channels,
while reporters were announcing the great success of Chechen para-
militaries and a complete failure of the Russian military offensive.
(Litovkin, 1995, author's translation)

During the entire duration of the campaign, the media broadcast images
of dead Russian soldiers, images which not only showed the futility of
the conflict but also a disregard for soldiers' lives and the feelings of
grieving families. This coverage coexisted with a new commemorative
activism of community groups, journalists and, primarily, the soldiers'
mothers' organisations. These organisations were actively involved
in protests against the deployment of conscript soldiers in Chechnya
(Caiazza, 2002; Sperling, 2003; Zawilski, 2006; Eichler, 2012). Following
their initiative, several national newspapers, including *Komsomol'skaia
Pravda* and *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, published commemorative listings of
Russian fallen and missing soldiers. These listings included surnames
of fallen soldiers and their age if known. The main task of these pub-
lications was to fill the information vacuum that existed in relation to
fatalities. In many instances, this citizen-driven commemoration in the
media preceded the release of official information by the Ministry of
Defence. In this regard, the efforts of civilian organisations attempted
to impose a civilian oversight over the military and hold the authori-
ties accountable for the Chechen conflict. The involvement of human
rights organisations, like *Memorial*, in body counts of Russian military
fatalities was in itself an interesting phenomenon. Originally, human
rights organisations were most concerned with the fate of civilians in
Chechnya, but this goal was extended to monitoring the deaths and
disappearances of Russian conscripts while on duty in the region (Orlov
et al., 1996; Trusevich and Cherkasov, 1997; Orlov, 2000; Cherkasov,
2004). In the case of the first Chechen conflict, the human rights organ-
isations found themselves in a situation where they often represented
both sides of this messy conflict.

The official listings were not released until several months after the
bloodiest stage of the operation in the winter of 1995. One of the first
official listings was published in *Krasnaia Zvezda* in October 1996.
The listing included 2,941 deceased soldiers, but it did not contain

any information about missing soldiers and it also did not include personnel from the Ministry of Interior Affairs who were deployed in Chechnya. The listing was accompanied by an editorial statement which captured the attitude of the military community towards the Chechen conflict:

> If a soldier or officer could choose a destiny and a war where he would die, he of course would choose a sacred war in which the population and the military are united in the fight against the aggressor. But soldiers do not choose wars. A soldier performs his military duty and follows the instructions of his commander. Boys whose surnames are published today on the pages of *Krasnaia Zvezda* are blameless in front of people or in their conscience. They deserve remembrance. Forgive us for being alive, while you were killed in this bitter war in Chechnya! (*Krasnaia Zvezda*, 1996, author's translation)

This statement from the official newspaper of the Ministry of Defence contrasts the performance of military duty during the 'sacred' Second World War with service during the ambiguous conflict in Chechnya. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of military duty as a cornerstone of Russian military culture which preserves its loyalty to the civilian authorities in any circumstances. This passage also separates the ambiguous context of the Chechen conflict from its participants by expressing repentance on behalf of the military community and its moral debt to fallen soldiers. Ultimately, this excerpt reflects the conflictual relationship of the military with both the government and civil society, but, simultaneously, it legitimates death while on service.

This official listing significantly downplayed the number of killed and missing soldiers. The current estimated figures for the first campaign in Chechnya range from 3,927 to 5,042 servicemen killed, and from 510 to 1,231 soldiers 'missing in action' (Krivosheev, 2001; Riazantsev, 2005). This calculation includes the 266 unidentified remains of Russian soldiers re-buried in common graves in the Bogorodskoe cemetery in the region of Moscow on 25 September 2000 (NEWSru, 2001; Babchenko, 2010). The estimates of human rights organisations and the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers are significantly higher and number approximately 14,000 deaths (*Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 2000; Prague Watchdog, 2000).

The media coverage of fallen soldiers in Russia shows that the compilation of commemorative listings was only the first step in a long process of coming to terms with the loss of sons and husbands in Chechnya. From 1994 to 1996, the Russian government did not

impose official restrictions on the burials of Russian soldiers as the Soviet authorities did during the Afghan campaign. The military authorities had to inform the relatives of deceased soldiers, transport the bodies of the fallen from Chechnya to Russia and cover the financial costs of funerals (FZ No. 160, 1993). However, the relatives of the fallen often encountered bureaucratic problems in receiving any assistance from the authorities (Trusevich and Cherkasov, 1997; Orlov, 2000; Cherkasov, 2004). In many instances, military families had to be proactive in finding the bodies of their deceased relatives by being directly involved in 'search and rescue' operations in Chechnya (Vakhnina, 2002).

With regard to these issues of repatriation, funerals and commemoration, both pro-government and independent sources published strikingly similar stories. In both cases, journalists reported about the lack of support and compassion from the civilian and military authorities for the bereaved families. The following two quotations demonstrate the similarity of narratives between *Krasnaia Zvezda* (the MoD newspaper) and *Izvestiia* (which was critical of the government's position in Chechnya). The first excerpt is from *Krasnaia Zvezda*:

> A government telegram about the death of my son, Kostenka, I received together with his body in a zinc coffin. My husband's factory helped us to organise the funeral by giving us financial support, helping with transport, digging a grave and paying for a gravestone. The military authorities only sent a patrol in the parade uniform for which we also should have provided transport. This is not the treatment we would expect from a Motherland. The military authorities sent my son to Chechnya and he was killed in battle there. Also, the military authorities made a mistake with his middle name and now I can't get any benefits. (Savenkova, 1996, author's translation)

A similar story was published in *Izvestiia*:

> From a letter to the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers: 'I can't believe that my son was killed on 31 December 1994. I can't find the body of my son. Everywhere I went, I was met with a lack of understanding, compassion and assistance. I called several times to the local military recruitment office, and begged them to give me a chance to go to Chechnya, and testify that this was the body of my son … It was explained to me that nobody was interested in looking for my son.' (Dement'eva, 1996, author's translation)

These stories about the bodies of soldiers who were lost, missing and unburied illustrate the neglect for individual life in Russia combined with the lack of responsibility and compassion on the part of the authorities. These tragic accounts also display a specific configuration of memory practices in post-Soviet Russia. In these often heartbreaking stories, the mothers of fallen soldiers appeal for recognition from the government and the military authorities by stressing an accomplished military duty and using traditional ideological justifications of the death at war ('died for the Motherland'). To an extent, mothers' narratives insist on the 'militarisation of the dead' (Wasinski, 2008) instead of fighting against this process. Oushakine explains this attitude of bereaved mothers in Russia by the concept of 'patriotism of despair' (2009). Mothers are aware about the ambiguous context of the Chechen conflict, but they prefer to refrain from questioning the necessity of military duty and loyalty to the country. Within the frame of the 'desperate' patriotism, the 'militarisation of the dead' gives an illusory sense of public recognition by ascribing a meaning to the death. Furthermore, the rhetoric of military duty gives hope to bereaved parents that someday the deaths of their sons will be recognised and publicly commemorated.

Thus, the Russian media in 1994–6 produced an image of warfare with diametrically opposing characteristics to the technologically prepared, professional and 'clean' operation in the Gulf in 1991. The media coverage of Chechnya depicted death and violence as genuine parts of a large-scale 'police operation', which emerged from the ashes of a collapsed state, and was led by a military and a society in crisis. Unlike the coverage of the Gulf War in the British media, the Second World War template was extremely rarely utilised by the Russian media to draw parallels between the conflicts. The various media outlets, whether sympathetic to the government or not, depicted service personnel as victims of politics, corruption and structural problems within the military. The coverage of this campaign revealed the fluid state of national identity, a disruption of Soviet narratives of war heroism, and conflictual relationships between the military, the state and the wider society. Finally, the media coverage also displayed a trend towards a decontextualised and military-centric commemoration, indicating the willingness of society to separate the causes of this ambivalent conflict from soldiers, its participants.

In the late 1990s, in two war drama documentaries, *Purgatory* (*Shchistilishche*) by Aleksandr Nevzorov (1997) and *Condemned and Forgotten* (*Prokliaty i Zabyty*) by Sergei Govorukhin (1997), soldiers were described not only as heroes, but also as victims of lucrative politicians,

greedy generals and an ignorant society. In these films, soldiers appear as martyrs whose heroism stemmed from the extreme suffering and the battle for survival whilst serving in Chechnya. These revisions rarely alluded to such ideological values as sacrifice for the Motherland or Fatherland, yet they occasionally referred to loyalty, military duty and the brotherhood of the 'condemned' and 'forgotten' soldiers who were sent to die in Chechnya.

5.3 The second Chechen conflict

Since the end of the 1990s, the media environment in Russia has undergone significant changes. The development of new communication technologies stimulated a diversification of media outlets from various television channels to Internet resources. Alongside this change, there has been a strong trend towards growing government control of media sources from the early 2000s onwards (Koltsova, 2006a). The previously independent television channel NTV, which delivered a critical coverage during the first Chechen conflict, fell under government control in 2001 (Zassoursky, 2004). This change in the media environment has been coupled with 'a reduction of political pluralism, and a turn towards a conservative political agenda of "managed democracy" and Putin's liberal nationalism' (Sakwa, 2008, p. 891). Within this increasingly restrictive political and media environment, media representations of Russian military fatalities have been greatly affected.

5.3.1 The Russian War on Terror

In September 1999, the media represented the second campaign as a 'counterinsurgency operation' (Herd, 2000, pp. 57–83; Baev, 2001; Russell, 2002, 2005). In the late 1990s, the rhetoric of terrorism became popular due the continuation of violence in Chechnya in the interwar period and a series of terrorist acts carried out in Moscow, Buinaksks and Volgodonsk in August and September 1999. In 2000, 'Putin asserted that the "territory of the republic has become occupied by foreign mercenaries and religious fanatics – fundamentalists from Afghanistan and from a number of groups from Arab east"' (Bacon *et al.*, 2006, p. 51; see also Putin, 2000). The events of 9/11 in the USA and the subsequent War on Terror further legitimated the government-inspired representation of the second campaign in Chechnya as the Russian War on Terror. These political and media discourses helped to reverse critical attitudes of the population towards the Chechen conflict as a whole (Levinson, 2001; Dubin, 2008b).

In 1999, the government was capable not only of popularising its version of events, but also of organising an effective system of media control. This system included an accreditation scheme for reporters and censorship guidelines on reporting from Chechnya (Zassoursky, 2004, pp. 124–5; Bacon *et al.*, 2006, p. 81). These guidelines, and a broader shift in the justification of the conflict, encouraged the troop-supporting reporting. According to Belin, in 1999, 'during the first months of the campaign, most Russian media, including all major television networks, dwelt on the steady advance of the federal armed forces, the high morale among Russian soldiers, and the welcoming residents of the "liberated areas"' (2002, p. 18). In 1999, the media broadcast interviews with the commanders of the Russian coalition forces and reprinted regular statements from the Ministry of Defence (Koltsova, 2006b, pp. 6–7). The Russian television and press reproduced images of missiles being fired and the movement of armoured vehicles, replicating the style of the depiction of the Gulf War. This focus on the campaign's technological capacity and military hardware portrayed the Russian military as being a well-organised and professional force. This troop-supportive coverage was aimed at the symbolic 'rehabilitation' of the armed forces after the first Chechen conflict and also after a decade of a declining public prestige.

5.3.2   Hero-victims and the struggle after death

The density of the media reporting on the situation in Chechnya fluctuated over ten years of the campaign from 1999 to 2009. The regular reporting on the conflict coincided with the first stage of the campaign from 1999 to 2000. During this period, images of the corpses of Russian soldiers more or less disappeared from television screens, but this did not lead to the mediatised commemoration of those who had lost their lives in Chechnya. The national media reported only on the cases of mass deaths without circulating the information on military fatalities on a regular basis. In 2000, *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* and *Novaia Gazeta* published the first commemorative listings, which were compiled by soldiers' mothers' organisations, continuing the tradition of citizens' commemoration activism (NVO, 2000). This practice was not continued throughout the whole operation and, starting in 2005, there was a significant decline in media coverage of any Chechen issues. In the majority of cases, a typical media report from the period between 2002 and 2009 would only briefly describe the number of service personnel or police officers – members of the Special Police Units (*Otdel*

Militsii Osobovo Naznacheniia: OMON) – killed or wounded while on a tour of duty in Chechnya.

On the whole, the reasons for the lack of media attention shown to both Chechnya and Russian military fatalities are manifold. First and foremost, throughout the 2000s, 'the state did increasingly use volunteers and professionals rather than conscripts to wage its war in Chechnya' (Eichler, 2013, p. 128). This change decreased the level of public attention shown towards the conflict and military fatalities. This trend was coupled with the reconfiguration of the media environment from the late 1990s onwards. In 1999, the government exercised rigorous censorship over depiction of the Chechen conflict (Zassoursky, 2004; Koltsova, 2006a), and imposed restrictions on the disclosure of information on Russian casualties (Solovev, 2000; Mukhin, 2003, 2007, 2008). However, it would be a mistake to ascribe the restricted media coverage of Chechnya to government censorship alone. In fact, self-censorship seems to have been a more powerful instrument, limiting both reports on Russian fatalities and the second Chechen campaign more generally.

Basing their conclusions on interviews and focus groups with Russian journalists, Oates and McCormack conclude that from 1999 to 2008, journalists did not cover the conflict because it was 'a difficult and dangerous story for journalists to cover, both in terms of trying to get information on the ground and the fact that the government was known to be intolerant of any coverage that could be deemed sympathetic to the Chechen cause' (Oates and McCormack, 2010, p. 131). Also, as Oates explains, throughout the 2000s, journalists felt that the public was getting 'weary of Chechen coverage' (Oates, 2006; Novikova, 2007). Thus, the media struggled to find a suitable frame for covering both the conflict and Russian military fatalities that would also satisfy the interests of both the government and the wider public.

Although thousands of Russian service personnel and policemen lost their lives in Chechnya, the media attention had focused on the death of the paratroopers in 2000. In February and March 2000, Russian forces lost some 135 men in Chechnya, including 85 paratroopers from the Sixth Company of the 104th regiment, the 76th Pskov Parachute Division (Shaburkin, 2000), 20 policemen from the Moscow OMON (Novoselskaia, 2000) and at least 30 policemen from the Perm OMON (Ilin and Ivanov, 2000). Whereas the national media reported all three cases, only the deaths of the paratroopers led to the prolonged media coverage and other forms of cultural commemoration, including the

erection of national memorials in Moscow (Figure 5.1) and Pskov, and the production of documentaries and films, such as *Duty Bound* (*Chest' Imeiu*, RTR, 2004), *Wuthering Gates* (*Grozovye Vorota*, Channel One, 2006), *Breakthrough* (*Proryv* by V. Lukin in 2006) and *Russian Victim* (*Russkaia Zhertva* by E. Liapicheva and I. Meletina, 2008) (see analysis in Regamey, 2007).

Figure 5.1   The memorial to paratroopers in the park of the Central Museum of the Armed Forces in Moscow (photo courtesy of Robert Lenfert, 2013)

Therefore, one might argue that the deaths of the paratroopers of the Sixth Company have become a 'foundation myth' of the Russian fight against terrorism in Chechnya. To deconstruct this myth and 'uncover the values for which a society stands, one need only look at its heroes, and at the mechanisms through which those heroes are commemorated and celebrated' (Ducharme and Fine, 1995, pp. 1309–11). In 2000, the official statement on the death of the paratroopers introduced the framework of post-Soviet heroic military commemoration. The following quotation from the official statement of the Minister of Defence, Igor Sergeev, illustrates this narrative:

> The paratroopers gave their lives in battle as heroes, loyal to their military duty, honour and combat brotherhood until the very end ... Our brave paratroopers demonstrated heroism, courage and a high level of professionalism in defending their position. They did not allow terrorists to break the blockade ... We will keep the memory of their heroism forever in our hearts. Their lives and heroic deeds will be an example of honourable service for the Fatherland. It will be appreciated by service personnel and all true patriots of Russia. (Sergeev, 2000)

This excerpt introduces the three main components of this 'foundation myth'. First, in this speech, the paratroopers are repeatedly described as heroes who remained loyal to traditional military values – military duty, honour, bravery and combat brotherhood. In this statement, we observe the substitution of 'objectified' accounts of the death used in the cases of reporting on the British military fatalities by references to military culture and nationalistic values (see Chapter 2 for a comparison). Second, paratroopers are presented as military professionals, reinforcing the idea of the professionalism of the Parachute Force and the Russian armed forces as a whole. Furthermore, if in the case of Britain, the media discourse 'sentimentalises' the military profession by representing service personnel as 'innocent victims', in the case of Russia, the official narrative explicitly links professionalism with patriotic values. This construction introduces the idea of 'patriotic professionalism', which legitimates the death of soldiers by their dedication to military duty and loyalty to the country.

This construction brings us to the third point. Contrasting with the coverage of the first Chechen conflict, the official narrative of the second Chechen conflict directly associates the death of the paratroopers with the nationalistic values (Russia and the Fatherland). As Eichler

notes, the Russian officials attempted 'to improve the image of the *Chechentsy* [participants of the conflict in Chechnya] by representing them as patriotic heroes and male role models' (2013, p. 125). This change in the official discourse demonstrated a stabilisation of the Russian identity-narrative in the early 2000s in comparison with the mid-1990s. By using a combination of militaristic and nationalistic narratives, the Russian authorities declare their readiness to 'speak through the dead' (Altheide, 2007, p. 185; see also Wasinski, 2008) by using the fallen as instruments of the regime's political legitimation. This rhetoric of patriotic military professionalism allows for the restoration of historical continuity in war commemoration by introducing paratroopers as successors of hero-soldiers who died in the Second World War. Most importantly, this language enables the decontextualisation of the Chechen conflicts by shifting the emphasis from the necessity of paratroopers' heroism (context and cause of war in Chechnya) to their professional dedication and loyalty to the country.

This discursive frame shaped reports on the funerals of the paratroopers in Pskov on 14 March 2000. It should be noted that, unlike in Britain, the repatriations of fallen soldiers from Chechnya (or other regions such as Tajikistan or Abkhazia) do not usually attract media attention in Russia. The funerals of fallen soldiers and police officers are the key public commemorative events. In Pskov, the wider national significance of the funerals was underlined by the presence of representatives from the office of the President and the MoD. The day of their funeral was declared to be an official commemorative day in the Pskov region (Riskin, 2000). This development is important as it establishes the priority of regional and local commemoration over the national commemoration of the fallen in Chechnya. In the case of the paratroopers, for example, the regional media first reported the names of the fallen, whereas the official listing was released more than a week after the death of the service personnel. Notably, neither the government nor the military press or independent press sources published individual obituaries to the fallen paratroopers. The coverage paid tribute to the fallen as a collective, heroes and martyrs whose death could potentially 'rejuvenate the nation' (Mosse, 1990, p. 78).

In 2000, the representation of the Pskov paratroopers as national heroes was not accidental, and we might even suggest – not without a measure of cynicism – that it was difficult to find better candidates than paratroopers to exemplify military heroes of modern conflicts. In Russia, the Parachute Force is one of the most prestigious and popular units of the armed forces. In a sense, belonging to this unit alone

justifies national commemoration. Symbolically speaking, paratroopers 'deserve' to be thus commemorated, owing to their cultural image as dedicated military professionals, loyal patriots and 'real' men. In Russian cultural imagery, being a paratrooper signifies dedication to military culture and duty combined with militarised masculinity, much like the cultural image of the Marines in American society (Barrett, 2001, pp. 77–99). This explains the preference for using the imagery of the Parachute Force in war memorials to the fallen of post-Soviet conflicts (Danilova, 2005). This imagery allows for the decontextualisation of the ambivalent conflicts, whilst celebrating the values of militarised masculinity, loyalty and patriotism.

Although the media repeatedly described paratroopers as heroes, they also presented them as victims and martyrs of the Chechen campaign. This ambivalence reveals itself through titles of commemorative publications on the anniversary of soldiers' deaths: 'The Motherland owes a debt to its heroes' (Riskin, 2002), 'In the footsteps of the Sixth Company' (Polianovskii, 2003), 'Europe will estimate the price of heroic death at Ulus-Kert' (Kommersant, 2009b) and 'Forgive us, the Sixth Company! … Not all mysteries of the heroic deaths of paratroopers are unveiled' (Vasilkova, 2010; see also Vasilkova, 2000; Pozhnov, 2000). The primary focus of these 'obituaries' was not the personal or professional qualities of fallen soldiers, but the ambivalence that surrounds the death of the paratroopers. As a result, in the commemorative publications, the paratroopers emerge as martyrs and victims of neglect and wrong decision making exercised by the Russian authorities. The following quotation illustrates this style of commemorative reporting:

> Infantry with wings (*krylataia pekhota*) did not make it out of the fire. Forgive us, The Sixth Company, Russia and me … This is an inscription on the memorial to paratroopers from Pskov … President Putin at the meeting with bereaved relatives talked about 'significant miscalculations which had been paid by the lives of Russian soldiers'. Who allowed for these miscalculations? There is no answer. The newspaper articles reported that the Chechen militants bought a ticket out of the Argunskoe Gorge at Shatoi village, but the Sixth Company didn't know that it was set up to create an illusion of resistance, and neither the Ministry of Defence nor General Staff responded to these accounts. The parents of paratroopers a year ago wrote a letter to the President. Why was no one punished for the slaughter of the Sixth Company? The President said that the investigation continues, justice will be restored. (Rudnitskaia, 2004, author's translation)

Commemorative publications on the anniversaries of soldiers' deaths expose the contestation of memory narratives. In such publications the authorities are depicted as incapable of paying for funerals and tombstones, granting compensation to bereaved families and taking responsibility for the deaths of soldiers. The act of commemoration also turns into reporting on the activism of bereaved families in their pursuit of justice and accountability of the authorities. Such reports demonstrate that Russian society is no longer satisfied with references to the patriotic military professionalism and it is ready to demand accountability of the authorities through court appeals (Bindman, 2013).

This style of commemorative reporting is common for the coverage of other episodes of mass deaths of Russian servicemen. Publications on the anniversary of the death of submariners of the nuclear submarine *Kursk* and the submarine *K-159*, which sank in 2000 and 2003 respectively, begin with a recognition of the sailors' heroism, but end with cases of court appeals by bereaved families against the government and the military authorities (Riabushev, 2002; Nekhamkin, 2003; Konygina, 2005; Fedosenko, 2006). This depiction of bereaved families in Russian media contrasts with media coverage of military families in the British media. The Russian media acknowledge the grief of the families, but the focus of their reporting is not on grief or private memories. The commemorative coverage turns into a reporting about the day-to-day struggle of the bereaved families and survivors to gain recognition and support from the authorities. This media commemoration undermines the emerging discourse of nationalistic and decontextualised commemoration, while also revealing tensions in the relationships between the military, the state and civil society in Russia.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ambivalent public attitudes towards the armed forces have distinguished Russian civil–military relations. As previously noted, one of the prominent legacies of the Soviet Afghan War was a decline in public esteem for the military. In 1992, only 20 per cent of conscripts considered military service as an honourable duty, in comparison with 70 per cent of conscripts who shared this view in 1982 (Naumova and Sycheva, 1993, p. 77). Approximately 86 per cent of cadre officers were dissatisfied with their salary or other conditions of their service in 1993 and more than 70 per cent of officers under 30 years old were ready to leave the service (Ianin, 1993, p. 39). The Soviet Afghan War was not solely responsible for this process. Since the mid-1980s, the military authorities had struggled with the recruitment of conscripts and draft dodging due to broader societal changes (Solnick, 1998). Following the collapse of

the Soviet Union, the economic and political crises of the early 1990s deepened structural problems within the armed forces (Taylor, 2003; Barany, 2007). These factors, together with the controversial conflicts in Chechnya, have further undermined popular support for the military as an institution.

The paradox of the relationships between the military and civil society in Russia lies in the discrepancy between trust for the military as a cultural concept and the military as an institution. According to public opinion surveys, in 1993, the military was considered one of the most trustworthy institutions by 62 per cent of the population (Rose, 1994, p. 26). In the 2000s, the majority of the population has continued to place the military among the most trustworthy institutions (Levada, 2007; Smirnov, 2009). However, a high level of public trust in the military does not signify the absence of criticism of the armed forces as an institution. Media and public opinion surveys demonstrate a public awareness about serious problems in the functioning of the armed forces, including discipline, logistics and/or the professional performance of the armed forces in Chechnya (Baev, 2002; Taylor, 2003; Allison, 2004; Golts, 2004; Renz, 2006). Moreover, public opinion has repeatedly shown greater concern over the poor treatment of conscripts than over the Russian fatalities in Chechnya or in other regions (FOM, 2000, 2004b, 2010; Petrova, 2002). As Deriglazova concludes, in Russia, 'a fear of the military [compulsory service] has been higher than a fear of conflicts' (2005). On the one hand, this public attitude can partly be explained by the practice of universal conscription, which implies a higher probability of experiencing violence during compulsory military service rather than a risk of being killed in conflicts. On the other hand, this emphasis on the fear of the compulsory service demonstrates a significant casualty tolerance within Russian society (Gerber and Mendelson, 2008). Essentially, one might argue that the public is prepared to tolerate combat losses in Chechnya or in other regions if conscripts have been properly treated.

Likewise, it is important to note that, while the lives of the paratroopers had been publicly commemorated, the lives of thousands of Russian soldiers who had also been killed in Chechnya were rarely mentioned in the media, along with the lives of thousands of civilians who were killed in Chechnya during both conflicts. In 1999, 'both the Russian Ministry of Defence and Chechen sources accuse[d] each other of understating the number of losses and exaggerating the losses of their opponents' (Herd, 2000, p. 62). In 2009, official estimates amounted to 6,000 servicemen from the different 'power' ministries, including the

MoD, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Security Services and other government divisions for a period from 1999 to 2009 (Kommersant, 2009a). However, in 2003, non-governmental sources estimated that approximately 11,000–12,000 Russian soldiers and over 40,000 civilians had been killed in Chechnya (BBC Russian Service, 2003a). Considering only the official estimates, we can safely conclude that over 11,000 servicemen died in Chechnya from 1994 onwards. This number situates the Chechen conflict alongside that of Afghanistan, in which 15,015 Soviet soldiers died.

5.4   Concluding thoughts

The Soviet Afghan War generated a cycle of media commemoration, moving from silence to glorification through to condemnation, and finally to a military-supportive and decontextualised commemoration. The coverage of the Chechen conflicts has been moving in the same direction from condemnation through selective heroisation towards nationalistic, decontextualised and military-centric commemoration. However, even in comparison with the Soviet Afghan War, we observe the 'absence' of Chechnya from the media environment. This 'absence' might be attributed to both government policy and also divisive public attitudes. Throughout the duration of the conflicts, public opinion was divided with respect to the situation in Chechnya (Levinson, 2001, 2010; Gudkov, 2001; Dubin, 2008b). Hence, both veterans and bereaved communities had little inclination to discuss the controversial circumstances of this war (Oushakine, 2009). It is therefore not surprising that the government-controlled media also opted for decontextualised and military-centred remembrance. For now, the door to the legacy of the Chechen conflicts is tightly shut, but the inability of society to openly discuss this experience has its drawbacks. To an extent, the absence of the broader public discussion about Chechnya has already empowered the regional political leaders like Ramzan Kadyrov, who has been a long-serving Head of the Chechen Republic (Sakwa, 2010; see also Russell, 2011). As Sakwa explains, the unexpected 'revenge of the Caucasus' created 'the Kadyrov system' within the Russian Federation, which 'effectively instituted "systematic separatism" (the term used in Russia by those who proclaim loyalty to Moscow but practise de facto independence)' (Sakwa, 2010, p. 610). This system is sustained through the personal negotiations between the federal and Chechen authorities over the distribution of political and economic resources. Therefore, the current political contract with Kadyrov's Chechnya does not favour any

public deliberation about the Chechen conflicts, including the issue of the Russian military fatalities.

Since the early 2000s, the media coverage of the Chechen conflicts has attempted to introduce a frame of nationalistic, decontextualised and military service-based commemoration. In essence, this frame has reproduced the modified version of the Soviet canon of war heroism adjusted to the context of modern Russia. The main adjustment concerns the representation of patriotic military professionalism, which combines military professionalism with loyalty to both the military and the country. Perhaps the very origin of this rhetorical strategy explains its exclusive character. Unlike the inclusive media commemoration in Britain, which reports on the deaths of all soldiers without distinction, the media commemoration in Russia is limited and selective; it focuses on the mass deaths of professional service personnel, whose commemoration could potentially sustain the positive representation of the armed forces.

The paradoxical aspect of the media reporting on Russian military fatalities lies in the fact that it implicitly undermines the representation of the fallen as national heroes through the reporting on the struggle of the bereaved families against the authorities. As a result, the fallen emerge as heroes, yet also as martyrs and victims of either wrong political decisions or neglect by both the military and civilian authorities. This criticism of the authorities in the media is limited; it does not doubt the value of military duty and therefore this coverage is sympathetic towards a military-centric and decontextualised commemoration.

6
War Memorials in Russia

6.1 The hierarchy of memories and memorials

The collapse of the Soviet Union has facilitated a 'memory boom' of previously neglected or 'forgotten' experiences across Eastern Europe. According to Blaker and Etkind, 'the transition from the long socialist decades of secrecy and servility, to the neoliberal twenty-first century, with its mobility, crises, and corruption, has made East European memory challenging, even explosive' (2013, p. 4). This 'explosive' nature of memory expresses itself through the contestation of narratives and interpretations of past experiences, from the Stalinist Terror in Russia to the experience of the Soviet domination and the 'double – Soviet and German – genocide' of Eastern European societies. Blaker and Etkind also argue that, unlike Western societies, which tend to 'fix troublesome memories in stone', in Eastern Europe and Russia, 'memoirs, novels, films, and fast-moving public debates about the past have outpaced and overshadowed monuments, memorials, and museums' (2013, p. 5). Our analysis of war memorialisation challenges this observation. The experience of the Soviet Afghan War and the Chechen conflicts resulted in hundreds of new war memorials scattered across all the regions of Russia. In the context of the limited and highly selective media commemoration, local memorials become the main vehicles for the remembrance of fallen soldiers.

Whereas in Britain the prominence of First World War memorials has encouraged a trend towards continuity in war memorialisation, in Russia the war memorial landscape has been marked by forceful interruptions of commemorative narratives and practices. These interruptions resulted from the politics of the Soviet state, which sought to erase the traces of past war experiences, whether through the physical

destruction of memorials, as in the case of the First World War, or through the strict regulation of military burials, as during the Soviet Afghan War. If we add to this list the practice of secrecy and the conceal-ment of the mass burials of thousands of victims of the Stalinist Terror (Etkind, 2013), we can safely say, paraphrasing Verdery, that the Soviet regime perfected the 'politics of the dead bodies', by using bodies and memorials as primary instruments of sustaining political order (Verdery, 1999, p. 28). As a result, the memorial landscape reflects a set of dis-cursive oppositions and hierarchies of memory narratives, expressed through the physical location of memorials, their size, imagery and inscriptions.

This hierarchy of memory narratives reflects changes in the political context in Russia, and yet we suggest that the process of commemora-tion cannot only be explained through the dominance of the state and resistance to the state suppression of commemoration and the prolonged experience of trauma (Merridale, 2000; Etkind, 2013). Soviet society lived through a period of repressions and devastating wars with an unimaginably high number of fatalities. However, in this instance, one runs into the danger of over-estimating the power of the state to control commemoration or of downplaying the power of civil society to shape the memory narratives. Furthermore, the framework of his-torical trauma encourages the 'universalisation' of commemoration by dismissing the peculiarities of commemorative process (see Chapter 1; Ashplant *et al.*, 2000). Our analysis is based on the premise that war memorials in the Soviet Union, and especially in post-Soviet Russia, reflect the outcome of a power struggle between all the parties involved in the process of commemoration (authorities, veterans, bereaved fami-lies and wider society).

6.1.1   The Russian war pantheon

According to Mosse, the First World War forged identification with the nation-states, thereby 'democratising' the remembrance of the fallen of 'equal status' (Mosse, 1990; see also Chapter 1). Perhaps if history had transpired differently and there had been no Russian Revolution, the death of over two million Russian soldiers in the First World War could also have been commemorated by a Russian equivalent of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the 1920s. Between 1914 and 1916, the Russian government drafted over a million conscripts and thousands of volunteers by encouraging patriotic feelings and pride in their sacrifice for 'God, King and Fatherland' (*Za Boga, Tsaria i Otechestvo*) (Petrone, 2011; see also Stockdale, 2006; Buldakov, 2007; Porshneva, 2007). Before

the Revolution of 1917, the first memorials and military burials for the fallen of the First World War reproduced the popular trends in Western European war commemoration. The Russian sites also assumed a uniformity of gravestones and memorials, and were placed at the newly opened *Fraternal* cemeteries (*Bratskoe kladbishche*) in Moscow and Pushkin. The concept of these cemeteries emphasised the unity of the fallen by depicting them as brothers-in-arms. As in Britain, memorials and cemeteries were built with the support of local communities, the government and dignitaries, including members of the Russian Imperial Family. As Petrone, in her study of the *Bratskoe* cemetery in Moscow, notes, 'the architect of the cemetery, P.I. Klein, directly linked the site to civic, national, and patriotic goals: he hoped that "future generations will here learn a love of the motherland and will carry away in their hearts the steadfast resolution to serve for the benefit of the fatherland"' (Petrone, 2011, p. 1). According to Petrone, the Russian peculiarity lay in the combination of nationalistic ideas with the Orthodox Christian religious idiom, which meant the incorporation of a church and a chapel into memorial sites. For a short period until 1917, the fallen of the First World War were perceived as brothers-in-arms, saints and martyrs of the Russian nation.

The Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War of 1918–22 had a drastic impact on the commemoration of the fallen. First, the Soviet regime was born on the back of ideological criticism of the First World War (Fitzpatrick, 2007; see also Figes and Kolonitskii, 1999), and therefore the new leaders of Russia did not think it necessary to encourage the remembrance of the fallen of the 'imperialist' war (Lenin, 1918). Moreover, by the mid-1920s, the Soviet regime had its own heroes to commemorate, including the death of Vladimir Lenin, its first leader, in 1924 (Tumarkin, 1983; Merridale, 2000). In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the progression to Stalinism led to the physical destruction of any legacy of Tsarist Russia. The aforementioned *Bratskoe* cemetery in Moscow with the graves of 17,500 soldiers, nurses and civilians, who were buried at this site between 1914 and 1917, was destroyed and subsequently replaced by a metro station, *Sokol*, and a public park (Petrone, 2011, pp. 1–4; see also Ionina, 2004; Arsenev and Morozova, 2005). In the same manner, other pre-existing war memorials and military cemeteries to the fallen of the First World War were systematically destroyed across the Soviet Union. This physical destruction of First World War memorials led many to conclude that the war was 'forgotten' by Russian society for almost a century (Seniavskaia, 1999; Merridale, 2000). However, Petrone argues that 'the marginalisation of World War I in

Soviet culture and the lack of centralised myth-making or official com-memoration does not signify an absence of memory or the failure of Russians to see the war as a compelling human struggle' (Petrone, 2011, p. 6). On the contrary, the Soviet authorities integrated some aspects of the First World War commemoration into the Soviet canons of war heroism. This argument suggests the entanglement of memory narra-tives, but it does not deny the fact that in the Soviet Union, memorials to the fallen of the Second World War filled this artificially created void in war memorialisation.

The memorialisation of the Second World War gave rise to numer-ous war memorials. The legacy of this war created the Myth of the War Experience, which was formulated by Mosse with regard to the Western European context (Mosse, 1990). Some of the Soviet memori-als expressed political statements and were created to forge belonging to the 'supranational' – Soviet – identity (Suny, 1993, p. 112), but the diversity of these memorials meant that they had multiple functions. In addition to the association with the Soviet identity, the Second World War memorials functioned as vehicles for local, regional and, to a cer-tain extent, ethnic identities in the Union Republics (see the analysis of ethnic policy in Sakwa, 1998, pp. 255–74). In many cases, the con-struction of war memorials resulted from the cumulative efforts of both communities and the authorities rather than solely the efforts of Soviet officials (see the analysis of a Leningrad monument in Kirschenbaum, 2006). This argument is particularly relevant to the first stage of war memorialisation within the Soviet Union. As Konradova and Rylova point out, the first memorials to the fallen of the Second World War were erected by local people and were often placed on the outskirts of villages and towns or within local cemeteries (2005, pp. 135–6). Some of these local memorials were named as 'tombs of unknown soldiers' and were dedicated to locally born soldiers (Pomnite Nas, 2010). This community-led commemoration in Soviet society in the 1940s is remi-niscent of the First World War memorialisation seen across Britain in the 1920s (see Chapter 3). This commemoration expressed the grief of local communities and helped to reconcile them with the aftermath of the most devastating war in modern Russian history.

During the late 1940s, the first landmarks of state-driven memo-rialisation emerged across Eastern Europe. Between 1945 and 1949, two impressive monuments to Soviet soldiers were constructed in the Soviet occupation zone in Berlin (Stangl, 2003). War memorials in Estonia – including a Bronze Soldier memorial in Tallinn (1947), Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria soon followed. These

memorials demonstrated the supremacy of the Soviet Union over its dominions in Eastern Europe. In comparison with 'foreign' war memorialisation, only a limited number of war memorials were built in the Soviet Union until the 1950s. The reasons for this can be attributed to economic constraints and the broader political realignment that took place after the war. Shortly after the end of the war, the 'people's war' was converted into 'Stalin's great victory' (Zubkova, 1998, p. 28). This revision shifted the prominence in commemoration from celebrations of popular heroism to the valorisation of Stalin. This state-led memorialisation soon came to an end with the death of Stalin in 1953 and was officially terminated during Nikita Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinisation (1956). This policy resulted in the physical destruction of Stalin's statutes across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Since the late 1950s, the victory of the Second World War was proclaimed as the most significant achievement of the Soviet society under the leadership of the Communist Party. This revision triggered a process of state-supported memorialisation across the country. In 1967, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was finally unveiled in Moscow. This memorial signified the height of the era of the 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War' under the rule of Leonid Brezhnev. In Brezhnev's period, this myth 'in its idealized form … had everything: violence, drama, martyrdom, success, and a chic of the global status' (Tumarkin, 1994, p. 132). The Soviet authorities used this myth as an instrument of military mobilisation and ideological propaganda during the Cold War (Kotkin, 2001; Chapter 5).

In the 1970s, a visitor to any Soviet city or village could find a war memorial dedicated to the Second World War (Ignatieff, 1988). The majority of these memorials were situated at central locations, squares, parks and crossroads. During this period, the authorities were also engaged in a campaign to inspire patriotism through the 'reordering of the dead' (Verdery, 1999, p. 36). In practice, this meant the transfer of remote military burials and local memorials to the central locations of towns and villages. The Soviet film *Aty-baty, Shli Soldaty* (*One-Two, Soldiers were Going*) (1977) describes the troubles caused by the attempt made by local authorities to transfer the military burial of two unknown soldiers from its original remote location to the centre of the village. This film shows the opposition between the private commemoration exercised by two elderly women and the local authorities. For these women, the grave symbolised their sons who had gone missing during the Second World War, whereas for the authorities, these graves were the instrument of inspiring patriotic citizenship. Notably, in the film, the

resistance of the two *babushkas* – the guardians of soldiers' memory – was eventually overcome. The final scene of the film shows Pioneers, the members of children's communist movement in the Soviet Union, paying tribute to the fallen at the new war memorial, which was placed in the main square of the village.

During the late Soviet period, local authorities, schoolchildren and members of the Young Communist League (*Komsomol*) were responsible for the maintenance of local war memorials, military burials and military cemeteries (Jones, 1985, p. 152). Within the areas of major battles and areas of the German occupation, youngsters were engaged in 'search and recovery operations' (*poiskovye otriady*). The main purpose of these operations was to find the remains of unburied soldiers, identify them and re-bury them with respect. The recovery of missing and unburied soldiers was a substantial part of their military-patriotic education (Jones, 1985, pp. 151–4). However, in this instance, the function of patriotic indoctrination overlapped with the recognition of the fallen as individuals, the outcome of which assisted in the political rehabilitation of the dead. As Dahlin explains, to have a relative 'missing in action' had serious political and practical implications for the families of the deceased because if 'no one knew what happened, it could not be ruled that they [fallen soldiers] had deserted or been taken prisoners, which in the Soviet Union was a crime' (Dahlin, 2012, p. 207). The 'search and recovery operations' of fallen soldiers helped with the political rehabilitation of the war dead by ensuring their transfer from a category of potential traitors to the prestigious position of war heroes. This transition had a direct impact on the lives of the relatives of deceased soldiers, from allowing for private commemoration to being eligible to claim social benefits.

In 1994, Nina Tumarkin predicted that the collapse of the Soviet Union would lead to a decline of the cult of the Great Patriotic War and a transition from 'collective to individual grieving' (Tumarkin, 1994, p. 226). However, the cult of the Great Patriotic War survived the dissolution of the Soviet Union, although its reincarnated version in post-Soviet Russia coexists with new memorials to the fallen of the First World War and post-Soviet conflicts (Darsavelidze, 2007). Contemporary war memorialisation illustrates the emergence of a complex entanglement of memory narratives. This knot of war memories consists of a series of temporal loops, which revolve around the national master narrative of the heroic and victorious – the Second World War.

Victory Park in Moscow is a primary example of the modified version of the Second World War adjusted to the post-Soviet context (it

opened in 1993). The main sculptural composition of Victory Park projects an eclectic vision of the Russian national identity by combining the Soviet canon of war heroism with references to Russian Orthodox messianic symbolism (see the analysis of Victory Park by Schleifman, 2001; Forest and Johnson, 2002; Forest *et al.*, 2004). The prominence of religious imagery in all new war memorials marks the swift return of religion into war commemoration. As explained above, the initial wave of First World War memorialisation engaged with the Russian Orthodox discourse, but the Soviet policy of atheism led to the physical destruction of religious sites across the country (Knox, 2005, pp. 44–7). However, as Petrone argues, 'despite of the new atheist "orthodoxy", religious discourse continued to provide meaning for those facing death and mourning their losses in the Soviet Union as well as in the rest of Europe' (2011, pp. 17–18). Fundamentally, she concludes, 'the imagery of resurrections and redemption remained crucial to the Soviet discourse of war' (2011, p. 18). Although Soviet war memorials incorporated discursive references to the ideas of sacrifice and the afterlife of fallen soldiers through the popular slogan of 'Never Forgotten!' and the figure of Mother-Motherland (*Mat'-Rodina*), which was often reminiscent of the Virgin Mary, these memorials were not physically adjacent to churches or chapels. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war memorial landscape was reorganised through the integration of the imagery of the Russian Orthodox Church and the physical construction of new religious sites (chapels or churches, or the instalment of wooden crosses) near the war memorials (see Figure 6.1).

The process of religious revival does not offer a straightforward explanation. In Russia the 1990s demonstrated a rapid conversion of the vast majority of non-believers (59 per cent of respondents in 1989) into born-again Christians (68 per cent of the population in 2005) (Shlapentokh, 2006, p. 163). According to Kaariainen and Furman, this conversion had a 'pseudo-religious nature' (2000, pp. 7–48) because it implied 'flexible rules and situational ethics' in dealing with religion, which are typical characteristics of the postmodern transformation within Western societies (Inglehart, 1997, pp. 43–5). However, in Russia, this process has assisted in restoring a sense of national unity and cultural belonging. More Russians than Americans, for example, recognise the cultural role of religion in their life (Shlapentokh, 2006, p. 164). In this sense, the Russian Orthodox discourse in war memorials signposts the national, cultural and 'ethnic' identities of Russians (Agadjanian, 2001; Mitrokhin, 2004; Knox, 2005; Haskins, 2009). The 'ethnicity' in this context is associated with an abstract notion

Figure 6.1 The Russian Orthodox Cross installed in 2001 by the Soviet Second World War memorial, Serafimovskoe Cemetery, St Petersburg (photo by the author, 2010)

of Russianness, which has more cultural and linguistic than ethnic connotations (Shevel, 2011, p. 187; March, 2012, p. 412). However, this cultural underpinning of the Russian Orthodox discourse in war memorials allows for a disregard of the 'real' ethnic identities of fallen soldiers and enables their symbolic conversion to 'Russians' after death. This discursive transformation feeds into the restored tradition of war commemoration, when fallen soldiers are represented as both martyrs and sacred heroes of the Russian nation.

Since 2001, the restoration and preservation of memorials to the fallen of the First World War has been included in the national programme of war commemoration (Kirillin, 2010). This speedy recovery of the First World War memory from a long-forgotten memory archive confirms Petrone's argument about its latent existence within the Soviet canon of war commemoration (Petrone, 2011; see also Cohen, 2003). The examples of this memorialisation include a memorial to Admiral Alexander Kolchak, the leader of the White Army during the Russian Civil War, in Irkutsk (unveiled in 2004) and a new national memorial to the fallen of the First World War in Victory Park in Moscow, unveiled by President Putin in 2014. In a stroke of historical irony, the Moscow memorial uses the same set of nationalistic, militaristic and religious symbols used before the Revolution of 1917 to commemorate the fallen of the First World War, including the Russian Imperial Tricolour and an Imperial Double-Headed Eagle; the Russian Orthodox Church is placed behind the heroic figure of a Russian soldier. Therefore, this memorial constructs a post-Soviet version of the myth of the First World War by situating it within the frames of patriotic citizenship and military heroism. This myth completely disregards the 'real' historical context of this war or its tragic aftermath for Russian society.

The same historical revisionism exists in the national memorials to the fallen of post-Soviet conflicts built in Moscow during the 2000s. One memorial to the soldier-internationalist in Victory Park in Moscow (unveiled in 2005) depicts a Soviet soldier in a military uniform, presumably in Afghanistan. The sculptural plaque includes imagery of fighting and suffering soldiers, an eclectic combination of red stars mixed with the symbols of modern Russian statehood and the Russian Orthodox Church. This eclectic aesthetic in post-Soviet memorials is puzzling (Strelnikova, 2011), but it enables the integration of the experience of Afghanistan into the evolving frame of Russian nationalistic commemoration (see Figure 6.2).

Like the First World War memorial, this memorial projects ideas of heroic masculinity and patriotism by dismissing any political controversy about the conflict. The prominence of this nationalistic and militaristic imagery expresses itself in the memorial to the paratroopers of the Sixth Company from Pskov (unveiled in 2002), situated near the National Military Museum in Moscow (see Figure 5.1). In a similar fashion to the aforementioned memorials, this memorial projects ideas of nationalism and heroic masculinity, without any hint of the complexity of the conflicts in Chechnya.

Figure 6.2 A memorial to soldier-internationalists in Moscow (photo courtesy of Robert Lenfert, 2013)

Similar ideas of patriotism, sacrifice and national mobilisation are expressed through the Russian version of the 'Animals in War' memorials. Notable examples include a memorial to a Seal-Saviour in Arkhangelsk (unveiled in 2010). In this region, seals were used by the Soviet Navy as mine-finders in the North Sea during the Second World War. In Akhtubinsk, a memorial, *'We Won!'* (*My pobedili!*), has two sculptures of camels in the centre (unveiled in 2010); these camels commemorate the efforts of the animals which carried the two artillery canons of a military

unit from Akhtubinsk during the war. Both examples of these 'Animals in War' memorials emphasise the unique experiences of local inhabitants and, in a similar fashion to memorials in Moscow, do not question or in any sense re-write the glorified version of the Second World War.

To summarise, the proliferation of war memorials in contemporary Russia can only partially be seen as a form of 'particularistic commemoration' as described by Nora with regards to Western societies (Nora, 1998, p. 632). New war memorials cover different conflicts and appeal to both national and regional identities. However, this memorialisation is insensitive to the individual war experiences and diverse identities of fallen soldiers. Instead, it represents wars as the collective experience of hero-soldiers and soldier-martyrs by emphasising the ideas of heroic masculinity, patriotism and sacrifice for the country. As Carleton concludes, this turn towards 'triumphalism' in contemporary Russian culture was facilitated in the 2000s with the 'centralisation of power by United Russia, the consequent emergence of an identifiable single party line, the state's control of key sectors of the economy, and the suppression of an independent media – all recall Soviet practice and policies' (Carleton, 2011, p. 617). Chapter 7 will discuss the political context of war commemoration in modern Russia. At this point, it is important to recognise that the observed wave of patriotic war memorialisation at the national level (in Moscow) differs from community-led memorialisation at the local level.

6.1.2   The fallen of the 'undeclared' wars

While the British tradition of memorialisation demonstrates a great deal of continuity in war memorialisation from the First World War to post-1945 conflicts (see Chapter 3), this form of successive memorialisation does not exist in Russia, where the memorial landscape is divided between memorials to the fallen of the Second World War and memorials to the fallen of other conflicts. This division is expressed through spatial and symbolic demarcations. If memorials to the fallen of the Second World War occupy a central location in the cities, towns and villages of Russia, memorials to the fallen of post-1945 conflicts are usually situated in the opposite corners of Victory Squares or Alleys of Heroes. The relative physical proximity of war memorials to their 'great' counterparts introduces the idea of succession, yet this succession is not straightforward.

The overwhelming majority of Soviet Afghan War memorials were constructed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The initiative of constructing memorials came from locally-based organisations of veterans and bereaved families (Sapper, 1994; Galeotti, 1995; Danilova, 2005). The success of these communities depended on their ability to accumulate

financial resources, collaborate with local authorities and raise support from the wider public. At the beginning of the 1990s, the implementation of these tasks was challenging due to an ambivalent public attitude towards the Soviet Afghan War (see Chapter 5), the economic crisis and conflicting relationships of veterans' organisations with the authorities (Danilova, 2010). By the mid-1990s, the military campaigns in Nagorno-Karabakh, Tajikistan, Moldova, Abkhazia and Chechnya further increased the number of fallen soldiers and, in many instances, memorials built to honour the fallen of the Soviet Afghan War were re-dedicated to local inhabitants who died in all post-Soviet conflicts.

In the 1990s, local memorials used a combination of aesthetic choices to express the trauma of the Soviet Afghan War and other post-Soviet conflicts. Three main themes can be identified: combat brotherhood, repentance and a modified version of the Soviet war heroism (Danilova, 2005, p. 155). It might be argued that the theme of combat brotherhood introduced the most politically challenging narrative. This theme depicted 'the expressive image of the soldiers who died in agony in a foreign land', 'a calm soldier who is tired of fighting' or 'soldiers [who] are depicted sitting down, their weapons dropped, in an obviously non-bellicose posture' (Konradova, 2006, p. 9; Strelnikova, 2011). This imagery contrasted with the Soviet canons of war memorialisation according to which Soviet soldiers were mostly depicted in a heroic or combat-ready position. To a certain extent, a figure of the 'tired' and 'grieving' soldier in the Afghan war memorials defied a war setting and emphasised the idea of brotherhood-in-arms between survivors and the fallen. The theme of repentance in the memorials to the fallen of post-Soviet conflicts used the Russian Orthodox discourse to communicate forgiveness, reconciliation, repentance and sacrifice. References to the Russian Orthodox discourse allowed for the integration of ambivalent war experiences into the emerging narrative of Russian nationalism. To an extent, the religious motive decontextualised and depoliticised post-Soviet conflicts by effectively separating the cause from the participant, and representing fallen soldiers as victims and martyrs of the nation. Finally, a significant group of local memorials used elements of Soviet canons of war memorialisation (for example, the eternal flame, steles, tanks and figures of soldiers in combat-ready or fighting positions). This type of imagery enabled a symbolic succession in the commemoration of wars from the Second World War to modern conflicts.

To explore the language of commemoration, the following analysis compares the inscriptions on Second World War memorials with memorials to the fallen soldiers of Afghanistan and Chechnya (see Table 6.1). This section analyses war memorials from a range of sources, including

Table 6.1 Inscriptions on war memorials to the fallen in the Second World War and memorials to the fallen in late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts (inscriptions are sourced from the personal collection of war memorials and a range of sources, including The Art of War, 2010; Afghan Border Forces, 2010; Pomnite Nas, 2010; RSVA, 2010; The Afghan Memorial, 2014)

	Inscriptions on Second World War memorials	Inscriptions on new memorials to post-Soviet campaigns
The naming of the event	The Great Patriotic War (*Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina*), 1941–5 In battles for a particular geographical area, 1941–5	Undeclared Local wars Military conflicts Afghan War and Chechen Wars Name of geographical area: Afghanistan or Republic of Afghanistan (1979–89) Chechnya or the Chechen Republic or North Caucasus (often without dates of the campaigns); and other conflicts (Tadzhikistan 1994, 1999, South Ossetia and Abkhazia 2008, etc.)
The agency of the fallen	Heroes, who gave their lives… (*geroi otdavshie zhizn*) Soviet Soldiers who fell in battles (*sovetskie soldaty pavshie v boiakh*) Defenders of Motherland/Fatherland (*Zashchitniki Rodiny-Mat'/Otechestva*) or a particular geographical area Soldiers and workers who died while heroically defending their city/village Heroically perished/died in battles with fascist-invaders (*geroicheski pogibshye v boiakh s fashistkimi sakhvatchikami*) Soldiers/civilian workers who gave their lives (*voiny/zhiteli itruzheniki tyla otdali zhizn*)	The fallen or participants of … who died/perished while on their military/service duty (*pavshie* or *uchastniki … pogibshie pri ispolnenii voinskogo/sluzhebnogo dolga*) Local inhabitants (*zemliaki*) Service personnel who died/perished on active service, on duty or in a particular military operation Soldier-internationalists who died/perished (*pogibli*) while doing their international duty (in the case of the Soviet Afghan War, 1979–89)

| The reasons for their death or what for? | For the Motherland
For the Freedom and Independence of our Motherland/ For the Fire of Life and Motherland
For Freedom and against the German-Fascist Invasion; Doing their Patriotic Duty for the Sacred Mother-Motherland; Defending the Motherland and a particular geographical area | They have done their military and service duties
International duty (*Internatsional'nyi dolg*), military duty (*voennyi dolg*) or service duty (*sluzhebny dolg*)
Active service (*voennaia sluzhba*) or a particular military task |

an online database of Second World War memorials (Pomnite Nas, 2010), and databases with memorials to the fallen of the Soviet Afghan War and post-Soviet conflicts (The Art of War, 2010; Afghan Border Forces, 2010; RSVA, 2010; The Afghan Memorial, 2014).

The first row of Table 6.1 shows contrasting inscriptions between memorials to the Second World War and to modern campaigns. Memorials to the fallen of post-Soviet conflicts generate multiple definitions of warfare, including 'wars', 'conflicts' or referring to a geographical location of the campaign. This discursive diversity in the description of warfare is comparable to the inscriptions on British memorials to fallen soldiers of modern conflicts (see Chapter 3). The peculiarity of the Russian context lies in the inscriptions which describe recent conflicts as 'undeclared' and 'local' wars. If the latter adjective emphasises the limited scope of modern conflicts, the former adjective – 'undeclared' (*neobiavlennaia*) war – has a political meaning. This adjective is a reversed idiom from the vocabulary of Soviet propaganda when the media reported on the 'undeclared' war started by the USA, Pakistan and China against the Afghan population and Soviet troops in Afghanistan (see Chapter 5). The references to the 'undeclared' character of modern conflicts are held in contrast with the Second World War ('declared' war) and emphasise the ambivalence and unrecognised significance of the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts.

One of the rarest commonalities between memorials to the Second World War and memorials dedicated to post-Soviet campaigns is the description of the agency of fallen soldiers. Both types of memorials describe death as an act of both *giving life* and *perishing/dying* while accomplishing patriotic or military duty. It is difficult to associate these grammatical constructions with passive versus active actions because both constructions assume a certain degree of involuntary action and therefore represent the fallen as hero-victims. This similarity can be attributed to the form of military recruitment exercised during the Second World War and in modern conflicts. In both cases, memorials commemorate the lives of conscripts and professional soldiers altogether.

The difference between modern memorials and Soviet memorials lies in a broader range of nominations for the fallen. A significant cluster of memorials use a unique term, 'soldier-internationalists' (see Chapter 5), but this term refers to the Soviet Afghan War and does not cover the experience of conscripts, professionals and police officers who had been killed while on a tour of duty in Chechnya. This discursive problem is solved on memorial inscriptions which describe the fallen as local

inhabitants (*zemliaki*) without commenting on their war or service experiences. However, this option coexists with references to military duty. The concept of 'duty' in this instance does not imply conscription, but implies the dedication to service and readiness to make sacrifices for the country, either through the call of duty (conscription) or through a professional service.

The comparison of the reasoning for the deaths shows a rift in war memorialisation of the Second World War and modern conflicts. The Second World War memorialisation pays tribute to the fallen for their sacrifice on behalf of the Motherland, freedom, patriotic duty or duties with regard to local inhabitants, and also promises eternal remembrance. Inscriptions on contemporary memorials to the fallen of Afghanistan and Chechnya can also call for eternal remembrance, but these memorials rarely invoke similar ideological values. Instead, memorial inscriptions in post-Soviet memorials generate a military service-based explanation of the death through references to the accomplishment of duty and military service.

However, not all local memorials chose a depoliticised frame of commemoration. The unique feature of community-inspired memorials to the fallen of modern conflicts is the use of memorial inscriptions for the instigation of public debate. Such inscriptions declare moral support for the dead, unity between the fallen and survivors, and an appeal to the government and the wider public to repay 'the duty' and remember the fallen of modern conflicts. For example, the memorial in the city of Yaroslavl states that 'living should carry a cross of repentance and atonement for the fire and ash of Afghanistan'. One memorial in Murmansk portrays the faces of veterans coupled with the following inscription: 'forgive us because we are still alive'. This inscription reiterates the idea of combat brotherhood and unity of veterans and the fallen, thereby implying that both groups were betrayed by the wider society. In Rostov, the inscription on one memorial promises eternal remembrance, while also asking the Motherland to repay its debt to the dead ('We are untainted in front of the Motherland! The Motherland should be untainted on our behalf!'). This inscription underpins the idea of shared responsibility and the commitment of civil society to repay the debt to the fallen by recognising their sacrifice. These inscriptions reveal the existence of ambivalence in the memories of post-Soviet conflicts when veterans and bereaved families struggle against a lack of recognition and compassion from both the authorities and the wider public.

This symbolic protest of veterans and bereaved families is limited as the memorial inscriptions do not question the necessity of soldiers'

sacrifice or reflect on the broader human tragedy of the wars in Afghanistan or Chechnya. The local memorialisation depicts Russian soldiers as victims of politics, and reflects the conflicting relationships between the government, and both the military and civil society. In this instance, the military and civil society emerge as united entities, which grieve for the lives of Russian soldiers and demand tribute for their death while on duty. However, references to militarised masculinity, military duty and sacrifice in local war memorials ensure their eventual co-optation into a broader frame of Russian nationalistic and military-centred commemoration.

6.2   The Serafimovskoe Cemetery

At the same time in 2001 as the Arboretum in Staffordshire was opened to the British public, President Putin signed a decree regarding the construction of the Russian National Memorial Cemetery (*Federal'noe voennoe kladbishche*). This cemetery was repeatedly described by Russian journalists as the 'Russian Arlington' in Mytishchi in the Moscow region (Ogilko, 2007; Pozdniaev, 2007; Miasnikov, 2011). Like the original Arlington, the 'Russian Arlington' when completed will hold graves and memorials to national heroes, fallen service personnel, policemen, firemen, veterans of the Second World War, military commanders and former presidents. The future 'main cemetery of the country' and the 'cemetery for heroes' (Miasnikov, 2011) was officially opened in 2011, but work continues at present. Currently, the fallen of the Afghanistan and Chechen conflicts are buried in local cemeteries across the country. The Serafimovskoe Memorial Cemetery in St Petersburg exemplifies this pattern of local commemoration.

The origin of this cemetery dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1905, a plot of land near the *Staraia Derevnia* was allocated for the burial of local peasants and paupers (*Encyclopaedia of St Petersburg*, 2010). In the 1930s, the 'proletarian' background of the dead saved it from destruction by the Soviet authorities. During the Siege of Leningrad (1941–4), the Cemetery became the second largest site, after the Piskarevskoe Memorial Cemetery, for mass burials of civilians and soldiers, with an estimated figure of between 100,000–200,000 dead (Ionina, 2005, p. 279). In 1965, the government erected a war monument to honour the heroes and victims of the Second World War. This impressive monument was adorned with an eternal flame and two-metre-high statues, embodying the state-inspired 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War' (Tumarkin, 1994; Weiner, 2001a). The Soviet era ended

with the construction of two cenotaphs commemorating the accidental deaths of Soviet sailors in 1981 and 1982, respectively. From the 1990s onwards, the Serafimovskoe Cemetery has functioned as a major regional site for military commemoration.

6.2.1 The Alley of Heroes

In 1996, the first Soviet Afghan War memorial in the city was erected at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery. Its position along the Alley of Heroes at the far end of the Cemetery introduces a concept of successive, yet divisive war commemoration. On the one hand, the Alley of Heroes symbolically links memorials to the fatalities of the Second World War with modern conflicts. On the other hand, there is a physical distance between the memorials and a stylistic difference.

The construction of the Afghan War memorial was the result of the joint efforts made by local veterans' associations and bereaved families. The composition of the memorial includes ten individual graves marked by uniform marble gravestones and a central sculpture. This composition symbolises the sacred unity of the fallen and the 'homogeneity of their war experience' (Mosse, 1990, p. 79). This display of unity in death is a post-Soviet phenomenon as, during the Soviet Afghan War, the graves of soldiers were scattered throughout the cemetery (see Chapter 5). In the early 1990s, the families of deceased soldiers and veterans of the Soviet Afghan War initiated the re-burial of the soldiers' remains from the edges of cemeteries to their central location, alongside the Alley of Heroes. Oushakine describes this 'rearrangement of the fallen' at the local cemetery in a Siberian town, Barnaul, and notes that this 'streamlining of history' allows for the rearranging of 'the graves in a neat row, regardless of the actual dates of death' (2009, p. 231). At the Serafimovskoe Cemetery, the re-burial of the bodies of soldiers enabled the rewriting of history by turning soldier-internationalists from victims of the Soviet policy of concealment into war heroes.

This attempt at successive heroic commemoration only partially fills a rift between the Second World War and other conflicts. The central dedication of the Soviet Afghan War memorial mentions only the time and place of the war – 'Afghanistan, 1979–1989'. It does not comment on the deaths of soldiers or the attitudes of either the government or wider society to the tragedy of the Afghan War. Beneath the sculptural composition, we also see a plaque with the names of soldiers originating and recruited from the local area. The plaque is covered by 140 shell casings with the names of soldiers and a pinch of soil from their graves. The central sculptural composition of the memorial shows the figures of

six young boys in Greek-style tunics, symbolising the 'triumph of the youth' and the brotherhood-in-arms of fallen soldiers (Mosse, 1990). The faces of the young men are moulded to resemble the features of particular individuals whose names are commemorated on this memorial. In this regard, this memorial combines private and public modes of commemoration. The reference to the brotherhood, youth and masculinity of the fallen are the only links between the Afghan War memorial and its Soviet counterpart. Unlike the Soviet memorial, the figures of soldiers defy any associations with war or military settings and therefore challenge the frame of Soviet heroic war commemoration (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3   A memorial to the fallen of Afghanistan, Serafimovskoe Cemetery (photo by the author, 2008)

Tombstones honouring the Russian casualties of the Chechen conflict are also situated along the Alley of Heroes, between the Second World War monument and the Soviet Afghan War memorial. This positioning shows their integration into the context of national war commemoration. However, tombstones for soldiers who died in Chechnya do not all read alike, the most noticeable difference being that between conscript soldiers and officers. For conscript soldiers, the tombstones feature the name, date of birth and death, and a short inscription, 'perished in Chechnya' (*pogib v Chechne*), which positions the soldier's death in the context of the conflict, but does not elaborate on the circumstances of the death or associate it with the accomplishment of military duty or sacrifice for the country. This example confirms the point raised by Oushakine that 'the deaths of soldiers in hidden and forgotten wars [Afghanistan or Chechnya] were ostensibly devoid of the justifying ideological context that was so prominent, for example, in public representation of losses of the Second World War' (2009, pp. 206–7).

The landscape of the Serafimovskoe Cemetery shows that not all tombstones for the Russian casualties of the Chechen conflict are devoid of ideological justification. On the contrary, the tombstones of police officers and professionals illustrate the emergence of a decontextualised and service-oriented commemoration. That of Dmitri Kozhemiakin, for example, lieutenant of the Sixth Company of the 104th Regiment of the 76th Pskov Parachute Division, exemplifies such a commemorative discourse (see Figure 6.4).

Kozhemiakin and 84 other members of the Sixth Company were killed on 1 March 2000 in a battle against Chechen fighters (see the analysis of this in Chapter 5). Kozhemiakin's tombstone is engraved with the coat of arms of his Parachute unit and bears the inscription: 'And God said "Hey, key-keepers open the gates to the Garden. I order you to let paratroopers into Heaven, from dawn to sunset".' This inscription is typical of military folklore (Bannikov, 2002) and it reinforces the idea of the superiority of paratroopers in the Russian armed forces and, by extension, in Russian society. The tombstone also informs us that Kozhemiakin was posthumously awarded the medal of the Hero of Russia (Decree No. 1334, 2000). Except for this reference, the tombstone introduces no other nationalistic narratives, replaced, it would seem, by symbols of military culture. Moreover, with no indication of where the soldier died, the tombstone reflects a decontextualised concept of commemoration. The absence of any reference to Chechnya is also common on the tombstones of the police officers killed on their tour of duty and buried at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery.

Figure 6.4   A tombstone dedicated to a paratrooper of the Sixth Company from Pskov, Serafimovskoe Cemetery (photo by the author, 2010)

In both cases, the context of the Chechen conflict disappears from the commemorative inscriptions, to be replaced by militaristic symbols. This service-oriented commemoration depoliticises, decontextualises and legitimates death while on service, without engaging with any aspects of the conflict in Chechnya.

An illustration of this concept of military-centred commemoration can be found in the memorial to the paratroopers of the Sixth Company in the park of the Central Museum of the Armed Forces in Moscow (see Figure 5.1 in Chapter 5). The inscription reads: 'This memorial is dedicated to the soldier-paratroopers of the Sixth Company, 104th Regiment of the 76th Pskov Parachute Division. The plaque was put up in 2002 by decree of the President of the Russian Federation.' Thus, the plaque simply tells us that the dead were in the armed forces and that the monument was built with government support (Decree No. 214, 2000); as with Kozhemiakin's tombstone, it does not contextualise the deaths of the paratroopers or offer any textual justification for their deaths. The year of the unveiling ceremony is the only indication that they were killed during the second stage of the Chechen conflict. The memorial

in Moscow compensates for the contextual scarcity by the valorisation of militarised masculinity and nationalistic symbols.

In 2001, the bodies of 32 submariners from the sunken submarine *Kursk* were re-buried at the Alley of Heroes in the Serafimovskoe Cemetery. As in many cases of recent military deaths in Russia, the funerals and the unveiling ceremony of this memorial became a scene of contestation between the families and the authorities. The families fought in court for the full disclosure of information about the incident, for the accountability of the authorities, and for their rights to choose a memorial, to bury their relatives and to receive compensation and benefits (Pepiia, 2001; BBC Russian Service, 2003b; Gracheva *et al.*, 2003). The central inscription of this memorial reproduces a note written by Captain Dmitrii Kolesnikov, 'Do Not Despair! (*Otchivat'sia ne nado*)', and its central sculptural composition depicts an albatross, which in Russian culture is considered to be an omen of tragedy. Unlike the new national war memorials in Moscow, this memorial tells a story of human tragedy without engaging with either nationalistic or militaristic narratives.

Thus, the Alley of Heroes at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery tells a troubled story of war commemoration in Russia. The heroic narrative begins with the Second World War monument at the front entrance of the Cemetery and symbolises an attempt to construct a successive war commemoration. According to this tradition, the fallen of all wars belong to the 'glorious dead' who sacrificed their lives for the country. However, the imagery and inscriptions on post-Soviet memorials do not offer us the certainty of the Soviet era. On the one hand, the new sites of war memory display a move towards a decontextualised and depoliticised commemoration by limiting any engagement with the context of warfare. On the other hand, memorials resort to the valorisation of military culture and the brotherhood-in-arms, and legitimate the death by the concept of military duty. These narratives reflect the ambivalent attitudes towards conflicts and accidents experienced by survivors and bereaved families, and also underpin the conflictual relationships between these communities and the authorities.

6.2.2 Public rituals, private commemorations

The Serafimovskoe Cemetery has never become the central place of 'national worship' in Mosse's words (Mosse, 1990). In St Petersburg, the Piskarevskoe Cemetery is the central cemetery for the victims of the Siege of Leningrad (1941–4) and the main site for an annual ceremonial commemoration on 9 May. Official ceremonies are held at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery on Victory Day amongst other dates, but the everyday life of

the Serafimovskoe Cemetery usually continues uninterrupted. This private life of the Cemetery did not change even when both parents of President Putin were buried there in 1998 and 1999, respectively (Timchenko, 2002). The unique character of the Cemetery is its ability to function as a place for both public commemoration and private grief.

Official commemorative events at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery revolve around specific dates. These dates include the anniversaries of wars and conflicts (15 February, the anniversary of the withdrawal from Afghanistan), the death of the Pskov paratroopers in Chechnya (1 March), the national days of certain branches of the armed forces, such as Paratrooper Day (2 August) or the day of creation of the Special Police Force (4 October), and Victory Day (9 May). The visits of veterans to commemorations during these days have similar functions to those performed by British veterans or members of service-connected organisations at the National Memorial Arboretum. In this instance, memorials at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery serve as focal points of reconciliation, shared grief and support for the collective identity of these groups. The official ritual of commemoration includes a talk by local officials or by a representative of the armed forces or veterans' organisations, a ritual of laying flowers and wreaths, and a memorial service at the local chapel or cemetery church.

The visits of relatives of the deceased and survivors are not regulated by official dates. For families, visits to this cemetery bring about a kind of reconciliation with their tragic loss and serve as a source of support from others in the communities of the bereaved. These communities are linked by 'fictive kinship' through associations with tragic events (Winter, 1999, p. 60). It seems that cemetery-based memorials have more symbolic significance to veterans than memorials situated in other public locations. For example, according to Strelnikova, the Kotliakovskoe Cemetery in Moscow is regarded by Soviet Afghan War veterans as one of the most appropriate locations for paying tribute to the fallen (2011, pp. 121–2). The memorial at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery is also more popular among veterans than the memorial in the square near to the Prospect of Glory in St Petersburg (Danilova, 2005). Unlike the cemetery-based memorial, the memorial on the Prospect of Glory re-uses the ideas of Soviet heroism and militarised masculinity to reflect the experience of the Soviet Afghan War.

The visits of bereaved families and groups of veterans to the Serafimovskoe Cemetery feature the performance of a range of commemorative rituals. The first ritual consists of bringing freshly cut or artificial flowers and wreaths. These tributes to the fallen are rarely uniform as

the choice of the flower depends on the personal preferences of the bereaved families and survivors. One of the most popular flowers that visitors might encounter after the official ceremonies are freshly cut red dianthuses. In the former Soviet Union, these flowers were regarded as the 'flowers of revolution and a symbol of spilled proletarian blood' (Egorova and Poletiko, 1969). Over time, dianthuses have become associated with the commemoration of the Second World War (see Chapter 7). In contrast with the National Memorial Arboretum, the 'custodians of remembrance' at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery rarely intervene with personal tributes to the fallen. Wilting flowers and decaying wreaths indicate the frequency of public visits to these sites of memory.

The second popular ritual is the tradition of having meals by the graves of the dead (Merridale, 1999, p. 66). Visitors also bring food to war memorials, including those to the fallen soldiers in Afghanistan. Furthermore, in the case of military commemoration, there is a tradition called the 'third drink' in memory of fallen brothers-in-arms. For this 'drink', veterans leave a glass of vodka, covered with a piece of bread, for the dead. These acts help to reconcile the survivors with their loss and to demonstrate their solidarity with the fallen.

One of the recent rituals of commemoration is the lighting of a votive candle in memory of the fallen. The Russian Orthodox Church, situated in the centre of the Serafimovskoe Cemetery, was built in 1907 and has never been closed, even during the Soviet period. However, this church was deemed insufficient for the needs of the participants of recent conflicts. In 2000, the local veterans' organisation *Afganvet* sponsored the construction of a Russian Orthodox chapel to St George in front of the Afghan War memorial. This chapel is opened only on special occasions, such as those mentioned above. This limited usage of the further privatises the ritual of commemoration and contributes to the community cohesion between veterans and the families of the deceased. At the cemetery, crosses replaced the red stars which were previously the main symbols of war commemoration in the Soviet Union. Believers can light votive candles in the church or the chapel in memory of a certain person and remember the fallen as victims of wars, conflicts and accidents. Thus, the social life of the Serafimovskoe Cemetery is divided between the official ceremonies and the routine visits of survivors and bereaved families throughout the year. The official rituals take place on the anniversaries of wars and deaths, and now often include a religious service. This service acknowledges the sacrifice of the fallen, smoothing over the controversies of the deaths of soldiers in modern conflicts and accidents in the Russian armed forces.

6.3   Veterans as guardians of virtual memory

According to Rutten (2013), Eastern European and Russian digital memories express themselves through a distinctive set of practices. Rutten argues that 'representing a culture whose traumatic past has not yet crystallised into public, consensual, and trivialised forms, they [digital communities] commemorate their contested past online by the means of "soft memory" – texts and narratives, documents and fantasies that are so easy to produce, record, or forge online' (2013, p. 227). The absence of 'hard memory' or memorials is often associated with the reality of the 'unsettling past' and 'manipulative official media' (Rutten, 2013, p. 227). The digital commemoration of the Soviet Afghan War and Chechen conflicts develops within the similar restrictive media environment, but its unique aspect is the existence of the published *Rolls of Honour* (known in Russia as *The Book of Memory*) and hundreds of physical war memorials. Therefore, we might suggest that the online commemoration of the fallen of modern conflicts develops not through the opposition between 'hard' memory and 'soft' memory (memorial versus online text), but through the interactions and 'borrowings' between offline and online forms of commemoration. The analysis discusses virtual *Rolls of Honour* and veterans' website as a prototype for community-orientated online memorials.

In Britain, virtual memorials have sprung into being as a result of the extensive media commemoration of the fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan (see Chapters 2 and 3). As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the limited and selective media commemoration of the Russian fatalities in Afghanistan and Chechnya facilitated the commemorative activism of survivors and bereaved communities in Russia. Some of these communities are also actively involved in creating virtual listings or *Rolls of Honour* (*The Book of Memory* or *Kniga Pamiati*). The popularity of these sources on the *Runet* – Russian-speaking Internet – can be explained by the long history of political manipulation and concealment of information about fallen soldiers. Virtual resources respond to this problem by creating web archives with the names of fallen soldiers from the Second World War to the conflicts in Chechnya or Abkhazia (Ksenofontova, 2011).

Virtual listings are created by various social agencies, from government institutions to communities of veterans, professional historians or dedicated individuals. For example, the genealogical website *GENON* lists more than 100 resources with commemorative listings of the fallen in the Second World War. Virtual commemoration of fallen and/or missing soldiers from the Second World War is also one of the priorities

for the government. The United Database – Memorial (*Ob'edinennaia Baza Dannykh – Memorial*) was created in 2007 in order to accumulate information about fallen and missing soldiers from the Central Military Archive of the Ministry of Defence, the Military-Memorial Centre of the Russian Federation, and regional and local *Rolls of Honour*. At the moment, there is no such government-supported source as the *Memorial* database for the fallen of late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts. In this instance, the digital communities are the primary actors of digital commemoration. The aggregated information on the fallen of the Soviet Afghan War is accessible through the websites of veterans' organisations (for example, RSVA, 2010; The Afghan Book, 2014). Commemorative listings of the fallen in the two campaigns in Chechnya are more difficult to locate. The incomplete data can be retrieved from the websites of regional veterans' organisations, the military-orientated press (for example, the online archive of a military journal, *Bratishka*, 1996–8), the archives of newspapers (*Nezavisimaia Gazeta* in 2000 and *Novaia Gazeta* in 2000) or the website of the human rights organisation *Memorial* (Trusevich and Cherkasov, 1997). Overall, the information about the fallen of the Chechen conflicts is scattered throughout the Internet and is thus 'hidden' from the user. The memory of the fallen is circulated primarily within the local communities of survivors and bereaved families.

The main form of digital commemoration is a digitalisation of the published *Rolls of Honour* and their transfer to the Internet. The vast majority of these *Rolls of Honour* to the fallen of the Soviet Afghan War appeared in print during the earlier part of the 1990s. These books were the result of the joint efforts of local military authorities, veterans and bereaved families (Oushakine, 2009, p. 299). Notably, they commemorated the lives of locally born and recruited soldiers. Oushakine observed that a change in the content of the books occurred between the late 1990s and the early 2000s (2009, p. 254). If in the 1990s, the organisation of soldiers' mothers in Barnaul included published personalised obituaries to the fallen of Chechnya and also included the excerpts from the critical media coverage (see Chapter 5), in the 2000s, any criticism of the campaign was often edited out of the books. The fallen were now represented as hero-victims of post-Soviet conflicts who perished while on their tour of duty in Chechnya.

A similar format of conservative commemoration appears in the commemorative website The Afghan Memorial (2014), which is dedicated to the Russian fatalities of Afghanistan. This website contains individual webpages; each page includes a photo of the deceased in military

uniform, a short summary about his military career, military honours, the circumstances of death and the subsequent memorialisation. Like the media-driven commemoration in Britain, the records in the Russian *Rolls of Honour* resort to the rhetorical strategies of 'objectification' and military language (Wasinski, 2008). These digital obituaries 'objectify' the death of the soldiers through an account of military operations and also legitimate their deaths through the recounting of streets named after fallen soldiers and physical memorials dedicated to the deceased. Notably, the virtual pages abstain from commenting on the ambivalent context of the Soviet Afghan War. This commemorative narrative allows for the integration of this conflict within the emerging frame of nationalistic and depoliticised remembrance which stresses military duty over loss and grief.

The format of virtual commemorative listings and digitised *Rolls of Honour* has limited potential for interaction and shared grieving. Veterans' websites position themselves as the main instrument to preserve the memory of 'forgotten' and 'undeclared' wars. Unlike in Britain, in the *Runet* the voices of bereaved families or civilian friends of the fallen are rarely heard on veterans' forums. While the mothers of deceased soldiers in Afghanistan and Chechnya are actively involved in interpersonal commemoration (Oushakine, 2009), they rarely participate in online discussions. The Russian virtual commemoration is mostly performed by veterans and for veterans only.

The website *Art of War* illustrates this style of veteran-centric digital commemoration. This site was originally created by members of a veterans' organisation in St Petersburg, *Veterans of Last Wars are Together* (*Veterany poslednikh voin – vmeste*). The members of this organisation have supported two platforms, The Afghan War (www.afgan.ru) and The Art of War (www.artofwar.ru). The first platform initially collected information about the history of the Soviet Afghan War, documents from the official and personal archives of Soviet soldiers, a digitised Roll of Honour, legal documents on military welfare and a search engine of fellow soldiers. The modern version of this site also contains publications about the American military operation in Afghanistan. This resource is introduced as a 'site about the Afghan War and the people of this war', where the category of 'people' refers to Soviet soldiers rather than civilians in Afghanistan. The welcome page of the site includes the following announcement:

> The blood which was spilled during local conflicts on the territory of our Motherland overshadowed the faraway war in Afghanistan. But the memory about it is still alive. The years will pass by and someone

who was lucky to come back will be dead in the future. Remember us! (*The Afghan War*, 2010, author's translation)

This excerpt represents both veterans and the fallen as the embodiments of memory and also its primary guardians. In a sense, the Afghan War veterans introduce themselves as 'involuntary walking memorials' (Stanley, 2000, p. 240). This concept is developed by Jo Stanley with regard to British veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. In the Russian context, the controversial experience of the Soviet Afghan War, coupled with the lack of support from the wider public, is perceived by Afghan War veterans as the main traumatising factor (see Chapter 5; Braithwaite, 2012).

The sister platform of this website, The Art of War, features fictional stories and non-fictional accounts written by participants of the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts. According to the founder of this resource: 'We are sure that the least painful, although possibly the most difficult, way of reflecting on the past and freeing oneself from the gnawing inner memories is to write' (Grigoriev, 1998). Grigoriev considers the act of writing and uploading war stories as an act of both commemoration and healing for survivors. In his interview with BBC News, he describes the site as a resource 'for authors rather than readers' and as a 'medical site' (Grigoriev, 2004). This 'medicalisation' of digital commemoration website brings us back to Stanley's concept of the 'unofficial collective commemoration' also observed in Britain (2000, p. 249). Through the act of writing, British and Russian veterans find a way to distance themselves from their traumatic memories, thereby remembering the fallen.

The analysis of virtual memorials in the *Runet* was a challenge, especially in comparison with the developed, web-based memorialisation of the British fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Britain, the faces of the fallen have become a symbol of public engagement with modern conflicts. In Russia, the names and the total number of the fallen are not circulated in the media on a regular basis. In a sense, the very existence of the fallen is a matter of public controversy. Virtual commemorative listings became the main instrument for filling the existing informational vacuum. Many of these virtual listings are set up and supported by veterans' groups, whose commemorative activism contrasts with the reluctant position of government agencies to publish such listings. Although this community-driven commemoration urges us to remember the fallen of the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts, it encourages the public to remember only a specific memory narrative. This narrative prioritises the experience of Russian veterans who served in Afghanistan

or Chechnya and who struggled to adjust to their civilian lives after their demobilisation. Within this veteran-led digital commemoration, the fallen emerge as brothers-in-arms whose personal qualities and lives beyond the army are 'forgotten', being replaced by recollections of the war experiences.

6.4   Concluding thoughts

As Marita Sturken points out: 'National memorials traditionally have been built with dual purposes: to act as forms of pedagogy about the nation and historical figures within it, and to honour the dead … Yet, this pedagogy is highly limited. Memorials do not teach well about history, since their role is to remember those who died rather than to understand why they died' (Sturken, 2011). War memorials in Russia also do not teach the history of recent conflicts well, but they serve as vehicles of deductive pedagogy in the Russian national identity and military culture.

The commemoration of the Second World War shaped the war memorial landscape in Russia and set the conditions for a successive commemoration. During the Soviet period, only one war – the Great Patriotic War – could be publicly commemorated. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent transition to a Russian statehood opened the door for the accommodation of other conflicts. The contemporary version of succession does not allow for adding the names of the fallen to Soviet war memorials, but it does encourage the reproduction of the national myth of war remembrance. This myth consists of heroic militarised masculinity, patriotism, duty and the Russian Orthodox discourse.

The valorisation of war experiences is less prominent in regional memorials to the fallen of post-Soviet conflicts. These memorials opt for the symbols of military duty, soldiering and brotherhood-in-arms as answers to the turbulent political changes and ambivalent relationships with both the civilian and military authorities. However, this fascination with military culture and militarised masculinity exposes the conservative essence of local commemoration. In Russia, neither regional nor national memorials challenge war or military settings, ensuring the cultural militarisation of Russian society. Memorials emphasise military duty and sacrifice for the country, hoping that the state will eventually recognise them as such. This fatalistic hope prevents any search for alternative interpretations of war experiences.

7
Remembering War: Celebrating Russianness

7.1   Inspired by the war

In the UK, rising social diversity within British society, combined with new security threats, facilitated a discussion about the nature of British national identity; in Russia, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 triggered a search for a national identity for a country which happened to have none (Urban, 1998; Tolz, 1998, 2004; Lieven, 1999). The dissolution of the Soviet state gave rise to a swift decline in the self-esteem of the Russian population. In the early 1990s, 'Russians had a very negative view of themselves' and responded to public opinion surveys with answers such as 'we are worse than everybody in in the world' and 'we bring only negative things to the world' (Laruelle, 2009, p. 154). To find a new national identity for Russian society was a mammoth task. This undertaking required Russia 'to be its own successor, to create a new identity based on the denial of the Soviet past … to fall into emptiness and start its history from a blank slate' (Morozov, 2009, p. 429; cited in Shevel, 2011, p. 181). At the level of political discourse, experts observed a move from 'civic *rossiiskii* nation-building in 1992 … towards a more ethnic and imperial conceptualisation of the new Russian state as a homeland for the Russians and Russian-speakers throughout the former USSR' (Shevel, 2011, p. 190). However, during the 1990s, the search for a national identity was constantly plagued by contradictory policy agendas, contradictory movements between civil and ethnic conceptualisations of Russian identity, and an inability of the authorities to develop a functional policy implementation mechanism for national identity building.

In 2000, political consolidation facilitated a transfer of this ambitious nation-building project into a specific set of policy initiatives.

National programmes of patriotic education came to be seen as the main instrument for fighting a number of societal problems, such as the fragmentation of Russian society and a lack of unifying ideas, rising individualism and consumerism, ignorant attitudes to the symbols of the Russian statehood, ignorance or disrespect of national traditions and military achievements, and, finally, the problematic relationship with the military, including the declining prestige of the military service, widespread draft dodging and difficulties in recruiting professional service personnel (Webber and Zilberman, 2006, p. 180; Rapoport, 2009b, p. 32). Since the beginning of the 2000s, three subsequent national programmes have been passed as laws: *The Patriotic Education of the Citizens of the Russian Federation* in 2001–5, 2006–10 and 2011–15 (Patriotic Education, 2000, 2005, 2010). Government funding for patriotic education has been steadily rising, from 178 million rubles (around £3.5 million) in 2001–5 to 497 million rubles (around £10 million) in 2006–10 and 596 million rubles, as well as 280 million rubles from non-budget sources (£12 million of government funds) in 2011–15 (see Chapter 4 for a comparison with the UK). These programmes were directed at various social categories of the population, including secondary schoolchildren, potential recruits, veterans, service personnel and the broader public. The programmes initiated in 2006 and 2010 emphasised the particular importance of the 'cultivation' of patriotism among the younger generation of Russians. For example:

> Putin said: 'The younger generation should not only be involved in the course of the current affairs but they should also know well the heroic and tragic pages of our history.' For this purpose, the government is ready to support patriotic clubs and clubs for 'search and recovery operations' of the remains of the Soviet soldiers killed in the Second World War (*poiskovye otriady*), and encourage other measures, including historical research, publications of archive documents, and so forth'. Putin also confirmed the government commitment to support cultural, sport and artistic initiatives which assist in self-realisation of young people while also forging feelings of belonging to the unified nation. (Putin, 2010, author's translation)

As this excerpt illustrates, the government has repeatedly declared its dedication to policies which promote a shared identity and national unity amongst Russians. In essence, patriotic programmes were designed to inspire patriotism through the commemoration of the 'heroic and tragic' pages of the Second World War. At first glance, this post-Soviet

creation for inspiring patriotism does not differ greatly from military-patriotic education in the Soviet Union (Jones, 1985; Tumarkin, 1994). In the Soviet Union, the commemoration of the Second World War was a multifunctional construct which was used by authorities for inspiring patriotic feelings, mobilising recruits and legitimating the Soviet regime as a whole (see Chapter 5). The initial encounter with the post-Soviet programmes of patriotic education suggests that the Russian authorities attempted to exploit the 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War' in the same manner. However, an alternative explanation also seems plausible. One might argue that Russian patriotic programmes have pioneered the war-centred concept of national identity, but they appear less effective in motivating youngsters to serve in the armed forces or inspiring the wider public to change their ambiguous attitudes towards the armed forces. To explain this argument, patriotic programmes will be further discussed in more detail.

From 2001, the government agency, the State Military Cultural Historical Centre (RosVoenTsentr, 2005, 2010), has developed three subsequent programmes of patriotic education. These programmes cover a range of policy goals, including the overall importance of loyalty to the country, readiness to defend the Fatherland, the need to popularise knowledge about national history and military achievements, respect for the symbols of Russian statehood, as well as tributes to fallen soldiers, veterans of wars and conflicts, and, finally, to inspire a feeling of pride in being a citizen of the Russian Federation (Patriotic Education, 2000, 2005, 2010). In these documents, the focus on the Second World War is often implied rather than explicitly articulated. In this regard, programmes of patriotic education reproduce the style of Putin's statement cited above. Programmes discuss the importance of teaching the younger generation to respect the symbols of Russian statehood and, to a certain extent, introduce the organisational structure of the state and encourage knowledge of national and local history and culture (*kraevedinie*). However, as Laruelle rightly points out, the content of patriotic programmes does not clarify the responsibility of the state towards its citizen, whilst it outlines very clearly that the main expectation of the Russian state from its citizen is a demonstration of loyalty to the country (Laruelle, 2009, p. 179). Moreover, patriotic education implies that the main instrument to inspire this loyalty is through the commemoration of the Second World War.

Since 2001, the government has sponsored a range of commemorative projects that are integrated within patriotic education. Examples of such projects include: the organisation of The Victory Committee

(*Komitet Pobeda*) for the coordination of the anniversary of the Second World War; national campaigns such as The Memory Watch (*Vakhta Pamiati*) as a platform for video recordings of interviews with veterans of the Second World War; a campaign, The Memorial, which is responsible for the preservation of war memorials and military burials across the country; the Our Victory (*Nasha Pobeda*) and We Remember (*My Pomnim*) campaigns for secondary schools; a national programme of support for local military museums and military exhibitions; support for 'search and recovery' units for the locating of unknown military burials and the re-burial of the remains of fallen soldiers from the Second World War; government funding for the production of films and literature on patriotic topics (see the analysis in Norris, 2007; Youngblood, 2007); and the publication of historical research about the Second World War, including the publication of 30 volumes of *Military History of the Russian State* in 2003 (see the analysis in Carleton, 2011).

This patriotic commemoration of the Second World War has led to widespread criticism of its goals and results. There is a significant scholarship that examines misrepresentations of the Second World War in Russian history textbooks, films and digital media (Merridale, 2003; Wolfe, 2006; Norris, 2007; Khazanov, 2008; Rondewald, 2008; Uldricks, 2009; Miller, 2010; Liñán, 2010). A large share of this criticism is directed at the government-led campaign against the falsification of history of the Second World War introduced by President Medvedev in 2009 (Felgenhauer, 2009). Overall, this critical debate asserts that the government policy of patriotic historical education has resulted in a highly selective and distorted narrative of the Second World War.

Recognising the importance of this criticism, three aspects of patriotic education programmes need to be reiterated. First, the concept of Russian patriotic citizenship situates its origins in the Soviet context and presents Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union. The engagement with the 'Soviet' context in patriotic programmes has a relatively superficial character and can be more correctly described as the form of 'Soviet nostalgia' (Boym, 2001). Practically speaking, the concept of patriotic citizenship replaces the Soviet – 'supranational' – identity, along with the communist ideology, with references to the 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War'. This shift allows for an illusionary sense of historical continuity between modern Russia and the Soviet Union. Such campaigns as *We Remember* or *Our Victory* attempt to unify the generations around victory in the Second World War as the nation's most significant achievement (Hosking, 2002; Dubin, 2004; Gudkov, 2005). As Gudkov (2009) has repeatedly pointed out, the emphasis on this specific war

demonstrates a conspicuous lack of legitimate examples from the recent period of which Russians can be proud.

This valid point does not undermine the fact that the unification of the country around the Second World War created the illusion of 'political solidarity in the absence of consensus' in the mid-2000s (Kertzer, 1988, p. 14). This illusion was much needed after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bumpy transition period of the 1990s. Following Kertzer's argument, a war-centred construction of Russian national identity might be seen as a practical solution to a citizenship conundrum. After two decades of nation-building, 'it is clear that the conceptual and practical dilemmas associated with each of the existing discourses of nationhood have not been resolved, and contradictions between ethnic and civic nation-building agendas and discourses at the official level continues' (Shevel, 2011, p. 192). The grounding of patriotic citizenship within the context of the Second World War not only constructs a precondition for the unification of the population of the Russian Federation, but also creates a solid foundation to connect with the large Russian-speaking diasporas in the former Soviet states. In this instance, the commemoration of the Second World War emerges as a cultural sibling of the law on compatriots (*sootechestviniki*) (FZ No. 179, 2010). This law was initially passed in 1999 and was amended in 2010, when it introduced a 'fuzzy' definition of who a compatriot is (Shevel, 2011, p. 192). Leaving behind legal aspects of this law, its content includes explicit references to 'shared cultural heritage, religion, customs, and traditions' and broader 'cultural connections with Russia'. The commemoration of the Second World War gave substance to the cultural projections of Russian national identity and transformed this ritual into a powerful foreign policy tool. This argument helps to explain the political underpinning of the Second World War commemoration seen in Estonia in 2007 (Burch and Smith, 2007; Onken, 2007; Novikova, 2011) and across other post-Soviet states (for example, in Ukraine in 2014).

Second, if the legacy of the Second World War provides us with the opportunity to explain the construction of Russian national identity, it also constructs a hierarchical and potentially divisive system of war commemoration. Officially, patriotic programmes have attempted to facilitate commemoration of the fallen of both the Second World War and post-1945 campaigns. This initial premise is similar to the extended principle of contemporary commemoration seen in Britain (see Chapter 4). In Russia, the organisations of veterans of the Soviet Afghan War have also been encouraged to participate in patriotic

education as instructors for youngsters (Sieca-Kozlowski, 2010). Despite these declared intentions, experiences of post-Soviet conflicts are largely under-represented within the system of patriotic education. Moreover, the model of patriotic citizenship places a particular emphasis on acts of war heroism, and under-represents other war experiences and also struggles to appeal to all those who have served in the armed forces or who died while on duty in post-Soviet conflicts. This aspect brings us to the third problematic issue in the concept of patriotic education in Russia.

Finally, one of the most popular conclusions of the studies into Russian patriotic education is the argument of its contribution to military preparedness and the broader militarisation of society (Sperling, 2003; Rapoport, 2009a, 2009b; Sieca-Kozlowski, 2010). According to Laruelle, 'the ultimate goals of the patriotic program are threefold: to prepare citizens for military service, to revive spiritual values of the country, but also more ideologically, to weaken ideological opposition to the state' (2009, pp. 177–8). However, Laruelle insists that the primary goal of patriotic education is military recruitment and military preparedness. In the literature, this causal link between patriotic education programmes and military service is typically supported by three interlinking arguments. First, the current programmes reproduce the structure of Soviet programmes of military-patriotic education, and therefore their Russian version achieves the same goals (Laruelle, 2009, p. 178). Second, the content of these programmes directly refers to such goals as 'to inspire the eagerness of youth to serve in the armed forces' and to 'raise the preparedness to defend the Fatherland' (Patriotic Education, 2000, 2005, 2010; see also Webber and Zilberman, 2006, p. 180). Putin personally mentioned that patriotic education should help to fight draft dodging and improve the prestige of the armed forces (Putin, 2006). Third, patriotic programmes include a range of activities that could be interpreted as instruments of 'militarised citizenship' (Laruelle, 2009, p. 188) or to encourage a broadly defined 'military spirit' (Sieca-Kozlowski, 2010). These militarised activities include the introduction of a basic course of military preparedness (*nachal'naia voennaia podgotovka* (NVP)) in secondary schools in 1999, government support for sports clubs and the Russian Defence Technical Organisation (*Rossiiskaia oboronnaia tekhnicheskaia organizatsiia* (ROSTO)), the re-establishment of cadet schools and Cossacks' organisations, funds for youth clubs of military-historical reconstructions, and assistance in the re-employment of veterans of the Soviet Afghan War and other conflicts as mentors for a basic military training in secondary schools (Sieca-Kozlowski, 2006, p. 252;

Sieca-Kozlowski, 2010, pp. 73–85). In light of these examples, it is possible to conclude that, since 2001, patriotic education programmes have produced a developed institutional structure for the militarisation of Russian society, while also introducing military culture as a core value of the national identity. This conclusion, however, does not necessarily imply a causal link between patriotic programmes and military service as such.

Assuming that the military preparedness hypothesis is relevant, we might expect that more than ten years of patriotic education would have brought about a decline in draft dodging, an increase in the number of volunteers and an improvement in the image of the armed forces. On the contrary, draft dodging has continued throughout the 2000s, as it did in the 1990s. In 2008 and 2009, around 200,000 potential conscripts avoided call-up papers and military preparatory exercises (Smirnov, 2010a, pp. 170–1). The prestige of military service as a profession did not change from 1997 to 2007. During this period, only three per cent of young people considered military service as a 'prestigious' profession, which was the lowest result in comparison with other occupations in Russia (Smirnov, 2010a, pp. 125–6). According to the same research, more than 50 per cent of the graduates of cadet schools and students of military academies in 2008 did not go into formal military service after they had finished their education (Smirnov, 2010a, p. 128). Moreover, the majority of cadets and students of military academies come from military families for whom military education is the only option in order to receive university education with government sponsorship. Theoretically, cadets should be strongly motivated to choose the military as a profession after years of patriotic education and military training. In this case, one might agree with Webber and Zilberman, who sceptically point out that 'the State attempts to impose a framework on the citizenry … are completely out of touch with the nature of Russian society today' (2006, p. 181).

Having said this, there has been an improvement in the image of the Russian armed forces in 2014. If, in 2006, only three per cent of the population considered the situation in the Russian armed forces as 'good', while 71 per cent of the public was convinced that the situation was 'bad', in 2014, only nine per cent of the public believed that the situation in the military was 'bad', while 25 per cent of the public believed that it had become 'good' (FOM, 2014a). It is unclear to what extent this recent shift in the public image of the Russian military can be directly attributed to the success of patriotic education. A range of factors could have brought about this change, from the reduction of

conscription from a two-year to a one-year service period in 2008, to the intensification of the military reform from 2011 onwards (Renz, 2012; Perlo-Freeman and Solmirano, 2014) and, finally, to the temporary patriotic fervour facilitated by current events, including the relatively peaceful occupation of Crimea in the spring of 2014 (Gudkov, 2014; VTsIOM, 2014). Thus, our main argument is that although the content of patriotic education programmes uses military service as one of the main points of references, in practice it engages with the military as a cultural construct rather than the military as an institution.

The most significant result of patriotic education lies in integrating the rituals of nation-building with those of the commemoration of the Second World War. This integration transforms the main 'foundation' myth into a master narrative of the Russian national identity. Since the early 2000s, there has been a continuous upward trend in the shared national identity (VTsIOM, 2006). Other changes in the values of Russian society include a significant improvement in the 'subjective well-being' of Russians, in comparison with their depressive self-assessment in the 1990s (Inglehart *et al.*, 2013). According to public opinion surveys, this positive self-assessment of Russians is largely based on the reference to the Second World War (Gudkov, 2005). From this perspective, patriotic programmes helped to reintroduce a war-centred concept of national identity, while also militarising society at the cultural level. In this instance, militarisation encourages support for government policies in Russia or the 'Near Abroad' (territories belonging to the former Soviet Union) as long as they can be justified by references to the common glory of the Second World War.

Societal changes within Russian society after the collapse of the Soviet Union, along with its transition to the market economy, complicates this undertaking. The post-Soviet period introduced consumerism, the individualisation of lifestyles and the broader privatisation of life. These societal changes put constraints on the government's striving for patriotic citizenship-building. After all, the effectiveness of patriotic education raises doubts even amongst the most dedicated government officials (Artem'ev, 2014; see also Putin, 2014). In 2010, a policy report by the Deputy Minister of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy, Oleg Rozhnov, indicated two problematic issues (Rozhnov, 2010). Rozhnov congratulated local authorities for attracting 1.9 million volunteers from various regions of Russia for patriotic campaigns, yet he also said this number covered only five per cent of the younger population of Russia. Further, he expressed his disappointment at the public's ignorance of patriotic education and the limited support for patriotism.

In 2007, according to VTsIOM, 86 per cent of the population said that 'neither they nor their family members participated in any patriotic programmes or campaigns' (VTsIOM, 2007). In 2010, the population associated 'patriotism' with the family, preservation of traditions and hard work at your professional position instead of loyalty to the country (VTsIOM, 2010b). In 2013 the public prioritised a military reform which would see the upgrading of military equipment and an increase in military professionalism (22 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively) over patriotism and 'spiritual' motivation (which was supported by only four per cent of the nationwide representative sample) (FOM, 2013c). Rozhnov's solution was to improve the government's information policy. This strategy is not unique and it was already being implemented through the system of government control over the mass media throughout the 2000s (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, one might doubt that the propaganda strategy alone could inspire the population to prioritise loyalty to the country over other societal values, such as family and work, or function effectively as a tool of military recruitment. In this instance, the historical parallels between modern patriotic education and the 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War' introduced by Brezhnev in the 1970s are useful because they show that the myth alone cannot prevent the disillusionment of the population or ensure the stability of the regime in the long run.

When, in 2014, Putin confirmed his intention to extend the programme of patriotic education until 2020, he also insisted that the government has to come up with 'new, really interesting, relevant and dynamic initiatives which will appeal to both the modern Russian society and the young generation altogether' (Putin, 2014). Putin's advice might be read as a recommendation to look for inspiration beyond the experience of the 'sacred' and 'glorious' Second World War. The outcome of this advice remains to be seen.

7.2 Victory Day in modern Russia

Victory Day in the Soviet Union constituted a mixture of state-'invented' rituals and popular practices which came from society itself. This intersection of official and popular forms of celebration came into existence as a result of the mass involvement of the population in the Second World War, but it was also facilitated by sharp swings in the state politics of the Victory Day celebrations. In 1947, Victory Day was demoted to a normal work day, but was marked by fireworks in the evening across the country and informal gatherings of veterans (Zubkova, 1998,

p. 28). For almost two decades, this day was celebrated informally by veterans and civilians in the kitchens of communal flats, in military cemeteries, and in parks and squares. The Soviet government became interested in 're-inventing' the ritual of the Victory Day celebration in the 1960s. In 1965, Victory Day was officially recognised as a national holiday, and subsequent 'invented' traditions included the Minute of Silence and a ceremony of wreath-laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which was unveiled in 1967 (Tumarkin, 1994). This political upgrading of Victory Day had to coexist with the popular practices of celebration that already existed.

Victory Day in the Soviet Union during the 1980s had a 'generally less developed, less standardised and more decentralised' structure, which encompassed 'the officially devised ritual sequences' and rituals 'evolved by the people themselves' (Lane, 1981, p. 152). Essentially, people practised various activities during Victory Day, including watching military parades and war films on TV, and visiting military cemeteries and war memorials, but also attending festive dinners with family and spending this day on *dacha* in the countryside. In the 1960s, the Soviet authorities introduced an official holiday on 1 May – Labour Day – and, together with Victory Day, these days, if they coincided with weekends, became a Soviet version of the Easter break in the UK. The public-private character of Victory Day mirrored the complexity of life in the Soviet Union, where 'living socialism to them [the Soviet people] often meant something quite different from the official interpretations provided by state rhetoric' (Yurchak, 2006, p. 8). In the 1990s, Tumarkin (1994) predicted a decline of the 'national heroic myth', observing changes in the Victory Day celebrations in Russia during that time. The 2000s have demonstrated that Victory Day survived the period of political turbulence and re-established itself as a popular holiday in Russia (see Table 7.1).

According to a public opinion survey, in 2006 the population considered Victory Day as the fifth most popular holiday. Considering Victory Day in comparison with the other Russian holidays in Table 7.1, it is the only day which can unite different sections of the population. The majority of holidays forge belonging to personal or family connections (birthdays), religious or cultural beliefs (Christmas, Easter or New Year), gender identifications (Women's Day or the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland). For example, Women's Day and the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland underwent significant changes due to the privatisation and individualisation of practices of celebration (Karpova and Iarskaia-Smirnova, 2003; Klimov, 2003a). Both days have recently evolved into a public celebration of women or

Table 7.1 Question: which holidays do you normally celebrate? (A selection from a survey by FOM, 2006a)

Popular holidays in Russia	The percentage of choices in a total sample (any number of choices allowed)
New Year	93%
My birthday	83%
Easter	78%
Women's Day (8 March)	71%
Victory Day (9 May)	71%
Birthdays of adult family members	60%
Christmas	58%
Children's birthdays	57%
Day of the Defender of the Fatherland (23 February)	49%

men, based purely on the grounds of their belonging to a certain biological sex and gender identifications. The 'abortive commemoration' concept by Barry Schwarz offers the most relevant explanation for this phenomenon because both holidays in modern Russia have 'the unfinished and unfulfilled purpose' (Schwarz, 2008, p. 78).

This change is most interesting with regard to the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland (23 February). In the Soviet Union, this day was dedicated to the Red Army and the Soviet Navy, and it was the Soviet equivalent of Armed Forces Day in the UK. The government organised concerts, fireworks and parades, and the public congratulated men as actual or potential conscripts, officers or veterans. Universal conscription, and the high prestige of the armed forces, coupled with the 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War', assisted in the political use of this day as a 'day of recommitment' to the military (Etzioni, 2000, 2004). In modern Russia, this militaristic meaning of 23 February has been slowly eroded. In 1995, this day was officially re-named as the Day of the Victory of the Red Army over the Germans in 1918 and also the Day of the Defenders of the Fatherland. This historical contextualisation referred to the last battle of the First World War for Russian troops and the first battle for the newly created Red Army (Sergeev, 2001). The idea to link Soviet holidays with historical events was particularly popular among the Russian political elite in the 1990s (Smith, 2002). The problem was that the majority of the population in the 1990s knew the Soviet ritual of celebration, but often 'forgot' the original historical context of these

days. Moreover, the original context of 23 February is a matter of historical controversy. From its inception, as Nikonova explains, this holiday has exemplified the perfect example of the 'invented' tradition, 'when defeats and failures of the Soviet authorities had been reinterpreted as its achievements and successes' (2007, p. 185).

In 2002, President Putin declared 23 February as a national holiday and re-named it again as the 'Day of the Defender of the Fatherland', removing other confusing historical associations. He also introduced a tradition of wreath-laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow on this day. Through this act, he attempted to introduce the idea of continuity in military service from the Second World War onwards. During the 2000s, the authorities have organised festivities on this day, and they used this occasion to declare their commitment to support the military and veterans. This official meaning of the day has not yet found much resonance with the Russian public. According to Klimov and Bode, a certain ambivalence arises from the generally ambiguous attitudes to the military, which developed from the early 1990s onwards, and also the broader process of the privatisation of national holidays, which began with the collapse of the Soviet Union (Klimov, 2003a; Bode, 2011). As a result of these changes, the public mark the 'Day of the Defender of the Fatherland' by giving gifts to all men, without any specific emphasis on their commitment to military service or defence of the Fatherland. In the context of the privatisation of holidays in modern Russia, the formative importance of Victory Day has become apparent. Victory Day has been the only day that unites Russians around a certain historical past and shapes the 'national and civil identities' of citizens (Klimov, 2003b).

The next question is: what kind of feelings does the public experience with regard to Victory Day? According to the Levada-Center, in 2010 Victory Day raised 'feelings of joy because of national victory in war' among 39 per cent of respondents, while 34 per cent of respondents had 'mixed feelings of joy and sadness' (Levada, 2010; see also FOM, 2004b, 2013b; Levada, 2009). Only 26 per cent of the public perceived Victory Day as a day of commemoration and mourning. This perception of Victory Day contrasts with the popular image of Remembrance Day in Britain. In Russia, Victory Day is more a day of celebration and a holiday. Moreover, according to VTsIOM, 91 per cent of the respondents believe that Victory Day is a 'holiday for everybody' and only eight per cent associate it with veterans of the Second World War (VTsIOM, 2010a). This attitude of the wider public towards veterans illustrates the peculiar position of this group in the Soviet Union and in modern

Russia (Edele, 2009; Danilova, 2010). Although military parades on Victory Day begin with the President's address to war veterans, it nevertheless seems that veterans are only ceremonial participants of the day. More importantly, public opinion does not associate Victory Day with veterans of the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts, and such public attitudes problematise the construction of the inclusive framework of war commemoration.

Public perception helps us to understand the importance of Victory Day in the national calendar, but it does not give us sufficient information about the popular practices of marking this day. What do people actually do on Victory Day in modern Russia? Public opinion surveys from 2005 and 2006 show that a wide range of activities may be planned and performed during this day (FOM, 2006b). For example, the most popular planned activity was 'a holiday meal with family' (32 per cent and 39 per cent in 2005 and 2006, respectively). This option can be merged with another socialising activity of 'having guests or visiting friends' (15 per cent and 19 per cent of the choices). Activities directly related to Victory Day as a day of remembrance include 'visits to graveyards and war memorials' and 'participation in festivities'. The 'participation in festivities' response ranges from observing street performances to the enjoyment of firework displays in the evening. In 2014, the balance between the 'socialising' and 'patriotic' spending of Victory Day has been preserved (FOM, 2014b). According to this survey, 53 per cent of choices for planned activities covered the following most popular options: 'socialising and going for a walk', 'going to the countryside/or having a barbeque at the *dacha*', 'family dinner/or having guests' and 'meeting friends'. More 'patriotic' activities, such as 'participating in the festivities', 'observing the military parade', 'watching war films on TV' and 'congratulating veterans' covered 32 per cent of the choices in total.

Thus, two types of practices, either festivity-related (or 'sacred' in terms of Durkheim's methodology) or activities unrelated to war remembrance ('profane' time-spending), can be performed during Victory Day (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]). If the first group of practices can unite the population as the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), the second group of activities has a minimal impact on commitments towards the nation-state. The prominence of socialising activities in the popular spending of Victory Day demonstrates its multifunctionality. If the authorities use this day to forge associations with Russia as a nation-state ('recommitment day'), the public perceives this day also as one of recreation, family unification and 'tension-management' (Etzioni, 2000).

7.3　Tanks, floral tributes and the St George Ribbon

Applying Connerton's approach to commemoration as a 're-enactment performance' expressed through participatory acts and bodily practices (1989, p. 70), the following section explores the three main rituals of commemoration on Victory Day, such as the national military parade in Moscow, floral tributes and the tradition of wearing the St George Ribbon.

7.3.1　Military parades: the politics of emotions

In the Soviet Union, soldiers marched through Red Square twice a year, on the Day of the October Revolution (7 November or 25 October according to the Julian, pre-Revolutionary calendar) and on Victory Day (9 May). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the October parade as a symbol of the Revolution underwent the most significant changes. At first, the Russian authorities cancelled any festivities held on this day due to the fact that the October Revolution was discredited in 1991. However, the Communist Party and veterans of the Second World War continued to mark this day with marches of protests and demonstrations. To mitigate social and political unrest around this date, the government introduced 7 November as 'a day of the liberation of Moscow by people's militia under the leadership of Kuz'my Minina and Dmitriia Pozharskogo from the Polish invasion in 1612' (FZ No. 32, 1995). This historical revision aimed at replacing the Soviet meaning of this day by associating it with the pre-Revolutionary history. In 1996, Yeltsin attempted another revision by introducing 7 November also as a Day of Solidarity and Reconciliation (Decree No. 1537, 1996). This document implied a link between the divisive experience of the Revolution of 1917 and a turbulent state of the Russian national identity in the early 1990s. Essentially, it suggested the unification of Russia after 70 years of the Soviet regime rather than the events of 1917. This holiday become an 'abortive holiday' from its very inception as the public neither had much willingness to 'celebrate' unity on 7 November nor much knowledge as to how this unity could be re-imagined within the context of the Revolution or the legacy of communism.

In 2004, Putin introduced another date in the Russian holiday calendar, 'The Day of Unity, Solidarity and Reconciliation' (known as Unity Day), celebrated on 4 November, which is supposed to unite the population after the experience of the Soviet regime, while also now unofficially commemorating the liberation of Russia from the Polish invaders in 1612. Both revisions were highly artificial and unsuccessful with the public. Nevertheless, the re-naming policy of 7 November and the official designation of Unity Day directly reflected the intention of the government

to unify the population through the revision of the national holiday calendar (Zerubavel, 2003). Demonstrating the government's commitment to erasing the memory of the Revolution of 1917 from popular memory and replacing it with the heroic legacy of the Second World War, in 2004, the authorities modified the concept of 7 November by declaring it as 'the day of the military parade on Red Square in Moscow in the commemoration of the 24th anniversary of the Great October Revolution (1941)' (FZ No. 200, 2004). This re-naming reinstalled the military parade during the Second World War as a main reference point of commemoration.

This parade, which was also known as the parade of the Defenders of Moscow in 1941, was an important cultural and political signifier of the 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War' in the Soviet Union. On 7 November 1941, Soviet troops marched from Red Square straight to the front to defend Moscow from the German invasion. The broadcast of this parade was integrated into the official Soviet ritual of annual media commemoration on Victory Day.

The post-Soviet revision of 7 November did not have much impact on the population. Because the majority of the veterans of the Second World War also happened to be dedicated supporters of the Communist Party, the official re-naming policy of this day did not alter the situation for this section of the population, who proceeded with marking 7 November as the Day of the Revolution of 1917. From the early 1990s onwards, the Communist Party has organised public marches with red banners and portraits of Lenin on 7 November, replicating the Soviet ritual on a smaller scale and without the presence of leading politicians and marching soldiers. In this regard, the march of communists and veterans on 7 November in modern Russia can be seen more as a statement of political partisanship and also a nostalgic act than as a ritual shared by the majority of the public.

Since the end of the 2000s, the media coverage of 7 November has been more actively shifting towards introducing this day not as the day of the Revolution, but as the day of the Moscow parade of 1941. The official discourse reproduces the Soviet canons of war heroisation, while also re-positioning Stalin as a successful wartime leader of the Soviet Union (Sherlock, 2011). On 3 November 2009, *Krasnaia Zvezda* published an article entitled 'The 1941 Historical Parade on Red Square on November 7th'. The format of this article replicated the Soviet style of propaganda from the 1970s and 1980s on Victory Day. The following paragraph illustrates the modern reincarnation of the Soviet narrative:

On the 24th anniversary of the great October Revolution, the operation of fascist forces 'Typhoon' to occupy Moscow stalled due to

> heroic efforts of the Soviet forces along the Mozhaisk line of defence and in the direction of Tula … Stalin considered the 1941 parade as a matter of the high military and political significance, and ordered the organization of a parade on Red Square in a strict secrecy … 285,000 soldiers and 140 artillery weapons, 160 tanks and 232 vehicles participated in this parade on November 7th of 1941 … Nobody expected the parade in our country, nor in Berlin, nor in the capitals of Western countries. The impact of this event was similar to a well-performed military operation … The 1941 parade is one of the brightest pages in the heroic history of our Motherland as a whole, and the history of the Great Patriotic War in particular. (*Krasnaia Zvezda*, 2009, author's translation)

The significance of this style of reporting on the 1941 parade in Moscow can only be understood in the context of the current revision of the Second World War in Russia. The official narrative does not dwell on the link between this parade and the events of the Revolution of 1917. Instead, the article emphasises the ideas of war heroism and triumphalism, and engenders the concept of historical continuity in military commemoration.

In 2011, the Russian authorities put significant financial and human resources into a historical re-enactment of the military parade of 1941. The 2011 parade was televised and this turned it into a 'mediatised' performance of national history. The parade surprised the audience with its scope and dedication to historical re-enactment. Cadets were dressed in the historical uniforms of the Soviet forces from 1941 and veterans of the Second World War replaced the communist leaders watching from Lenin's mausoleum. The integration of the veterans into the ritual counteracted their dedication to the Communist Party by effectively converting them from the active commemorators of the Revolution of 1917 into supporters of the Russian patriotic and war-centred version of 7 November. In addition, the presence of veterans at the parade legitimated historical re-enactment by constructing a sense of historical continuity and an illusion of national unity.

As Oushakine notes, 'this time the [2011] parade was less about the Soviet ability to resist, and more about demonstrating a link, a direct connection with the past that is not available anymore' (2013, p. 270). Therefore, from Oushakine's perspective, the 2011 parade demonstrates the 'affective management of history' when people are 'not only linked together', but are also provided 'with a social space and symbolic tools

that could help to make such linkage tangible' (2013, p. 275). In this instance, the power of affective management is directed at forging national sentiments through Second World War commemorations. The actual impact of these state-led historical revisions seems to be limited. In 2013, 49 per cent of the population in the nationwide representative sample expressed their willingness to mark 7 November as a day of the October Revolution of 1917, not as Unity Day, the Day of Liberation from the Polish Invaders or the Day of the Moscow Military Parade of 1941 (FOM, 2013a). Moreover, according to public opinion surveys in 2005 and 2013, no more than three per cent of the public could remember, if asked, that one of the new holidays in November is somehow connected with the Polish invasion of 1612 (FOM, 2013a). This result shows a clear limitation in exploiting the past at will and 'inventing' new rituals without taking into consideration popular sentiments and recent memories of commemorations.

In contrast with the turbulent history of the parade on 7 November, the military parade on Victory Day experienced fewer radical changes. In 1992, the first President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, replaced the military parade with a ceremony of wreath-laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. As Smith believes, in doing this, 'Yeltsin paid homage to the ordinary fighting man and elevated the status of informal, popular celebrations' (2002, p. 86). While this interpretation sounds viable, it does not fit well with the Soviet history of war commemoration. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Russia came into being as a result of state-led commemoration in the 1960s and, in the Soviet Union, the ceremony of laying wreaths and the Minute of Silence were a part of the annual official ritual of commemoration rather than an expression of respect towards an individual soldier. In 1992, Yeltsin performed a reduced version of the Soviet ritual. The fact that he did not sanction the parade might be explained by the economic crisis and the overall problematic relationship with the military in the early 1990s.

The cancellation of the Moscow parade, together with the political uncertainty of the 1990s, brought demonstrations and protest marches to Victory Day. In 1992, democrats organised a 'civilian' parade on the outskirts of Red Square, while supporters of the Communist Party, together with groups of Second World War veterans, held an alternative march in a different part of Moscow (Krylova, 2004). In the early 1990s, pro-communist groups of veterans of the Second World War organised political protests during Victory Day at Victory Park in Moscow.

The public was reserved in its support for the veterans' political activism on Victory Day. For example, in 1995, 43 per cent of respondents did not support these separate marches of veterans of the Second World War (Migdisova *et al.*, 1995). The population was more willing to accept veterans marching through Red Square or sitting in a lounge of honoured guests than to see them as participants in an opposition protest. These public attitudes reflect the ambiguous position of veterans of the Second World War in Russian society: they are accepted as heroes of the Second World War, but not as a group with specific political views.

In 1995, the first signs of political and economic stabilisation stimulated a comeback of the military parade as an essential part of the Victory Day celebrations. According to Smith, the first 'democratic' parade had qualities reminiscent of its Soviet predecessor: 'the ceremonies were now too Soviet' (2002, p. 90). Smith saw this Sovietness in a symbolic form of the parade, but one might disagree with this conclusion. The first parades of Yeltsin's period in office differed from their Soviet-era parades in one important aspect. The focus of these parades was on the veterans of the Second World War and service personnel as their successors; military vehicles were not used in the parades. Although this decision reflected more the financial limitation of the Russian authorities, it also introduced a 'human-orientated' concept to the Moscow parade. The economic and political stabilisation of the 2000s has demonstrated that this 'humanistic' version of the parade was only a transitory stage in its post-Soviet evolution. From the mid-2000s onwards, the Moscow parade has seen steady increases in terms of the number of participants, units of military vehicles and planes. The first Moscow parade on a larger scale took place on the sixtieth anniversary of the victory in the Second World War in 2005 and included 7,000 participants. Since 2010, the annual number of participants has ranged from 11,000 to 14,000 people marching through Red Square (Tikhonov, 2013).

The modern parade begins with the hymn of the Russian Federation and the congratulatory speeches of the President. These speeches start with the traditional introduction: 'Dear citizens of the Russian Federation! Dear Guests! Soldiers and Sailors, Sergeants and Midshipmen! Officers, Generals and Admirals! Veterans of the Second World War! Congratulating You on the Day of the Great Victory!' (see Putin, 2005b, 2006b; Medvedev, 2010, 2011). This tradition of announcing the military parade presents Victory Day as a day of national unity, a form of gratitude to veterans of the Second World War and respect for service personnel. The main part of the parade includes the marches of service personnel from various branches and units of the armed forces. In 2010,

veterans of the Second World War did not march through Red Square, but they were driven around in historical vehicles or invited to a special lounge for honourable guests. In 2010, veterans of recent conflicts, such as the Soviet Afghan War and the Chechen conflicts, marched for the first time through Red Square as successors to the veterans of the Second World War. In this sense, the Moscow parade functions as an institution of unification of different generations of veterans.

During the Moscow parade, the ambivalent coexistence of the cultural and national facets of the armed forces comes to the fore. The Moscow parade places the origin of the Russian military within the Soviet context, and this symbolic act presents the Russian armed forces as a legitimate successor of the Soviet military. This symbolism is crucial for Russian nation-building because it suggests that the Russian military during modern conflicts can potentially replicate the success of the Soviet military during the Second World War. For this purpose, the 2010 parade included a 'historical part', during which Russian service personnel dressed in military uniforms from 1945. Compounding this, T-34 tanks and SU-100 armoured vehicles paraded through Red Square (Gavrilov, 2010). In this instance, the military emerges as an important component in the nation-building process, a symbol of historical continuity and a power projection of the Russian government.

However, these symbolic games do not give the military as an institution much scope for expressing its identity. If the American military can potentially use public military ceremonies for articulating its expectations from the wider public (Burk, 1999, p. 452), in Russia, the Moscow parade introduces the armed forces (and veterans of the Second World War) as cultural projections, which reinforce a sense of shared national identity and assist in political legitimation of the government. These goals in Russia cannot sustain the 'support the troops' rhetoric present in Britain or in the USA (see Chapter 4). The problematic position of the military within the Victory Day ritual will be further explored in the discussion of the St George Ribbon tradition.

In 2005, on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the Russian government invited the heads of foreign governments to attend the Moscow parade. The governments of France, Britain and the USA sent delegates to the parade, but for the representatives of Eastern European governments, the invitation of the Russian authorities turned into a matter of huge political and public debate. In particular, this act was perceived as a display of power pressure by the governments of the Baltic States (Onken, 2007). To an extent, Putin in his speech at the parade attempted to reconcile these conflicting versions of European

and Russian memories by stressing the importance of remembering both 'the Second World War' and 'the Great Patriotic War' (Putin, 2005b). From Putin's perspective, this reconciliation of memories could improve the international military cooperation in the global War on Terror. On the one hand, Putin's gesture was significant considering that, before 2005, Russian society celebrated Victory Day solely as a Soviet or Russian victory without acknowledging the contribution of the Allies (Britain, the USA and France). On the other hand, Putin's instrumental approach to the memory of the Second World War brushed over the deeper disagreements between the former allies, as well as the conflictual perceptions of the experience of the Second World War in Eastern Europe and in the Baltic States in particular (Blaker and Etkind, 2013).

Hutchings and Rulyova analysed a broadcast of the Moscow military parade in 2005 and came to the conclusion that the parade projected 'a quintessential Russianness to an imagined community otherwise dispersed across this still disparate nation' (2009, p. 138). However, they stressed that the TV presenters used *steb* (ironic rhetorics), symbolising 'the fragility of Russian national identity', 'which is deconstructed at the moment of being constituted' (Hutchings and Rulyova, 2009, p. 139). Despite this disursive strategy, one might ague that the Moscow parade has been functioning as a relatively successful tool of the nation-building process and a vehicle of 'imagined' historical continuity.

Although politicians and experts are largely concerned with the broader political resonance of the Moscow parade, these issues do not appear to concern the general population of Russia. In 2005 and 2010, only three per cent and five per cent of respondents were interested in the international resonance of the parade and the Victory Day celebration overall (FOM, 2005; VTsIOM, 2010c). On the other hand, the public liked the event because of its 'attention to veterans of the Second World War', 'the organisation of festivities', the 'atmosphere', and the 'good organisation of some of events such as the military parade, street performances and fireworks' (FOM, 2005; VTsIOM, 2010a). Therefore, the Moscow parade functions effectively as an instrument of nation-building, a symbol of historical continuity and also a large-scale cultural performance. The multivocality of the post-Soviet military parade enables its different reading by older and younger generations. Veterans might consider parades as a form of 'legitimation of their war experience', as the Cenotaph march in London is often perceived by British veterans, while younger generations may consider the parade as a celebration of national history or a colourful cultural performance (Sabonis-Chafee, 1999).

The important quality of the Moscow military parade is its exclusivity. The public cannot attend the parade without special permission, but members of the public are allowed to attend regional parades in the cities and towns of Russia. In any case, the military parade is a specific political ritual which demands the presence of local politicians, the military leadership and veterans, and generally provides limited access for the general public. In St Petersburg, this exclusivity of the military parade became one of the reasons for also introducing an annual march of veterans along Nevsky Prospect at 5 pm on Victory Day in addition to the parade of the cadets and service personnel at 10 am. The organisation of the veterans' march in St Petersburg is reminiscent of the march of veterans and service personnel in London. As is the case in Britain, in St Petersburg, veterans' groups and members of service associations are the main performers of this ritual (see Figure 7.1).

The public reception of the veterans' march on 9 May 2010 in St Petersburg encourages two observations. The first observation concerns the ambivalent position of veterans in the ritual. Veterans who represented the different fronts of the Second World War marched first, and their appearance was met by waves of applause from the public.

Figure 7.1   March of veterans, St Petersburg (photo by the author, 9 May 2010)

However, veterans who chose to associate themselves with political parties and carry communist banners, Red flags and portraits of Lenin and Stalin did not receive such a warm reception. The applause started to die out altogether with the decline of overall interest in the march. This public response underpins the broader problematic position of veterans in Victory Day celebrations and in Russian society as a whole. Veterans of the Second World War are supposed to be embodiments of history and national identity, and, as such, they play a ritualistic role in the Victory Day celebrations. Having said this, it is important to recognise that, for veterans of the Second World War, Victory Day is the very rare opportunity to demonstrate their presence in the public life of the country and receive a symbolic recognition for their service.

The second observation is associated with the ambiguity of introducing an inclusive commemoration without the revision of the master narrative of Victory Day. During the march, the public response to the participation of the veterans of the Soviet Afghan War or other post-Soviet conflicts did not receive the same welcome from the public as that for the Second World War veterans. The public reaction was similar to the politicised groups of veterans; the applause died out and the public moved towards stalls with food, beer and shops. This reaction illustrates the unfinished transition towards the inclusive, successive and military service-centred commemoration in modern Russia. Currently, this transition is troubled due to a range of factors, from the ambivalence of modern conflicts and contested civil–military relations to a primary focus of Victory Day ritual on the experience of the Second World War.

7.3.2   Flowers for the dead and flowers for the living

My personal memories of Victory Day in the 1980s are associated with trips to the central military cemetery in the city of Perm. My grandfather fought in the Second World War as a mine-seeker. He returned in 1946, but died soon afterwards. Spending only months with his family, he was buried at the local cemetery in the Perm region. On Victory Day, we used to visit his grave at this cemetery, if we could, or visit the graves of unknown soldiers of the Second World War buried at the central military cemetery. This practice might seem strange considering that we paid equal tribute to a member of our family as we did to the unknown soldiers. However, for my mother and me, this act felt like 'the right thing' to do. Perhaps, we felt the same also because my mother never met her father and therefore – for both of us – he was a symbolic figure representing all those who fought and died in the Second World War.

My family ritual on Victory Day did not differ from visits to a civilian cemetery on other occasions. We used to bring food and flowers, we ate, talked and just sat quietly by the grave. Considering this experience as a researcher, I would suggest that these annual tributes to fallen soldiers constructed a strong connection between the experience of my family and the country. This private act of commemoration connected our family history with the national history and identity. Through visiting the military cemetery, bringing flowers and sharing bread with the dead, we paid tribute to both my family loss and the broader losses of society in the Second World War. The pilgrimage to military cemeteries and war memorials became an important part of the Soviet official ritual of commemoration on Victory Day from the 1960s onwards (Jones, 1985, p. 152). However, as my experience demonstrates, this state-led tribute in the Soviet Union coexisted with private practices of war commemoration. Therefore, whereas this practice of remembrance might fluctuate with the state politics of memory, its fundamental change could happen only with major changes in broader funereal and commemorative traditions (Cook and Walter, 2005).

To date, floral tributes to the dead remain a popular form of commemoration. In 2010, thousands of people visited Piskarevskoe Memorial Cemetery in St Petersburg. This cemetery contains common graves to thousands of unknown soldiers and civilians who died during the Second World War, as well as an impressive war memorial, 'Grieving Mother-Motherland'. In modern Russia, on Victory Day, the public brings floral tributes to this cemetery and to other war memorials throughout the city. The majority of these floral tributes are red dianthuses. As mentioned in Chapter 6, red dianthuses were used by the Soviet authorities as the main symbol of sacrifice and represent the spilled blood of revolutionary heroes (Egorova and Poletiko, 1969). However, this meaning has been shifting towards the encompassing of all soldiers and civilians who died in the Second World War and in other conflicts. Although red and white dianthuses are the most popular flowers on Victory Day, their popularity competes with other forms of floral tributes. In post-Soviet Russia, floral conventions are flexible in terms of the type of flowers or their colours. The public and politicians bring floral tributes to the war dead, thereby demonstrating the democratic and inclusive essence of this ritual. This form of tribute joins the threads of national, local and personal memories together in a simple act of dealing with death and loss.

In Russia, floral tributes on Victory Day have a twofold function: they express a tribute to the dead and they also serve as expressions of

gratitude and appreciation for the veterans of the Second World War. The Soviet ritual of war commemoration included floral tributes to the veterans, but these tributes were usually set within the formal settings of official events. On 9 May 2010, in St Petersburg, the public was actively involved in the ritual by presenting flowers to passing veterans. In Moscow, as a journalist from *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* notes, some 'veterans were often surprised by this extensive attention and flower tributes from unknown people presented to them on the streets of Moscow' (Smirnov, 2010b; see also Figure 7.2).

It is interesting to speculate about the social functions of floral tributes to the veterans. The act of presenting flowers establishes short-term personal relationships between a veteran as an 'embodiment of the heroic past' and the giver of the flowers. This practice constructs a sense of historical continuity and belonging to the shared past. Moreover,

Figure 7.2   Piskarevskoe Memorial Cemetery, St Petersburg (photo by the author, 9 May 2010)

it might be suggested that the decreasing number of veterans and the increasing popularisation of the Second World War, as a part of national history, encourages interactive forms of tributes. The act of offering floral tributes constructs missing links between the generations, uniting the Russian society around the memory of the Second World War. The idea of continuity and unity underlines the popular practice of encouraging children to present flowers to the veterans.

In 2010, in St Petersburg, the act of presenting flowers to the veterans of the Second World War was often accompanied by a joint photograph with veterans. These photographs not only personalised the experience of war commemoration, they also helped to construct evidence of a shared history and signpost national belonging. In a sense, these photos function as an instrument of symbolic legitimation (Bourdieu, 1996) because they produced recognisable and legitimate memories of Victory Day participation. These photographs allow for the recording, storing and legitimating of acts of gratitude to the veterans of the Second World War and to the national shared history.

In summary, floral tributes express empathy and respect, as well as national sentiments, and therefore demonstrate the intersection of individual *and* collective experiences. However, these fragile tributes tell us more about the strong desire of the public to belong rather than about the readiness of society to support veterans or the armed forces through financial contributions. In this regard, floral tributes reflect the strong emotional attachments of Russians to the memory of the Second World War, but this ritual can also be seen as a form of the passive participation in veterans' welfare. Meanwhile, for many veterans, these fragile tributes on Victory Day are important because they are the important tokens of public gratitude and appreciation of veterans' wartime sacrifice.

7.3.3   The St George Ribbon: committed to remember

In 2005, a new symbol of war commemoration came into existence on the sixtieth anniversary of the victory in the Second World War in Russia. The St George Ribbon (*Georgievskaia Lenta*) can be seen as a clear-cut case of an 'invented' tradition. Officially, this tradition was introduced by students of the Moscow State University in collaboration with the News Agency *RIA Novosti.* From its inception, this initiative received the support and encouragement of the Moscow government and other government agencies (St George Ribbon, 2014). The government's backing legitimised this initiative, while reflecting its compliance with the interests of the political elite in the mid-2000s. The Ribbon fitted well

within the framework of the nation-building process by giving a material expression to a war-centred concept of Russian national identity.

In 2005, sceptics predicted that this initiative would fail, but these predictions turned out to be wrong. According to public opinion surveys, over 70 per cent of the population supported this initiative in 2007 and 2012 (FOM, 2007, 2012). In modern Russia, it is difficult to imagine Victory Day without the Ribbon; the Ribbons can be seen on the streets of towns and villages, TV shows or official government meetings. Without doubt, 'the ribbon became the most successful post-Soviet symbol' (Oushakine, 2013, p. 287). The success of the Ribbon demonstrates that the public in Russia was 'ready to tune in' to the new 'invented' tradition (Hobsbawm, 1983b, p. 263). If, in 2008, the Ribbons were distributed in 30 countries, then in 2010, 50 million Ribbons were distributed throughout Russia and 60 other countries (Oushakine, 2013, p. 287). The international projection of the St George Ribbon is an interesting fact in itself as the Ribbon not only unites the population in Russia, but is also capable of engaging Russian-speaking disaporas in the performance of the ritual.

In appearance, the St George Ribbon is a narrow black ribbon with orange stripes. In the eighteenth century, it was a part of the Order of St George introduced by Catherine the Great. In the twentieth century, the Ribbon was incorporated into the Order of Glory by Stalin during the Second World War. This historical legacy of the Ribbon makes it a symbol which perfectly complements other symbols of the post-Soviet national identity. By alluding to past military successes in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Ribbon constructs an 'imagined' sense of historical continuity, positioning the post-Soviet society as the legitimate successor of the Russian and Soviet Empires. However, this idea of succession has an interesting quality because in the past the Ribbon was incorporated in distinguished military medals and therefore was a symbol which could only be deserved and awarded to a small minority of war heroes for their exceptional acts of courage and sacrifice, while today it is a token for everyone.

In many senses, the Ribbon is a truly postmodern symbol unburdened by social commitments. The main acts associated with the wearing of the Ribbon are remembrance of war and taking pride in the act of remembrance. The official motto of the St George campaign expresses this idea: 'I remember, I am proud of it.' This narrow meaning of the Ribbon distinguishes it from other symbols of war commemoration in Western societies. Because the organisers mentioned that the idea of the Ribbon was inspired by such traditions as the Poppy Appeal in the

UK and similar tokens of the First World War remembrance elsewhere (RIA Novosti, 2005), it was possible to expect some parallels between the Russian and Western traditions. The principal difference lies in the fact that in Russia, the Ribbons are distributed free of charge and therefore do not contribute to veterans' welfare. The official website of the campaign encourages sponsors to donate funds in favour of hospitals for veterans of the Second World War, but this is a voluntary act of goodwill. For the majority of the public, the Ribbons are a free token of remembrance and therefore wearing them assumes a passive form of public participation.

According to Marita Sturken, an American cultural anthropologist, coloured ribbons became popular in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s (Sturken, 2007). Originally, they expressed a political stance, and a willingness to contribute time and money to a charitable cause. Over time, wearing a coloured ribbon – whether the red ribbon of the AIDS epidemic, the yellow ribbon in support of Vietnam War veterans or veterans of the Persian Gulf War, or pink ribbons for awareness of breast cancer – 'has come to symbolise mainstream participation in a social cause', demonstrating a 'reduction of political action to a simple, unengaged act' (Sturken, 1997, p. 175; see also Lilley *et al.*, 2010). If, in Western societies, this passive act implies a direct contribution to a cause, be it AIDs charities, breast cancer research or the welfare of veterans and service personnel, in Russia, the St George Ribbon does not offer even this form of public passive participation and therefore demonstrates an inversion of the cultural symbol of war commemoration from Western culture. The only similarity between the St George Ribbon and the coloured ribbons in the USA or, for example, the Poppy Appeal in Britain is the nationalisation of these symbols. The Ribbon, like the red poppy, articulates the belonging to a shared history and national 'tradition' of war commemoration.

This design of the St George Ribbon tradition raises a simple question. Why do the organisers not sell the ribbons? Indeed, it might raise additional funds for veterans of the Second World War and other conflicts. It might also serve as a symbol of encouraging support for the armed forces. However, the commodification of the St George Ribbon contradicts the organisation of military welfare in Russia. The military welfare system in Russia is centralised and regulated by the federal government. In this context, the support of veterans of the Second World War is a responsibility of the state, not the public. Although according to a public opinion survey in 2012, the most popular reason for wearing the St George Ribbon were such options as 'war remembrance, respect to

the fallen, and gratitude to the veterans of the Second World War' (FOM, 2012), one might provocatively argue that veterans themselves are not the main target audience of this campaign. In Russia, the position of veterans is replaced by the 'invented symbol' itself. The practical value of the Ribbons is purely symbolic and this symbolism demands the act of remembrance mixed with a demonstration of pride in the Russian war history.

The St George Ribbon is even less capable of communicating the idea of supporting the armed forces (Stahl, 2009; see also Chapter 4), because the role of the military as an institution is largely unarticulated in the ritual of the Victory Day celebrations. Paradoxically, both the St George Ribbon and the military function as cultural constructs to sustain the ideas of national unity and shared heroic history. In this regard, the selling of ribbons would challenge the state-centric nature of the military and veterans' welfare in Russia and would contest the current social contract between the military, the state and society. Whereas Russian society might need this change, it seems that the organisers of the St George tradition did not intend to facilitate it.

The discussion about the St George Ribbon tradition as an act of passive participation brought to my mind another phenomenon of contemporary Russia. Visitors to any Russian city or town from the end of April to the middle of May might encounter street-beggars who have stories about their wartime heroism or sufferings, or who might appeal to the passer-by's compassion as disabled veterans of modern conflicts. In anticipation of Victory Day, these beggars wear the St George Ribbon as well. The possible truth behind their stories does not make any difference to the interpretation of this popular phenomenon. Beggars use the military uniform, medals, 'made-up' stories about their wartime experience and St George Ribbons in order to receive the support and compassion of the public. The popularity of this tactic of begging illustrates that the public in modern Russia is responsive to war-related imagery and causes. Moreover, the public is ready to be less passive in support of veterans of any conflicts, including the Second World War and post-1945 conflicts. This 'charitable' interaction contrasts with the state-centred and hierarchical welfare for veterans of wars and conflicts.

The popularity of the St George Ribbon does not assume strict rules for wearing it. According to the official website of the campaign, the Ribbons should be attached to a car, clothes or a handbag, or tied to a wrist (St George, 2014). In practice, the ways of attaching the Ribbons are diverse. They can be a fashion accessory, a hair decoration, a belt or serve any other purpose (BaltInfo, 2009). This treatment of a national

memory symbol illustrates its compliance with the modern individual-ised and consumer culture of contemporary Russia. As Norris notes, the wearing of the Ribbon created 'a new tradition' for the marking of the 'Victory Day in the New Russia' by 'glamorising' the commemoration of the Second World War (2011, p. 226). This 'glamorisation' of the ritual and apparent flexibility of wearing the Ribbon does not destroy its potential to be a source of a 'banal nationalism' during and after Victory Day (Billig, 1995).

Moreover, one might argue that the nationalising impact of the Ribbon is its most prominent function as it appears that this symbol cannot sustain any form of political commitment towards veterans or the armed forces. In the absence of these commitments, the Ribbon turns into a distorted historical projection and a symbol of the Russian political and cultural influence. The impact of the Ribbon as an instru-ment of historical indoctrination can also be limited. To an extent, as Norris suggests, the Ribbon is capable of encouraging 'postwar

Figure 7.3   The St George Ribbon as a hair accessory, St Petersburg (photo by the author, 9 May 2010)

generations to travel back to the past and learn historical lessons' (2011, p. 226), but it is important to realise that time-travelling by means of the St George Ribbon will lead us to the 'imagined' past of heroic sacrifices and also an 'imagined' unity of the country from the Second World War onwards. This value of this 'imagined' unity and continuity of national story is a matter of debate. According to Oushakine, 'the St George ribbon was used as a connecting link that strung together other people's stories' (2013, p. 288). However, from Oushakine's perspective, a semantic ambiguity of the Ribbon constructs its conceptual emptiness, leading to 'its inability to produce or sustain a narrative of its own' (2013, p. 288). Nevertheless, one might argue that the St George Ribbon not only connects Russians, but also constructs a strong political narrative. For example, Novikova, while observing the usage of St George Ribbons in Estonia, comes to conclusion that 'the ribbon, which asks for an individual performance or choice, has turned into a remarkably effective commemorative symbol of Russian martial/heroic masculinity, unifying Russian imperial and Soviet military histories' (2011, p. 595). Fundamentally, the 'fuzzy' concept of the St George Ribbon tradition has successfully prioritised remembrance and national pride in the Second World War over other forms of political participation and engagement with the military or veterans or the legacy of modern conflicts. In this regard, the Ribbon has sustained and strengthened the ideas of patriotic citizenship and loyalty to Russia as a cultural and political entity. During the political crisis in Ukraine in the spring of 2014, the usage of the St George Ribbons was dissociated from the ritual of war commemoration. The Ribbons were worn in Crimea by supporters of unification with Russia, by rebels in the Eastern part of Ukraine, and also in Russia in solidarity with the rebels. These examples demonstrate the ability of the St George Ribbon to evolve into a powerful symbol of political partisanship and allegiance to Russia.

The nationalising impact of the Ribbon is enhanced by other tokens of national belonging. In contemporary Russia, Victory Day became a day of the mass distribution of national symbols, waving flags and signs which might be associated with the Second World War or the Soviet military. This commodification of national and military symbols emerged in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. To date, the celebration of Victory Day is well equipped with the facilities necessary to satisfy the growing thirst for consumption amongst the Russian public. Local authorities across the country are responsible for the organisation of street festivities, including mobile cafes and food stalls. In St Petersburg in 2010, these street festivities were concentrated along Nevski Prospect

and were held in every district of the city. These performances include Second World War songs and dances in historical military uniform. In this form, Victory Day celebrations show the desire of post-Soviet society 'to escape to the Soviet past in search of entertainment' (Novikova, 2010, p. 294). This style of war commemoration does not dwell on the sufferings of millions of people during the war. The presenters mention the huge human losses of the Soviet Union in the Second World War before a staged Minute of Silence is held. However, as this ritual is set in the context of entertainment, its appeal is weak. Some people choose to keep the silence in memory of the deceased, while others continue socialising with friends. This illustrates the complexity of Victory Day celebration in Russia, which, while introducing a strong national identification, is also the great tension-management occasion.

7.4 Concluding thoughts

For a long time, the remembrance of the Second World War was also a part of traumatic personal experiences and family histories. The intense impact of this war on society gave rise to various forms of commemoration. Since the 2000s, the government has again turned towards the legacy of the Second World War as a reservoir of unifying values and patriotic citizenship. In contemporary Russia, broader societal changes, combined with a declining number of veterans, have had an impact on the popular practices of celebration. Victory Day has become a day for dances, songs, brightness and kitsch in military parades, flowers, photos with veterans, and the waving of flags and wearing of St George Ribbons in an atmosphere of overall enjoyment. Participation in the festivities assumes an appreciative attitude towards the veterans of the Second World War. These emotions are touching, but short-lived. The public does not directly contribute to veterans' welfare, nor is it asked to support the armed forces.

The position of the military in the context of Victory Day is a peculiar one. As the population places the military amongst the most trusted of social institutions, it enjoys parades and other militarised entertainments on Victory Day. This interest does not convert into a willingness to join the armed forces through conscription or voluntarily. The existing gap between the cultural and institutional images of the military can explain this paradox. The public perceptions of the military as a cultural concept and as an institution do not overlap with each other. Consequently, the festive commemoration of the Second World War can enhance bonds of national belonging, but it cannot be

easily converted into an instrument for military recruitment. Equally, the Victory Day celebrations cannot lead to a serious debate about late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts. In its present state, Victory Day also lacks the potential to bring about discussion of the legacy of the Second World War. Dances and songs performed on Victory Day illustrate a powerful national myth and a specific void 'where neither trauma nor responsibility matters anymore' (Lipovetsky, 2004, p. 359).

We can only speculate whether the organisers of the St George Ribbon campaign in 2005 intended to offer a symbol for expressing emotional attachment and respect for the Second World War veterans, as well as an instrument for unity of the population around the legacy of the Second World War, or whether they anticipated the evolution of the Ribbon into a symbolic projection of Russian foreign policy and solidarity with rebels in the eastern part of Ukraine in 2014. Regardless of the initial reason for the St George Ribbon campaign, the Ribbon has evolved into a powerful multivocal symbol. Paradoxically, the symbolism of the Ribbon sustains a war-related imagery and the ideas of militarised masculinity, but does not offer much for the armed forces in Russia as an institution. The existing social contract between the military, the state and society reinstalls the responsibility of the government over the welfare of the military, veterans and, by extension, civil society. First and foremost, this contract demands loyalty to the country and, implicitly, the political regime rather than engaging the citizenry in any form of political participation.

In conclusion, I would like to describe a street performance on Victory Day in which I had the pleasure of participating. On 10 May 2010, the local authorities in the northern district of St Petersburg organised local festivities. From my perspective, this event summarised the modern components of the Victory Day celebration in Russian society. First, a local politician gave a speech and stressed the contribution of the local authorities in the war remembrance. A veteran of the Second World War gave a short talk afterwards and, according to him, today veterans feel more appreciated in comparison with 'the mess of the Yeltsin period'. After several more short speeches, the public was invited to enjoy war songs and dances accompanied by an accordion. The finale of the festivities was a 'wartime' lunch, free of charge. This lunch included a plate of porridge, a piece of bread, a cup of tea for the women and children, and half a glass of vodka for the men. The food was served by conscript soldiers whose miserable appearance represented the peculiar position of the Russian military at this commemorative festival. Considering this example, I strongly doubt that Victory Day can inspire an eagerness in

many to join the military. Nevertheless, it is effective in keeping the public politically passive by reinforcing an illusory sense of national unity and shared heroic history. These nationalistic, nostalgic and war-centred sentiments correspond well with the interests of the authorities who mobilised the rituals of the Second World War commemoration for the nation-building process.

8
From Remembrance to Militarisation

8.1   The military face of modern war commemoration

According to the American sociologist Barry Schwarz, commemoration is 'a register of sacred history' and an embodiment of 'our deepest and most fundamental values' (1982, p. 377). The paradox of contemporary commemoration lies in the obsessive desire of both societies, Britain and Russia, to 'forget' and ignore the ambivalent causes of modern conflicts. Both societies search for a solution for the two interconnected dilemmas 'of how to honour the participant without reference to the cause' and 'of how to ignore the cause without denying the participant' (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwarz, 1991, p. 404). Surprisingly, both societies shy away from conceptualising modern warfare and opt for separating war's confusing causes from its participants. This symbolic separation allows for the powerful illusion of remembrance without politics.

In Britain, society is engaged in the sentimental and compassionate commemoration of British military fatalities of modern conflicts. The fallen are commemorated as the successors of the 'glorious dead' and as service personnel who died while on military duty. The former strategy integrates the fallen within the national tradition of First World War commemoration, whereas the latter strategy introduces the military service as a new reference point for contemporary commemoration. The shift towards a military service-based commemoration enables the disengagement of the commemorative process from the context of confusing warfare in favour of the seemingly apolitical values of military culture and military service. Meanwhile, this shift reflects the willingness of society to commemorate the fallen as individuals and military professionals, it also reinstates the military within the national

imagining. Contemporary commemoration in Britain brings the ideas of the nation and a wartime-like national unity to the fore in terms of public attention. In essence, in British society, like other Western societies, 'the popular support on which modern conflicts have to build if they are to have any chance of success is still largely derived from the same ideological, nationalist sources as before' (Malesevic, 2010, p. 330). This powerful mixture of nationalistic and militaristic sentiments undermines the popular argument about the dissociation of military professionalism from the idea of the nation or the country. The contemporary commemoration of fallen soldiers in Britain shows that the military, consisting of all-volunteer forces, in a country with a tradition of limited conscription, can nevertheless function as a projection of national identity.

In Russia, the commemoration of fallen soldiers turns into a search for the final solution to multitudinous societal, political and ethical problems. This search is driven not only by the context of ambivalent warfare, but also by the nation-building process exercised by the government. The fallen of modern conflicts are positioned as bricks in the ambitious reconstruction of the Russian national identity, and the restoration of the pride and power of the Russian state. The government, albeit reluctantly, encourages the commemoration of the fallen of modern conflicts as successors to the fallen of the Second World War, who are the Russian version of Britain's 'glorious dead'. This state-led successive commemoration coexists awkwardly with the reinvention of the 'Myth of the Great Patriotic War'. As Laruelle notes, 'the Kremlin promotes an explosive mixture of Soviet nostalgia, focused on past greatness and the victory of 1945, and the call for Russia to assume a leading role in the twenty-first century … This conjunction … gives the impression of a political power continuously manipulating contradictions and toying with multiple identity strategies' (2009, p. 202). One of the consequences of this state-led identity politics is the establishment of an exclusive and hierarchical system of war commemoration, which prioritises the experience of the Second World War over the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts. The remembrance of the 'sacred war' is more suitable for power projection, and yet this myth cannot sustain itself without new generations of the 'glorious dead'. Only through the incorporation of the fallen of modern conflicts within the national master narrative can the imagined continuity of the present with the past be restored and preserved. The government puts its faith in a tried and tested method of inspiring patriotism through symbols of militarised masculinity, wartime heroism and loyalty to the nation. Meanwhile,

survivors and bereaved communities struggle to reconcile themselves with decades of ambiguous relationships with both the government and the military. However, these groups equally struggle to find an alternative way of remembering fallen soldiers without supporting the military culture or rejecting the politics of war. For these communities, military culture offers the only hope that someday the death of their relatives and brothers-in-arms in modern conflicts will be acknowledged and publicly commemorated.

In both countries the master narratives of war (whether of the First World War or the Second World War) are used as templates for the re-framing of modern conflicts. In Britain, this re-framing accommodates the recent shift towards a decontextualised, inclusive and military-centred commemoration. This revision relies on consistent public support for the armed forces, a tradition of all-volunteer forces, and the relative stability in civil–military relations from the 1990s and throughout the 2000s. The paradox of the Russian situation is that the move towards military service-based commemoration comes from the civilian sphere rather than from the government. The Russian government encourages the exclusive commemoration of a few hero-victims, while prioritising the commemoration of the 'sacred' Second World War. Russian society, however, turns towards the military-centric and depoliticised commemoration because this frame allows for the omission of both the ambivalent context of modern conflicts and the equally ambivalent relationship with the authorities. Despite these contextual differences, in both societies the emphasis on military culture and militarised masculinity emerges as an answer to eliminating any remnants of political contestation from the process of commemoration. The final result produces a mixture of nationalistic and militaristic narratives that remember the lives of hero-victims.

8.2   The hero-victim dilemma

While the trend towards military-centred and decontextualised commemoration allows society to bypass the peculiarities of the scholarly debate about the nature of modern warfare, it does not completely render this debate unnecessary for the purposes of our discussion. The 'fuzzy' concept of post-heroic warfare problematises the dichotomous representation of fallen soldiers as both heroes and victims. The hero-victim dilemma exists in both societies, although it acquires different meanings of what it means to be a hero or victim in Britain and in Russia.

In Britain, contemporary commemoration exercises an inclusive approach towards the remembrance of the fallen. From media coverage to memorials and rituals, fallen soldiers are remembered as deserving individuals and professionals who have been killed or died while on duty. The commemorative scenario does not distinguish between heroic deaths, accidental deaths or deaths from friendly fire. The names, faces and lives of *all* fallen soldiers are mediated and publicly commemorated. This overwhelming public attention towards British military fatalities reflects the idea that the lives of *all* service personnel are worthy of remembrance. This trend, when coupled with a nationalistic sentiment, represents *all* service personnel as national heroes because of their service to the country. However, this concept of inclusive heroism coexists with another powerful concept. In Britain, like other Western societies, the acceptance of the vulnerability of soldiers' lives enables the transformation of fallen soldiers from national heroes into national hero-victims. Fundamentally, this construction underpins the controversy of the public perception of military heroism in the era of post-heroic ambivalent warfare. This warfare does not necessarily converge into casualty sensitivity or casualty aversion of Western societies, but it treats the lives of British service personnel as more precious than the lives of unknown others (Butler, 2003; Zehfuss, 2009).

According to McCartney, the simultaneous application of these two labels – a hero and a victim – to British military fatalities is damaging for both the image of the armed forces and for the 'health' of civil–military relations (2011, p. 45). From McCartney's perspective, this dichotomous vision should be re-balanced and altered in favour of a less ambiguous representation of the fallen and of veterans of modern wars. However, this re-balancing might require altering the whole commemorative process, which currently revolves around the hero-victim dilemma. On the one hand, it expresses public anxieties about the legitimacy of contemporary conflicts and other aspects of abstract warfare. On the other hand, the hero-victim dilemma is integrated within the national ritual of remembrance by functioning as a key instrument for raising donations and encouraging support for the armed forces deployed in overseas missions. Moreover, the hero-victim representation of fallen soldiers empowers survivors and bereaved families by allowing them to challenge dominant discourses and practices of commemoration. The repatriation of the bodies of fallen soldiers, court hearings of friendly fire episodes and parliamentary discussions about the overseas deployment of British forces are all driven by the unresolved paradox of the hero-victim dilemma.

In Russia, citizen-based commemorative activism engages with the hero-victim concept and uses a different starting point for its inspiration. Unlike in Britain, at the national level, only a few of the fallen are commemorated in the media and in national memorials as heroes; the lives of the majority of conscripts, professionals and police officers who were killed during the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts are absent from the public discourses of commemoration. This gap in the memory politics is compensated for by a state-led reiteration of the heroic sacrifices made during the Second World War. This obsession with national war triumphalism (Carleton, 2013; see also Wertsch, 2008) constructs an exclusive and hierarchical concept of commemoration. However, like Britain, the ambivalent context of modern conflicts brings the concept of victimhood into the discourse of war commemoration. Whereas only a few soldiers are commemorated as national heroes in post-Soviet Russia, the fallen of the late Soviet and post-Soviet conflicts are remembered as victims without any exceptions. To an extent, the case of Russia demonstrates a reversed dynamic where the fallen are first and foremost victims, and then national heroes. In this instance, the exclusivity of the state-driven narrative of heroic commemoration contrasts with the inclusivity of community-led remembrance exercised by local communities of survivors and bereaved families. The important undercurrent in this community-led commemoration is its faith that the deaths of the presently unrecognised, yet deserving, military victim-heroes will eventually be commemorated. In contemporary Russia, the lack of recognition and tribute to fallen soldiers of modern conflicts expresses itself through emotional accusations aimed at the government and wider society for their reluctant remembrance. This point brings us to a discussion of the relationships between the military, the state and society.

8.3   The politics of responsibilities

For both countries, the American tradition of war remembrance emerges as a normative and inspiring model for organising a successful war commemoration. In Britain and in Russia, the political and military elites support the construction of British and Russian 'Arlingtons', and the creation of a British or Russian version of the 'Fourth of July'. Policy makers in both countries are particularly attentive to changes after 9/11. As many note, 9/11 assisted in the renationalisation of commemoration in the USA and its integration within the concept of American patriotism (Simpson, 2006; see also Butler, 2003; Sturken, 2007). The subsequent experience of the 'Long Wars' in Iraq and Afghanistan

(Howard, 2006) resulted in a range of the government policy initiatives that targeted the 'misunderstanding' of the military by the American public. In the 2000s, a 'support the troops' rhetoric came to be seen as both an expression of patriotic citizenship and a moral duty towards the American armed forces (Stahl, 2009). One might argue that the attractive power of the American tradition lies in its ability to exploit the cult of the war dead for revitalising nationalistic sentiments and ensuring public support for current and future military operations (Wasinski, 2008; see also Bodnar, 1994; Grant, 2005).

While the political and military elites of both Britain and Russia have been learning from the American example, they have learnt different lessons. Confirming the thesis of the special relationship, in Britain, we observe a process of the direct 'borrowing' of American policies. Since 2007, British society has been subject to such American-inspired projects as Armed Forces Day, the Troops to Teachers programme and a Support the Troops campaign. These policy projects have been driven by similar concerns as in the USA, from the perceived danger of a civil–military gap to the potentially negative impact of the ambiguous operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite these fears, public support for the British armed forces has been preserved throughout the 2000s (McCartney, 2011; Forster, 2012; Edmunds, 2012). Although it is difficult to attribute the consistency of public support to the success of military-centric remembrance, it could be argued that the refocused commemoration has effectively reduced the moral responsibilities of British society to a range of passive actions: from the demonstration of gratitude to the armed forces for the burden of 'unlimited liability' (Mileham, 2010), donations to service-related charities during the remembrance period (Strachan, 2009) and a cheerleading role in support of the forces deployed in overseas missions. Nevertheless, the fact that the British Parliament has agreed to the Armed Forces Covenant implies that society could potentially renegotiate its moral responsibilities towards the national armed forces. This democratic underpinning of civil–military relations in Britain does not exist in Russia.

Considering the normative influence of the American experience, one might suggest that the political and military elites in Russia were more inspired by the strength of the American nationalism than by the American experience of managing civil–military relations. This focus sprang from the fragmented nature of the Russian national identity in the 1990s. In order to foster nationalism, the authorities have turned towards the cult of the war dead by mostly associating it with the Second World War. This policy marginalises the fallen of other conflicts

and it also marginalises the armed forces by using the military as an embodiment of national identity and a power projection for the political regime. Such new traditions as the St George Ribbon on Victory Day do not communicate a 'support the troops' rhetoric, but instead encourage pride in the remembrance of the Second World War. In this regard, the process of war commemoration prioritises patriotic citizenship and loyalty to the Russian nation over commitments towards the national armed forces. This social contract does not imply the concept of 'shared responsibility' in civil–military relations or the Military Covenant; therefore, it demonstrates the authoritarian nature of the regime in Russia (Herspring and McDermott, 2010; Herspring, 2011). Yet it would be wishful thinking to suggest that societal–military interaction in Russia happens without tensions or contestation. On the contrary, the process of commemoration reflects the mutual distrust and ambiguous relationship between all the parties involved. Currently, these disagreements do not diminish the passive consent of the wider society with the identity politics exercised by the government. Russian society continues to hope for the best, expecting that the government will eventually pay tribute to the fallen of modern conflicts.

8.4　Militarised societies

In many contemporary societies, war commemoration is one of the rare public occasions where the public may encounter the tragic outcomes of modern conflicts and in which they can reflect on their difficult moral dilemmas. However, the seemingly apolitical nature of commemorative rituals encourages us to dismiss the normalisation of war and the militarisation of civilian societies as irrelevant threats. This study argues that the commemoration of fallen soldiers in both societies has ensured the incorporation of the military culture into the national master narratives; it has normalised military fatalities and has also contributed to the militarisation of educational institutions, whilst legitimating the defence policy of both governments.

The commemorative process in Britain and Russia replicates some aspects of the American model of militarism. As Bacevich explains, 'at the end of the Cold War, Americans said yes to military power' and this revision has subsequently normalised war (2012, p. 118; see also Bacevich, 2005). In the 2000s, this normalisation of war propelled the image of the soldier 'to the status of national icon, the apotheosis of all that is great and good about contemporary America' (Bacevich, 2012, p. 125). According to Bacevich, the paradox of the current 'creeping

militarism' in the USA lies in the gap between the armed forces and the majority of the Americans, for whom the military force reaffirms a claim on 'American Exceptionalism' while acting as a cornerstone of the national identity (2012, p. 129).

Since the 1990s, the British media have immersed themselves in the coverage of 'New Militarism Warfare' (Keeble, 2010). Through the depiction of British military fatalities, the media coverage has promulgated a range of militaristic and nationalistic sentiments by essentially normalising and engendering war in the public sphere. Similarly, one might argue that military-centric memorials and remembrance rituals, driven by 'support the troops' rhetoric, normalise the perpetuity of modern warfare and prepare society for future human sacrifices. Throughout the 2000s, the military has also penetrated educational institutions, from secondary schools up to the university level (Stavrianakis, 2009; Stavrianakis and Selby, 2012). The ritual of war commemoration in this instance has ensured the engendering of the military culture in the heart of the British national identity. It sustains an illusion of sentimental commemoration while encouraging military build-up and demonstrating that: 'The idea that Britain is an essentially peaceful nation with a clear and healthy civil–military divide is troubled by its ongoing use of military force, by the British military's role in social practices that are clearly "excess of what is strictly necessary for effective defence" [Strachan, 1997, p. 265] and by the materialisation of the military as a key institution in British society and military service as a cornerstone right of citizenship' (Basham, 2013, p. 139).

The 'military penetration of social relations' in the UK has been repeatedly justified by the self-presentation of the military 'as a force for good in world, facing new threats associated with the end of the Cold War, the rise of the War on Terror and the changing nature of warfare' (Stavrianakis, 2009, p. 505). From the second half of the 1990s, the British military budget has witnessed a steady increase. In 2009 and 2010, Britain became the third-largest military spenders in the world, after the USA and China (Perlo-Freeman *et al.*, 2013). While military spending dropped between 2011 and 2013, the UK has preserved its place among the six leading world military spenders (Perlo-Freeman and Solmirano, 2014). Despite this fact, throughout the 2000s, mainstream 'press coverage has given more prominence to calls to increase the military budget rather than to maintain or decrease it' (Lewis and Hunt, 2011, p. 163). The media has prioritised increases in military spending by referring to two popular reasons: this type of spending is 'good for the economy' and military spending is good for the 'national

security of Britain which exists in a dangerous world'. Less often, the media have justified increases in military spending by such arguments as the need to increase military spending in order to preserve Britain's position as 'a global power' (this argument replicates the so-called 'Blair Doctrine') and the increase in military spending demonstrating support for the armed forces deployed in overseas operations (Lewis and Hunt, 2011, pp. 163–5). This analysis corresponds with the main finding of our research by allowing speculation on the intersection between the media coverage of national military spending and the politics of war commemoration. As explained throughout this book, the 'support the troops' rhetoric is central to the commemoration of British fatalities, being also linked with both the national identity and the support for modern military operations. Correspondingly, we might argue that the rituals of war commemoration enable a securitisation of the public sphere because they legitimate and normalise the ideas of permanently endangered national security, the combat-ready armed forces and the continuous military conflicts.

Like the British experience, the cult of the war dead has been renovated and integrated within the Russian national identity. The centrality of the Myth of the Great Patriotic War has prioritised the idea of Russian exceptionalism. Consequently, the commemorative symbols and traditions have become vehicles for Russian foreign policy in the former Soviet states. In Russia, the war-centred identity normalises wars and transfers military culture into norms of militarised masculinity and patriotic citizenship. This outcome is achieved through a reinstated system of patriotic education and a compulsory year-long conscription into the armed forces. Having said this, one might argue that the cultural militarisation of Russian society is currently limited due to the ambivalent attitude in society towards the military as an institution. As Eichler (2012) points out, there is a tendency to overstate the power of militarism in Russian society by dismissing the legacy of the ambiguous relationship between the military, the state and civil society. From the 1990s onwards, the often-alleged high level of public trust in the military has coexisted simultaneously with draft dodging, the low prestige of military service as a profession, criticism of violence within the military and a predominantly critical attitude towards modern military conflicts (Smirnov, 2009; Renz, 2012). This ambivalence in civil–military relations does not undermine the fact that, from 2011 onwards, the country has had the third-largest military budget in the world (Perlo-Freeman *et al.*, 2013; Perlo-Freeman and Solmirano, 2014). In comparison with Britain, the Russian media do not just 'misrepresent' increases

in national military spending; rather, these issues are rarely brought up in the public domain at all (Webber, 2006; Herspring, 2009). Moreover, Russia has had the experience of being involved in military conflicts in Chechnya and in the former Soviet states. Undoubtedly, the events in Crimea in 2014 have illustrated the potential of converting passive support for the military culture into the reality of an aggressive military operation.

This discussion of militarisation raises the question about 'windows of opportunities' (Tarrow, 1998) to contest war- and military-centric narratives in both societies. Lewis and Hunt (2011) conclude their analysis of the media's misrepresentation of the British military budget with pessimistic comments on the strength of the pro-government and pro-military lobby in the UK. They believe that the only hope lies in a proactive PR campaign by non-governmental groups with anti-military and anti-war agendas across the mainstream and social media. I also believe that non-governmental groups with an anti-militaristic vision of remembrance could benefit from a more balanced coverage of their activities, but I also see hope for change in broader social activism. As a democracy, British society allows for the performing of alternative visions of citizenship or practices of commemoration. Throughout the 2000s, TV presenters and other members of the public have openly challenged the dominant war- or military-centric narratives. The existence of such commemorative symbols as the white poppy in the British culture offers hope for anti-war and anti-military forms of remembrance. Finally, modern conflicts led to large-scale anti-war protests in the early 2000s, and this experience suggests that the population can potentially contest the politics of war.

Regrettably, the 'window of opportunity' in Russia seems to be smaller. First and foremost, by the end of the 2000s, the government's control of the mainstream media significantly limited the public sphere for a critical performance of citizenship. Currently, the concept of patriotic citizenship is contested by digital network communities and through networks of civil society groups. More importantly, in Russia, it is difficult to find any non-governmental organisations with clear anti-military or anti-war agendas. Many scholars consider the soldiers' mothers' organisations as a form of Russian 'home-grown' anti-war or anti-military activism (Caiazza, 2002; Sperling, 2003; Lonkila, 2008). In the 1990s, these organisations campaigned against the war in Chechnya and the deployment of conscripts in this region; in the 2000s, soldiers' mothers protested against the violations of human rights in the military. However, these protests rarely questioned the military

culture, articulated a clear anti-war statement or received support from the wider public for that matter. As research on local soldiers' mothers activism in provincial Russia demonstrates, mothers often resort to a compromise with the military and the government, which Oushakine (2009) describes as the 'patriotism of despair'. This 'patriotism' uses ideas of militarised masculinity and military duty and therefore assists in the militarisation of Russian society rather than challenges the politics of war. If Russian society appears to be lacking a potential for staging an open democratic protest, it has practised a passive sabotage of government military policies through draft dodging and other forms of 'depoliticised, private and passive opposition' (Eichler, 2012). It remains to be seen if this passive protest will evolve into other forms of public activism against the politics of war and militarisation.

Finally, the comparison of British and Russian societies problematises the limitations of ideological labelling (democratic versus authoritarian). Paraphrasing Stavrianakis and Selby, many argue that '"their" [Russia's] war-making and war-preparation is aggressive, destructive, glorifies war and is "militarist", "ours" [Britain's] is defensive, humanitarian, does not glorify war and is not "militarist"' (Stavrianakis and Selby, 2012, p. 20). This book was driven by the idea that, in both countries, the politics of war commemoration is capable of subverting political debate and limiting the scope of public deliberation over modern wars and the role of the national armed forces. In both countries, the politics of war commemoration is also capable of militarising societies, and legitimating and normalising current and future conflicts.

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