

**Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War** by Jason Lyall. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2020. 528 pp. Paper, \$35.00.

Scholars have long recognized that the social composition of militaries can have important consequences for military effectiveness, among other outcomes of interest to political scientists. While this research agenda received renewed interest following the Arab Spring and has made great progress, the challenge of collecting data for a large universe of cases on a topic about which many governments are intentionally secretive has meant that statistical analysis has remained frustratingly out of reach.

By offering a complete initial step in such a cross-national data collection project, and the rigorous multi-method testing to go with it, Jason Lyall's first book makes a major contribution to any literature that seeks to understand military design or behavior. In *Divided Armies*, Lyall explains why modern armies vary in their battlefield performance. His argument is that military inequality—or the extent to which a military includes ethnic groups that are disadvantaged or discriminated against in broader society—causes substantial problems on the battlefield. This is a notable adjustment to more common arguments that merely emphasize diversity or representation in the military. Lyall argues that in militaries characterized by greater inequality, soldiers who are second-class citizens are more likely to identify with their ethnic group, rather than their unit, organization, or country. This, in turn, reduces motivation, degrades trust between ethnic groups, and increases cohesion within groups in ways that shape soldier choices and constrain how commanders use them on the battlefield.

Among the many things I appreciated about this book were Lyall's clear descriptions of his research design, empirical choices, and causal logic. This makes the book an excellent source for instructors looking to illustrate examples of hypotheses that are well linked to concepts and case selection. The empirical strategy in the case study chapters—which constitute the bulk of the book—was also persuasive. In a welcome deviation from the norm, he selects many less studied conflicts to avoid making inferences from a handful of big but unrepresentative cases. Each qualitative chapter process-traces his argument under different conditions and is built on a well-paired case comparison that matches at least two armies or units along 28 covariates. This supports a counterfactual approach that argues that a given army would have performed better if not for its level of inequality. Extensive use of

internal reports and personal memoirs, including from the opposing combatants, make for convincing evidence.

Another major contribution is the introduction of the Project Mars data set, which uses an intuitive but novel quantitative metric of inequality in combatant militaries in all conventional interstate and intrastate wars from 1800 to 2011, for a total of 825 observations. It is well suited to his argument and, complemented by the case studies, provides the most thorough and generalizable support for an effect of military composition on battlefield performance to date.

Scholars of comparative politics and authoritarian civil-military relations will be familiar with Lyall's conclusion that states rarely design militaries to maximize effectiveness against external threats—though he adds nuance to these arguments. In addition, parts of the argument are reminiscent of Stephen Biddle's modern system, in that military inequality may be a causally prior variable that explains why some armies cannot employ the complex techniques necessary to survive on modern battlefields. This does not negate the contribution, but skeptics might prefer a more thorough rebuttal of similar modern system arguments. Lyall avoids other critiques associated with the modern system by carefully framing his argument as monadic. The dependent variable is the combatant's battlefield performance (measured as simplified tactics, unfavorable loss-exchange ratio, mass desertion and defection, and fratricide), rather than military effectiveness or conflict outcome. Nonetheless, some readers may desire more discussion of how the *opponent's* military inequality and pathologies affected battlefield outcomes.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed *Divided Armies*, and I strongly recommend it. Lyall has accessibly laid how inequality wreaks havoc on militaries. His valuable empirical work and data collection—and clear methodology—will provide numerous avenues for future research to anyone with an interest in civil-military relations and conflict.

Author's note: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

MAX MARGULIES  
*United States Military Academy*