# What Ails the All-Volunteer Force: An Institutional Perspective

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The state of the armed forces became a distinct point of contention in the 2000 presidential campaign. The campaign saw the two major party candidates give differing interpretations as to the capabilities, morale, and readiness of the military. At the same time, students of armed forces and society have been pointing to a growing civil-military gap.[1]

The focus in this article will be on the military as a social organization, not on technological developments or global strategy. Most members of the armed forces understand and experience the military as a social organization. This article seeks to be both conceptual and practical: conceptual in that it presents a model of organizational change within the military, and practical in the sense that it sets forth proposals on which to base manpower policies.

### *Background*

In broad terms, the armed forces went through serious personnel difficulties following the end of the draft in 1973. During the early 1980s, personnel matters took a marked turn for the better, a state of affairs that lasted until the mid-1990s. Recent years have seen a reappearance of both recruitment and retention problems.

The overarching hypothesis is that the American military has been moving away from an institutional format to one that increasingly resembles that of an occupation.[2] The contrast between institution and occupation is easy to overdraw, of course. To characterize the armed forces as either an institution or an occupation is to do an injustice to reality. Both elements have been and always will be present in the military system. But the social analyst must use pure types

to advance conceptual understanding. Our concern is to grasp the whole, to place the salient fact, to have a framework to appraise the relevant policy. Even though terms like institution or occupation have descriptive limitations, they do contain core connotations that serve to distinguish each from the other and offer insight into the working of the all-volunteer force.

An institution is legitimated in terms of values and norms, that is, a purpose transcending individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good. Members of an institution are often seen as following a calling, captured in words like duty, honor, and country. They are commonly viewed and regard themselves as being different or apart from the broader society. Role commitment in an institutional military tends to be diffuse; members are expected to perform tasks not limited their military specialties. Unlike most civilian compensation systems, in which marketability determines reward, remuneration in the institutional military is essentially based on rank and seniority.

An occupation is legitimated in terms of the marketplace. Supply and demand, rather than normative considerations, are paramount. Whether under the rubric of econometrics or of labor market analysis, such a redefinition of the military is based on a set of core assumptions: (1) cost-effectiveness analyses of civilian enterprises and military services are equally valid; (2) military compensation should be as much as possible in cash, rather than in kind, thereby allowing for a more efficient operation of the marketplace; and (3) military compensation should be linked directly to skill differences of individual service members. The occupational model implies the priority of self-interest rather than that of the employing organization.

In broad terms, reference groups in the military are organized vertically, whereas occupation reference groups tend to be horizontal. In the conventional military, being part of the same organization has traditionally been more important than the fact that military members do different jobs. People in an occupation tend to feel a sense of identity with others who do the same sort of work and receive similar pay whether in the same or different organizations.

The institution-to-occupation thesis was not well received by the "econometric" mindset that had become dominant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and its sponsored research on military manpower. This has been true under both Republican and Democratic administrations. A consequence of econo-

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metric analysis is to downplay the less-tangible noneconomic factors and value-derived aspects of military organizations. Econometric analysts prefer typically to deal with the material dimensions, because they are the ones that can be measured easily. The econometric model is a little too neat, however; it ignores the reality that the armed forces are not merely fluid collections of self-maximizing individuals, but sets of social relations that include nonmaterialistic behavior.

Since the initial introduction of the institution-to-occupation thesis in 1977, the trends described and anticipated have become even more pronounced. This is in part due to the continuing dominance of the econometric model in the Defense Department, but also due to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Without the threat of invasion, Western states no longer needed to buttress armed forces so distinctive from the social values of the larger society. This led to a major shift from mass-conscript armies to volunteer forces throughout Western Europe, thus recapitulating the American experience of the period following the end of the Vietnam War.

Indeed, the growing interpenetrability of civilian and military spheres, both structurally and culturally, makes even the over-abused term "postmodern" appropriate to the all-volunteer force. In addition to internal changes within the armed forces, the contemporary military is characterized by two major organizational changes. One is the shift in the military purpose from fighting wars to missions that would not be considered military in the traditional sense. The other is that the military is used more in multinational forces and authorized (or at least legitimated) by entities beyond the nation-state.

## *Trends in the Armed Forces*

What trends have developed with the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new century? We can identify several.

### *Perceived Threat*

We begin with the simple idea that the probability of war and the perception of threats shape the basic relations between armed forces and society. What are the threats against which the military is suppose to defend society? These change in time and character, as well as in specifics. During the Cold War, the threat was both a conventional war with the Soviet bloc as well as the possibility of nuclear war. The 1991 Gulf War, although not a Cold War product, nevertheless was a war involving states against state, albeit at unprecedented levels of high technology on the winning side. The threat to the West, however, was not one of invasion (although Kuwait was invaded), but to oil interests that were deemed vital to national security.

In the post-Cold War era, most states are not concerned with invasion or with nuclear war initiated by enemy states (though the fear of nuclear terrorism grows). The greatest tensions and violence are occurring within states, such as

the former Yugoslavia with its ethnic conflicts, or African states, such as Somalia, Zaire, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, with starvation and ethnic struggles.

The American military has rapidly created new training exercises and manuals to incorporate lessons learned from deployments since the end of the Cold War. New buzzwords have entered the Pentagon lexicon: "operations other than war," "other military operations," or "sustainment and stability operations." Likewise, the predictable acronyms have followed: OOTW, OMO, and SASO. Whatever these kinds of missions are called, they reflect a fundamental shift in the emphasis of the armed forces from defense of the homeland to multinational peace and humanitarian missions. Indeed, one of the growing internal debates within military circles is the degree to which "operations other than war" detract from the "warrior" capabilities of the armed forces.[3] More clearly, the increased tempo of deployments has come to be regarded as a major stress on the contemporary American military. Since the end of the Gulf War, there have been major military deployments to Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. This in addition to numerous humanitarian missions to alleviate natural catastrophes such as in Bangladesh in 1995, Central America in 1999, and Mozambique in 2000.

In addition to intra-state violence, other matters come to occupy the attention of armed forces in Western states, and many of these tend to be nonmilitary in any traditional sense. Edward Luttwak argues that geo-economics rather than geo-politics will dominate the use of military force.[4] Threats to national security increasingly have transnational dimensions, such as the drug trade, uncontrolled immigration, and environmental degradation.[5] A few examples suffice to make the point. In 1992 and 1993, the American Navy and Coast Guard picked up thousands of Haitians at sea seeking to enter the United States and placed them in refugee camps at the American naval base in Cuba. In fact, the American intervention in Haiti in 1994 was motivated in part by the desire to stop illegal Haitian immigration to the United States. In 2000, a $1.4 billion aid package with major military components was to given to Colombia in the fight against narcotics.

*Force Structure*

As the perceived threat changes, so also does the force structure to deal with it.[6] Well into the latter part of the last century, countries relied on mass armies, typically based on conscripted able-bodied men with a cadre of professional military officers, noncommissioned officers, and certain technical specialists. With the onset of the Cold War, the United States continued to rely on a large standing army of conscripts. The opposition to the war in Vietnam eventually led to the end of the draft, and in 1973 the all-volunteer force came into being.[7] From that time until the end of the Cold War, the military was increasingly professional, although still large.

The active-duty force of 2.6 million in the peacetime draft years of the Cold War was down to 1.9 million in the all-volunteer force of the latter years

of the Cold War. By 2000, the active-duty force was reduced to 1.4 million, where it appears to be leveling off.[8] Spending on defense in the United States declined from six percent of the gross national product in the mid-1980s to slightly less than three percent 20 years later. The end of the Cold War saw heightened budgetary debates on the relative sums to be spent on military versus non-military expenditures.

*Dominant Military Professional*

The military's genetic self-image is that of a specialist in violence, ready for combat. In anticipation of conventional war, the primary military need was for the soldier skilled in the arts of combat and leadership. For situations involving direct combat, such soldiers are still needed. Increasingly, however, technological sophistication replaces brute force as the key to victory. Probably the most well-known finding in military sociology tells how the dominant type of military professional shifts from the combat leader to the managerial technician of the Cold War era. This shift was most clearly argued for in the American case by Morris Janowitz.[9]

In the contemporary period, more than a residue of the warrior spirit will continue within the officer corps, but we can also expect to see the ascendancy of alternative professional types: notably, the soldier-statesman, the officer skilled in handling the media and adept in the intricacies of international diplomacy. The relevant empirical question is which kind of officer will most likely be promoted into the military elite. It is of some note that when General Wesley K. Clark was selected as supreme commander of NATO and all American forces in Europe in 1997, he was described as "scholarly" and possessing the "diplomatic skill" that made him right for the job.[10] In the same year, when General H. Hugh Shelton was selected to become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a key factor was "how he transformed from a warrior to a diplomat" during the 1994 American intervention in Haiti.[11]

*Compensation*

The end of the draft brought about a major transformation in the compensation system of the armed forces. The selective service system was premised on the notion of citizen obligation—a calling in the almost literal sense of being summoned by a local draft board—with concomitant low salaries for junior enlisted personnel. Furthermore, even volunteer recruits, many entering because of the draft, received the same low salaries as draftees. The per capita cost of a single active-duty military member in 1964, the last year of the peacetime draft, was $29,140 per annum (in 1999 dollars). This includes direct manpower costs, family housing, and personnel support. In 1999 the figure was $63,812.[12] The bottom line is that it costs over twice as much to maintain a person in uniform in the all-volunteer force than it did during the days of conscription.

In 2000, regular military compensation—basic pay plus allowances for subsistence and housing—came to $23,666 for a private. This does not include

post-service educational benefits, medical care, or enlistment bonuses. Regular military compensation for a master sergeant with 26 years of service was $56,868. In other words, a very senior noncommissioned officer makes only about double that of a junior enlisted person. In the draft era, the compensation ratio of a master sergeant to a private was seven to one. This compression of the pay scale is one of the most significant developments of the all-volunteer force, though not usually commented upon. Instead, inordinate attention is given to the small number of junior enlisted personnel who are eligible for food stamps because of their family status.

*Media Relations*

In times past, the civilian media were typically an integral part of the military system. Through World War II, the American media were basically incorporated into the armed forces. Not only were journalists subject to censorship, but they also had formal status in the armed forces, including the wearing of military uniforms. In essence, both the media and the military were on the same team.

In recent history, the media, while no longer incorporated into the armed forces, are nevertheless subject to a high degree of control, as occurred during the American operations in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War. The defense establishment effectively controlled the media through the use of press pools in which only a small number of select journalists was given access to the troops. The media saw itself as being manipulated by the military, even though there was no formal censorship.

The post-Cold War era, as represented by the operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, presents an entirely different situation.[13] The media are frequently "in country" before the arrival of the military and take care of their own logistical needs. More important, the media are essentially autonomous entities as technological advances allow for direct transmission of news to the outside world. Whereas the media are manipulated by the armed forces in conventional military operations, journalists are courted by the military in peacekeeping missions. The 78-day American-led campaign against Yugoslavia in 1999 was an example of both types of military-media relations. On the one side, the NATO bombardment campaign was a replay of the older pattern of official manipulation of news information. On the other, coverage of the Kosovo refugee crisis saw the media operating virtually independently of the military.

There is another dimension of media relations that must also be mentioned, portrayals of the military in the mass entertainment media. A cursory review of recent movies is revealing. *The Rock* (1996) had a maverick Marine general holding San Francisco hostage by threatening to use poison gas. *Broken Arrow* (1996) portrayed a passed-over Air Force major who plots to steal nuclear bombs and hold Denver in ransom. *The Siege* (1998) had a villainous Army general overseeing martial law in New York City. In *Snake Eyes* (1998) a Navy

commander plotted the successful assassination of the Secretary of Defense. *The General's Daughter* (1999) presented a picture of the Army and West Point where there is gross sexual misbehavior and rapes are covered up. It is more than coincidental that two 1998 box office hits with positive portrayals of the military, *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Thin Red Line*, were both set in World War II, in contrast to the negative movie images of the contemporary armed forces.

*Civilian Employees*

During the Cold War, civilians were a minor component of the operational side of the defense establishment. In the post-Cold War period, however, an increasing number of civilian employees work in the defense establishment in operational roles. In part this is because many menial jobs have been turned over to civilian workers on the grounds of cost effectiveness and releasing soldiers from non-training tasks. More important, the shift toward civilians is due to the military's greater reliance on technically complex weapon systems, with the corresponding need for technical experts, both contract and direct-hires, to work in the field and at sea. At least since the 1950s, the capabilities of American warships would have been severely handicapped without the civilian technicians—"tech reps"—who maintain their weapon systems.

In the buildup leading to the Gulf War, some 10,000 "Emergency Essential Civilians" working for the US military were sent to Saudi Arabia to help operate logistics systems. Interestingly enough, these civilian personnel had a lower rate of being returned back to the United States for physical and disciplinary reasons than regular military personnel.[14] It is more than a historical footnote that the first American casualty in Operation Provide Comfort in Somalia was an Army civilian employee who died when the vehicle in which he was traveling hit a mine.[15]

In recent deployments, civilians have become even more intimately involved in military functions. Without the contractors who were responsible for much of the logistics and housekeeping duties, it would be hard to conceive of the American missions to Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia taking place. Brown & Root, the leading civilian contract firm, has done over $2 billion worth of logistics business for the Army since 1992.[16] When American troops first entered Kosovo in August 1999, they were lustily greeted by Brown & Root employees who had preceded them into the strife-ridden region.

In 1999, the Office of Management and Budget was readying new guidelines for what military jobs could be given to civilian contractors. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had opposed the OMB language because they want all combat support jobs to be filled by uniformed personnel who would be subject to military rules and discipline.[17]

*Women's Role*

A particularly illuminating way to understand the trends in the contemporary armed services is to look at the role of women in the military.[18] In the mass

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army of the mid-20th century, women served in a separate corps. The Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the Navy's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) of World War II typified this form of utilization.

Gradually the role of women expanded following the end of conscription. Women were formally integrated into many support roles starting in the 1970s. Women were allowed to join the officer commissioning programs on civilian campuses in 1972. Four years later, a major threshold was crossed with the admission of women to the military academies in 1976. Through the Cold War period, however, American policy remained one of exclusion of military women from combat roles or even being assigned to areas of high risk.

In the post-Cold War military, pressures have grown to incorporate women into all assignments, including combat roles. Playing a major role in this impetus was the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service (DACOWITS). Although the United States was not in the forefront of the movement, by the 1990s steps in that direction were clearly evident. Starting in 1995, Navy women were allowed to serve aboard warships (excluding submarines) and as combat pilots aboard aircraft carriers. Similarly, women pilots (albeit a small number) were assigned to bombers and fighter planes in the Air Force. Basic training was gender integrated in all of the armed forces, except in the Marine Corps and in the ground combat arms of the Army. Though still excluded from ground combat assignments at the time of this writing, the role of women in the American military has increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War.

These changes came with both benefits and costs to the military's reputation. The sexual shenanigans of Navy fighter pilots in the 1991 convention of the Tailhook Association in Las Vegas, Nevada, became a national news story.[19] In 1996 incidents of sexual harassment at training camps rocked the Army. Yet even these scandals could serve as an impetus for opening up the remaining proscribed roles for women. Certainly the "Tailhook" scandal facilitated the opening up of virtually all Navy assignments to women.

It has become an article of faith for prominent feminists to hold that sexual harassment would come under control only when women are no longer regarded as second-class members of the military, that is, no longer excluded

from the combat arms. Yet survey data show that only nine percent of enlisted women thought sexual harassment would decrease if women entered the combat arms and 40 percent thought it would increase (the remainder were not sure).[20] The same survey found that three-quarters of enlisted women believed that false accusations of sexual harassment were as much, if not more, of a problem than actual sexual harassment. Yet, in mandatory classes given in the military on sexual harassment, false accusations are not covered. Survey data also report that female officers are more likely to think sexual harassment is a problem than female enlisted personnel. This most likely reflects differing thresholds by social class on what is considered harassment.

*Spouse and Military Community*

In the not too distant past—the 1950s—a junior enlisted man informing a superior of his wish to marry would be admonished, "If the Army wanted you have a wife, it would have issued you one." And, in fact, about nine out of ten draftees and first-term soldiers were single men. With the advent of the all-volunteer force, there is a striking increase in the proportion of married soldiers. Thus, for example, at the pay grade of E-4 (specialist or corporal in Army terms), only one in ten were married in the years of conscription compared to three in ten in the all-volunteer force. In a striking reversal of the draft pattern, soldiers in the all-volunteer force are more likely to be married than their civilian counterparts. In 1999, there were, proportionately, as many married E-4s as there were married first lieutenants. The presence of large numbers of married junior enlisted personnel has become an accepted reality, a trend with major budgetary implications with regard to housing and medical care. Yet in 1993, when the Commandant of the Marine Corps proposed that recruits be limited to single persons only, he was publicly rebuked.

For the career soldier, especially commissioned officers, military membership in a manner extended to his wife and family.[21] The military wife was expected to take part in numerous social functions and "volunteer" activities. Indeed, promotion to higher ranks might depend to some degree on how well one's wife performed in this role. In the past decade, a discernible trend was the increasing reluctance of wives of military personnel at both the officer and noncommissioned officer levels to take part in customary military social functions. This trend became more pronounced as military spouses became much more likely to have employment outside of the home. Fewer and fewer of them—and we are still speaking mainly of wives rather than of husbands—have either the time or the inclination to engage in the social life of military installations. Curiously enough, it appears that as demands on military spouses decrease, there is more resentment of those demands that remain.[22]

*Homosexuals in the Military*

The status of homosexuals in the military remains contentious, but the general movement is toward increased toleration and acceptance.[23] During the

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period of the mass army, military personnel who were discovered to be homosexuals were frequently incarcerated during times of war, or dishonorably discharged during times of peace. In the latter years of the Cold War, homosexuals were still not allowed, though the severity of punishment diminished. The trend, however, was toward less-stigmatizing discharges, with gays typically given medical discharges.

As the status of homosexuals becomes increasingly accepted in society at large, similar pressures arise to allow homosexuals to serve openly in the armed forces. The higher education establishment in the United States for some years has urged the Defense Department to remove the ban on homosexuals entering the military as a condition for maintaining ROTC detachments on campus. (Efforts to remove ROTC from several prestigious campuses stalled when Congress passed legislation prohibiting government contracts to universities that disestablished ROTC.)

The controversy surrounding President Bill Clinton's effort to lift the gay ban in 1993 dominated much of the news coverage of the new Administration. After much negotiation among service chiefs, the Congress, and the Administration, the new policy announced in 1994 forbade the military to inquire as to a service member's sexual orientation, but if the service member declared his or her homosexuality, than that person was to be discharged. In other words, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy meant in effect that a discreet homosexual could remain in the service.

In point of fact, the number of homosexuals discharged from the military went from around 800 a year before 1992 to about 1,400 annually in recent years. This reflects several variables. Some 85 percent of discharges for homosexuality are for "telling," the majority occurring in the first year of service. Announcing one's homosexuality is one of the quickest ways to leave the service with an honorable discharge. The discharge rate of white soldiers as homosexuals is some three times greater than that of blacks. Women, who account for approximately 15 percent of the armed forces, make up 30 percent of homosexual discharges. This most surely reflects the greater stigma homosexuality

has within the black community compared to the white community and among men as compared to women.

Only time will tell whether "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" will hold firm or is only a way-station to the full integration of open homosexuals into the American armed forces. Although the lifting of the ban seems unlikely at the time of this writing, the United States has clearly moved toward greater acceptance of homosexuality than would have been imagined a decade or so ago.

*Postmodernism Comes to the Military?*

The concept of "postmodernism," with its core meaning of the absence of absolute values, as increasingly applicable to the contemporary military has manifold illustrations. Consider the following.

- In 1997, the Secretary of the Army hired as a temporary consultant an advocate of replacing a "masculinist" with an "ungendered vision" of military culture.[24]
- In 1997, the nation was transfixed when Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, the first female B-52 pilot, was discharged from the Air Force on charges of an adulterous affair with a civilian married to an airwoman (along with charges of insubordination and making a false statement). The anti-adultery regulations of the military justice system came under heavy attack from the establishment press. Thus, *The New York Times* castigated the "antiquated adultery rules" of the armed forces.[25]
- Starting in 1997, in a symbol of growing religious diversity, soldiers of Native American Indian descent were allowed to use the hallucinogenic plant peyote in religious services.[26]
- Perhaps even more striking, in 1999, the US Army chaplaincy recognized the neo-pagan Wicca as a legitimate faith. More than 40 active-duty "witches," male and female, celebrated the Rite of Spring at Fort Hood, Texas.[27]
- The American Federation of Government Employees filed a complaint after a squadron commander ordered a male civilian Air Force employee to change his attire. The man had been wearing a dress, bra, and makeup.[28]

## *Recruitment and Retention*

Recruitment concerns have been at the forefront of the personnel problems confronting the all-volunteer force. Of a different order is the increasing number of junior officers who are leaving the armed forces. Each of these requires separate commentary.

*Officer Retention*

The number of junior officers who leave after the first term increased by 50 percent in the mid-1990s.[29] The conventional response has been that compensation in the armed forces is not competitive with the civilian market-

place. Yet, when junior officers are asked if they are satisfied with their compensation package of pay, the number saying yes was virtually identical in 1998 (56 percent) to those responding similarly in 1988 (57 percent).

Dr. Leonard Wong, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, persuasively argues that economic factors are not driving junior officers out of the service. Rather, it is dissatisfaction with the social organization of the military. He makes several pertinent recommendations, among which are the following.

- Resurrect officer clubs and mandatory social gatherings that foster organizational rituals strengthening the bonds between officers.
- Proceed cautiously with privatization and instead enhance military housing, post exchanges, and recreational facilities.
- Maximize opportunities to foster lasting friendship in officer basic and advance courses.
- Really mentor junior officers, which includes seniors spending serious time with juniors.
- Move away from a "zero-defects" mentality.

Wong concludes by saying that the military must move away from creeping occupationalism and reinstitutionalize itself, albeit in concordance with the most advanced technological competency in computers and software.[30]

*Recruitment*

According to youth surveys from 1980 to 1999, the number saying they definitely will not serve in the military has increased from 40 to 63 percent. Recruitment problems in the early 1990s, however, were alleviated by the lower recruiting objectives resulting from the drawdown in military force levels following the end of the Cold War—fewer recruits were needed to fill a smaller Army. With the end of the drawdown, recruitment shortfalls began appearing in all the services (with the exception of the Marine Corps) in the late 1990s. This was the case for both the active-duty force and the reserve components. In 2000, recruiting goals were met for the active forces, but with much greater expenditures for recruits—about $10,000 per recruit compared with half that figure in the late 1980s. Even with these additional outlays, recruiting goals for the reserve components have not been met for several years, including FY 2000.

How innovative efforts to enhance recruitment efforts will fare is yet to be seen. But some deserve serious consideration. All the services are moving into online recruitment through computers, complete with chat rooms, to enlist new troops. The Army introduced in 2000 a program to offer financial assistance to community college students in advance of an enlistment in the Army. None of this, however, should lose sight of one the verities of recruitment—the best recruiter is a credible veteran with a positive military experience.

Adding to recruitment woes has been the surge in attrition since the advent of the all-volunteer force. In the peacetime draft era, between the wars in Korea and Vietnam, approximately 10 percent of draftees failed to complete their

two-year obligation. For enlistees who volunteered for the typical three-year term, the attrition rate was about 20 percent. In the 1990s, the attrition rate was 37 percent, that is, better than one in three enlistees was not finishing his or her first term. Differences by race, gender, and education were significant. White women had an attrition rate of 55 percent, compared with 39 percent for black women. For males, the attrition rate was 26 percent for Hispanics, 33 percent for blacks, and 36 percent for whites. Those with a high school diploma had an attrition rate of 35 percent compared to 52 percent who entered without a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) diploma.

Even though recruiting goals for the active force were met in 2000, there have been some mixed signals regarding the quality of the recruits. The number of enlistees scoring in the top half of the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) has dropped by a third since the mid-1990s, although in FY 2000 Army recruiters achieved a 22-percent increase in "high quality recruits, defined as high-school graduates who scored high" on the AFQT.[31] However, in FY 2000 the Army also took in some 380 recruits with felony arrests, a number more than double that of 1998.

At the higher levels of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, recruiting problems are addressed in much the same way as that heard with regard to retaining junior officers. The conventional wisdom, that is, attributes current personnel woes to a strong economy. The conventional wisdom is wrong. The competition for recruiters is college attendance, not the economy.

Today, some two-thirds of high school graduates go directly on to higher education. But military recruiting centers on the high school graduate—and, recently, those without diplomas as well. Recruiter focus on this population is self-limiting. It would be much better to encompass the broad expanding pool of college students and graduates. This is not to exclude continuing appeals to the high school graduate, but it is to recognize that what can attract college youths differs from the prevailing enlistment philosophy.

The biggest disincentive for college youths is the long enlistment. With such inducements as high recruit pay and job training, the armed forces try to get recruits to sign on for three or more years. For college youths, this a nonstarter. Rather than emphasizing military career opportunities, recruiting appeals must reinvigorate the concept of the citizen-soldier.

Now is the time to introduce a 15-month or 18-month enlistment option. Such a term would involve five or six months of training to be followed by an overseas assignment. Obvious locales would be Korea, Germany, the Sinai, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Rather than seeing such duty as onerous, short-termers would be willing volunteers for a chance to do something different and positive in a foreign locale. It would be important to couple such a military enlistment with generous post-service educational benefits linked to a reserve obligation of, say, two years. A G.I. Bill that paid off student loans would be especially attractive.

A short enlistment would appeal to those who want to "stop-out" of college for a spell. It could become the military equivalent of the "junior-year abroad." Moreover, those with bachelor's degrees are often those who most want a break in the academic routine before going on to graduate or professional education.

Beyond resolving recruiting woes, short enlistments have other advantages. With higher educational levels, the number of those leaving the service before their enlistment is up would drop dramatically. And there is another factor. At a time when American youth marry later and later, the lower enlisted ranks are becoming increasingly married, with attendant family strains. With more college youths entering the military, the proportion of married soldiers and single parents in the junior ranks would drop.

The above proposal may sound idealistic, but it does have support from some empirical data. College graduates are an untapped pool for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. I have surveyed 430 undergraduates at Northwestern University in my introductory sociology class. The students were queried on various social values as well as military recruiting options. To my knowledge, this was the first time such a survey has ever been conducted on a college campus. The results have some surprises.

But first some background information. Northwestern students fall in the 93d percentile on SAT scores, and 90 percent were in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class. These students are, in the main, destined for high-paying corporate and professional positions. Slightly over half identified themselves as politically liberal, a third said they were middle of the road, and only 15 percent defined themselves as conservative. It goes without saying that these are the kinds of young people who are not joining the armed forces. In fact, the military is not even attempting to recruit them.

The survey presented four enlistment options: four, three, or two years, or 15 months. Each of these options was paired with an educational benefits package, respectively, $60,000, $40,000, $25,000, and $15,000. Such benefits could be used to underwrite graduate school or pay off undergraduate student loans. Those answering "likely" or "possibly" to these enlistment options were defined as having some propensity to join the military. The numbers were almost nil for the four- or three-year options, which are the terms of enlistment most favored by recruiters. About one in ten indicated some propensity for the two-year or 15-month options.

Both women and men generally had similar views. The large majority had negative impressions of military life, with lifestyle, danger, and length of commitment heading the list. Such positive values as travel, personal freedom, and meeting people of different backgrounds were seen as much more attainable in civilian life than in the military.

Toward the end of survey, the students were asked to pause and await my remarks. I then gave a five-minute talk on my own days as a draftee in

Germany during the Cold War years of the late 1950s, as well as my research experiences in peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. I sought to be as candid as I could by noting the potential dangers as well as the physical demands and regimentation of military service.

But I also mentioned the fun and laughter in the company of a cross section of Americans that I would otherwise never have met. I described peacekeeping as an ennobling experience and the chance to step into history. I concluded by saying that doing something so different for a year or two was the best way to refresh oneself before going on to graduate school or a career.

Following these remarks, the students were then asked to reconsider the enlistment options. There was no change for the long enlistments, but the propensity to enlist doubled for the two-year option and tripled for the 15-month one. Interestingly, enlistment propensity was not correlated with political ideology, the liberals being as willing or unwilling as the others. The students were not attracted by the usual enlistment inducements of pay, skill training, or physical adventure. Rather, the strongest positive correlations were with the probability of serving overseas, or with having had a friend or relative with a favorable military experience.

So where does this leave us? There is a limited, but not insignificant enlistment pool among college graduates. Indeed, if the military could recruit just five percent of the 1,200,000 who graduate from college each year—as opposed to the infinitesimal number it gets now—our recruiting woes would be over. So what accounts for the Defense Department's resistance to recruiting college students?

Three major arguments can be raised against the short enlistment. These are given below with rejoinders.

- "The peacekeeping missions for which our military is increasingly deployed require professional soldiers." Let us remember that in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, the vast majority of combat soldiers had only six months (sometimes less) of training before being sent to war. Further, the training required to serve as a military policeman, the kind of role often required for peacekeeping, takes only about six months. When we consider that the typical Bosnia or Kosovo assignment is six months, the rationale for a short enlistment seems apparent.

A related argument is that today's military requires highly technical skills that cannot be met by short-termers. This overlooks the reality that there are thousands of military jobs that do not require extended skill training. And let us not forget that many college students would be coming in with computer skills far exceeding the present levels in the armed forces.

- "Short enlistments would increase demands on the training base." We have already noted that today more than one-third of our soldiers fail to complete their initial enlistments. High quality short-termers would reduce attrition dramatically. Much better to have a soldier serve 15 months honorably than to be discharged prematurely for cause.

Short-term enlistees would enter reserve components after their active duty, thus alleviating another severe recruitment shortfall. In point of fact, reserve duty fits quite nicely with university attendance. (I write as one who served in the reserves as a graduate student following my two years as a draftee.)

• "Today's Army requires highly trained and experienced soldiers, and that requirement cannot be met by short-termers." Precisely. Higher compensation should be aimed at those whose skills require extended training and job experience. Indeed, across-the-board pay raises for military personnel are misguided.

*To put it baldly, we now have overpaid recruits and underpaid sergeants.* Pay raises should be focused on the career force, not on the lower enlisted ranks. Restoring something like the old ratio in compensation would be the best way to resolve retention problems in hard-to-fill skills and leadership positions. At the same time, we must also reduce the pay ratio between a senior noncommissioned officer and a junior officer.

One major obstacle in recruitment, however, is beyond the military's control. Namely, the substantial federal aid given to college students who do not serve their country. We now spend annually over $20 billion in grants and loan subsidies to college students. We have, in effect, created a G.I. Bill without the G.I. In the long-term, there should be a push to link federal college aid to a term of service—whether military or civilian. *It is noteworthy that a 1995 Gallup poll* found that 40 percent of the American public favor this proposition, an amazing level of support for a concept that has not even entered the public debate.

So what are the real obstacles in the way of introducing the citizen-soldier in the all-volunteer force? It is my belief that the senior policymakers in the Defense Department do not want college graduates because they believe such youths are too good for the military. A senior Defense Department official dismissed my proposal of recruiting college graduates by stating, "They would be pushing brooms."

One other positive consequence of a short enlistment should not be overlooked. If serving one's country were to become more common among privileged youth, more future leaders in civilian society would have had a formative citizenship experience. This can only redound to the advantage of the armed forces and the nation.

### *Conclusion: Casualty Acceptance*

There is yet another reason, perhaps the most important one, why the children of American's elite should serve in the armed forces. Under what conditions will Americans accept casualties for soldiers sent on overseas missions? There is much commentary on the greater reluctance of Americans to accept casualties than in times past. We need only remember the abrupt American evacuation from Beirut following the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks or the turnaround in Somalia following the October 1993 deaths of 18 American soldiers. Or recall that sending ground troops in the war against Yugoslavia in 1999 was rejected before the beginning of the bombing campaign.

Why has the threshold of casualty acceptance changed? Certainly the small number of combat losses in recent military operations contributes to the lower tolerance for casualties. The invasions of Grenada and Panama were over within a matter of days and incurred just 18 and 23 American deaths, respectively. Even with over a half-million troops in place during the Gulf War, almost miraculously we suffered only 183 combat dead. In Haiti, only one American soldier was killed by hostile fire.

The increasing reluctance to accept casualties, however, also suggests that something deeper has changed in our society. One school of thought holds that a declining birth rate and resultant smaller families make the loss of children in war much more traumatic than in an era with large families.[32] This explanation has a certain surface plausibility, but what are we to make of the fact that the birth rate in the United States is higher than in the former Yugoslavia, where ethnic willingness to suffer—as well as cause—casualties has become legendary?

The most frequently voiced explanation of casualty acceptance is that the public will not accept combat deaths unless the national interest—sometimes the adjective "vital" is interjected—is clearly at stake. On this point commentators are virtually unanimous. Intervening in a civil war in Lebanon or in clan warfare in Somalia did not meet the criterion of national interest. Hence, our quick departure once the going got tough. From economic and strategic viewpoints, the Gulf War more easily fit, though not perfectly, into the framework of American national interest. But the Gulf War was not a true test of the national interest theory because we have little idea how Americans would have reacted had the combat deaths been in the thousands rather than in the low hundreds. In any event, the consensus is strong that enforcing a peace agreement in Bosnia or Kosovo does not seem to meet the normal standard of national interest.

But all of this is wide of the mark. The answer to the question of what are national interests is not found in the cause itself, but in who is willing to die for that cause. Only when the privileged classes perform military service does the country define the cause as worth young people's blood. Only when such youth are on the firing line do war losses become more acceptable. This explains the seeming paradox of why we have a lower acceptance of combat casualties with a volunteer military than we had with a draft Army.

History in the last century supports the argument that casualty acceptance correlates with a force that drafts privileged youth. In World War II, battle deaths approached 300,000. Yet casualty acceptance was high because virtually every able-bodied male served in the military. A slightly less draconian draft occurred in World War I when 53,000 American soldiers died. Though never popular, the Korean War—with its 33,000 deaths and fought mainly by draftees—lasted four years. Support for the Vietnam War, where 47,000 Americans died in battle, waned as more and more privileged youth evaded the draft. The Army of the Vietnam War had a narrower social base than at any time since before World War II.

The advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973 ensured that the children of our national elites would not be found in the military, especially in the enlisted ranks. This social reality, more than any other factor, for better or worse, has lowered our country's willingness to accept casualties. Citizens accept hardships only when their leadership is viewed as self-sacrificing.

If we want ourselves to accept combat casualties, there are only two ways. Bring back a draft that starts conscription at the top of the social ladder. Or establish recruiting appeals that will garner some share of privileged youth. Otherwise the all-volunteer force will be an ineffective instrument in any time of war or even in peacekeeping, unless the instance is virtually casualty-free.

Let us remember that Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to assure good winds for the deployment of his soldiers during Operation Trojan War. The ancient Greeks understood that such a sacrifice was necessary if the troops were to sacrifice themselves. We should not forget this ageless truth.

**NOTES**

1. See, notably, Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Gap Between the Military and American Society and What it Means for National Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, forthcoming); and Center for Strategic and International Studies, *American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington: CSIS, 2000). A concise overview of the issue is Eliot A. Cohen, "Why the Gap Matters," *The National Interest*, No. 61 (Fall 2000), pp. 38-48.

2. Charles Moskos, "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces & Society*, 4 (No. 1, 1977), 41-50. For a fuller explication of the institution-to-occupation thesis, see Charles Moskos and Frank R. Wood, eds., *The Military: More Than Just a Job?* (Elmsford Park, N.Y.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988). A related but more current formulation is found in Charles Moskos, John A. Williams, and David R. Segal, eds., *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000). See also Charles Moskos and James Burk, "The Postmodern Military" in *The Military in New Times*, ed. James Burk (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), pp. 117-40.

3. An early field study on the potential contradictions been the warrior and the peacekeeping roles, based on the U.N. contingent in Cyprus, is Charles Moskos, *Peace Soldiers: The Sociology of a United Nations Military Force* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976). For more recent empirical studies of military attitudes in peacekeeping missions, see David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal, *Peacekeepers and Their Wives* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993); Laura L. Miller and Charles Moskos, "Humanitarians or Warriors? Race, Gender and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope," *Armed Forces & Society*, 21 (Summer 1995), 615-37; and Laura L. Miller, "Do Soldiers Hate Peacekeeping? The Case of Preventive Diplomacy Operations in Macedonia," *Armed Forces & Society*, 23 (Spring 1997), 415-50.

4. Edward N. Luttwak, *The Endangered American Dream* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

5. The elevation of environmental concerns in the national security agenda is reflected in *Environmental Diplomacy* (Washington: Department of State, 1997). The forewords are by then-Vice President Al Gore and then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

6. For a discussion of changes in the recruitment and force structure of US forces, see David R. Segal, *Recruiting for Uncle Sam* (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1989); and Sam Sarkesian and Robert E. Connor, Jr., *America's Armed Forces* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1996).

7. The early years of the all-volunteer force were characterized by low morale and extreme recruiting difficulties. See, for example, William L. Hauser, *America's Army in Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973); Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, *Crisis in Command* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). This gave way to much more positive accounts. See, for example, Frederic J. Brown, *The US Army in Transition II* (McLean, Va.: Brassey's, 1993); and James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). An exception to the favorable portrayals of the contemporary all-volunteer force is W. Darryl Henderson, *The Hollow Army* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

8. A good summary of the post-Cold War effect on the military is David McCormick, *The Downsized Warrior* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1998).

9. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960). Where Janowitz saw the need for the professional officer corps to have greater civilian interaction, Samuel P. Huntington saw an

inevitable, and not necessarily bad, disjuncture between the conservative ethos of the officer corps and the liberal society. See Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957). A midposition is found in Sam C. Sarkesian, *The Professional Army Officer in a Changing Society* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1975). See also, Sam C. Sarkesian and Robert E. Connor, Jr., *The U.S. Military Profession into the Twenty-First Century* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1999).

10. "Clinton Picks Army General for NATO Post," *The New York Times*, 1 April 1997, p. A3.

11. "Cohen Gets One Right," *Time*, 28 July 1997, p. 52.

12. Obtaining these figures was most difficult. I am indebted to Dr. Charles Johnson, a staff member of the US Commission on National Security/21st Century for his perseverance in assembling these personnel costs.

13. See Peter R. Young, ed., *Defence and the Media in Time of Limited War* (London: Frank Cass, 1992); Larry Minear, Colin Scott, and Thomas G. Weiss, *The News Media, Civil War, and Humanitarian Action* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1994); and Charles Moskos, *The Media and the Military in Peace and Humanitarian Operations* (Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation, 2000).

14. Of the 2,297 Department of Army civilians assigned to Desert Shield and Storm, only five would not go and only four were sent back after arrival in Saudi Arabia. Personal communication (1994) to author by a Department of Army official.

15. *The New York Times*, 24 December 1992, p. 5.

16. Greg Schneider and Tom Ricks, "Cheney's Firm Profited from 'Overused' Army," *The Washington Post*, 9 September 2000, p. 9. See also Tom Ricks, "U.S. Military Turns to Civilian Workers for Support Services," *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 May 1995, p. 1.

17. Bill McAllister, "Shedding Reserve on Defense," *The Washington Post*, 22 June 1999, p. 15.

18. The literature on women in the armed forces is vast and growing. A partial sampling is: Brian Mitchell, *Weak Link* (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1989); Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1992); Sandra Carson Stanley, *Women in the Military* (New York: Julian Messner, 1993); Judith Hicks Stiehm, ed., *It's Our Military, Too* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1996); Linda Bird Francke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1997); and Stephanie Gutmann, *The Kinder, Gentler Military* (New York: Scribner, 2000).

19. William H. McMichael, *The Mother of All Hooks: The Story of the U.S. Navy's Tailhook Scandal* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1997).

20. For an especially insightful account of the attitudes of enlisted women, see Laura L. Miller, "Feminism and the Exclusion of Army Women from Combat," Working Paper No. 2, John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, December 1995.

21. For a good summary of the literature, see Mady Wechsler Segal and Jesse J. Harris, *What We Know About Army Families* (Alexandria, Va.: US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1993).

22. A taboo subject in military sociological research is an appraisal of the attitudes of military wives toward women in the service.

23. A balanced compendium on homosexuals in the armed forces is Wilbur J. Scott and Sandra Carson Stanley, eds., *Gays and Lesbians in the Military* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1994).

24. See Madeline Morris, "By Force of Arms: Rape, War and Military Culture," *Duke Law Journal*, 45 (No. 4, 1996), 651-781.

25. "The Discharge of Kelly Flinn," *The New York Times*, 23 May 1997, p. A18. Contrary to popular understanding, adultery in the American military is not a "stand-alone" offense. Adultery is punishable when it is "directly prejudicial to good order and discipline and not to acts which are prejudicial only in a remote or indirect sense. . . . It is confined to cases in which the prejudice is reasonably direct and palpable." Article 134, *Manual for Courts-Martial* (Washington: GPO, 1995), p. IV-93.

26. *Los Angeles Times*, 17 April, p. 4.

27. *Washington Times*, National Weekly Edition, 17-23 May 1999, p. 19.

28. *The Washington Post*, 17 January 1999, p. A25.

29. John T. Natter, "Listen to the JOs," *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, 124 (October 1998), 58-62.

30. Leonard Wong, *Generations Apart: Xers and Boomers in the Officer Corps* (Carlisle, Pa.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2000).

31. Gary Sheftick, "Army Meets Recruiting Goal," *ArmyLINK News*, internet, http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/sep2000/a20000928recruiting.html, accessed 20 March 2001.

32. Edward N. Luttwak, "Where Are the Great Powers?" *Foreign Affairs*, 73 (July/August 1994), 23-29. Another viewpoint holds that national interests must be clearly articulated by the civilian leadership for the country to accept casualties. See also E. V. Larson, *Ends and Means in the Democratic Conversation: Understanding the Role of Casualties in U.S. Military Operations* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996); and Max Boot, "Will Bush Bury 'Bodybag' Syndrome?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 September 2000, p. A44.