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America Goes to War

Managing the Force During Times
of Stress and Uncertainty

Bernard D. Rostker

Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



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Summary

Introduction

Currently, with extended deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army is having difficulties recruiting new non-prior-service personnel. Questions have been raised concerning the viability of the all-volunteer force and how the Department of Defense (DoD) can manage personnel during these times of stress and uncertainty. This report addresses these concerns, with particular attention to the history of conscription and volunteerism. It examines the history of the draft to try to understand when and under what conditions conscription has been used effectively to raise the manpower needed by the Army during wartime. The report also examines what other means besides conscription the Army could use to meet manpower demands. Specifically, what actions could be taken to increase the supply of volunteers or reduce the demand for new personnel? The report also looks at the many programs that have been developed to help military members and their families cope during difficult times, as well as the particular challenges of understanding which programs work.

To Draft or Not to Draft, That Is the Question

If there is to be a public debate over conscription, then it should consider under what conditions conscription has been used effectively to raise the manpower needed by the Army during wartime. The histories of Britain and France are most often used to spotlight the differences

between countries that have favored volunteerism and those that have favored conscription and to help illustrate the conditions when conscription has been accepted.

Great Britain's Tradition

Great Britain, buttressed by the isolation afforded it by being separated from most of its adversaries by sea, was able to provide for the defense of the nation as it limited the power of the state in favor of a military force made up of volunteers. In 1916, the enormous manpower demands finally compelled Britain to enact a national conscription, but by March 1920, with occupational duty behind it, Britain ended its draft. It was not until the eve of World War II, April 27, 1939, that Britain again enacted national conscription. Between 1946 and 1960, Britain fought six colonial wars. By 1946, it was clear that the manpower needs of the armed forces were such that conscription could not end, and the wartime draft law was extended. In April 1957, the British government announced its decision to end conscription. By 1963, there were no conscripts serving in the British Army.

France's Tradition

The fundamental difference between Great Britain and France reflects the difference in philosophy of English philosopher John Locke and French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the former emphasizing the rights and liberties of individual citizens and the latter a citizen's responsibilities to the state. In 1789, with foreign powers poised to restore the monarchy, the National Assembly reported, "Every citizen must be a soldier and every soldier a citizen, or we shall never have a constitution." Article 12 of The Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizens of 1789 stipulates that "[t]he security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces," and Article 13 states that "common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces." This was the prevailing doctrine for most of the next two hundred years. After 1989, with the end of the Cold War, and for the first time since 1871, no direct threat to its national territory, France started to move to an all-volunteer force. The two principles of "obligation and universality" on which the draft had been built were now coming into

conflict with another principle—equality. France had a structural surplus of people eligible for national service beyond the needs of the military. As a result, fewer and fewer people actually served in the armed services. National service could be accomplished by serving for as little as ten months in the military or enrolling in one of five forms of civil service—or one could even claim to be a conscientious objector. The final move to an all-volunteer force came with the election of President Jacques Chirac in 1995 and from pressure from a reform movement that wanted a fully professional military.

Equity and the Prussian Model of Universal Selective Service

The original French model of conscription, with its emphasis on the obligation of all citizens to defend the revolution coexisting with provisions to allow a citizen to buy his way out of service, proved to be a clear contradiction; this model was finally corrected after the humiliating French defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1870. The modern model of universal military service developed by Prussia during and after the Napoleonic period proved so effective in allowing a country to mobilize its manpower and field a much larger army than might have been maintained as a standing force that by the end of the 19th century it was in wide use throughout the non-English-speaking world. It was the Prussian system of short-term conscripts backed by years of compulsory service in the reserves that defeated Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866, and France in 1870. Thereafter, Austria (in 1868), France (in 1872), Italy (in 1873), Russia (in 1874), and Japan (in 1883) adopted, to one degree or another, the Prussian system of universal military training and selective service.

The American Tradition

The noted historian of the modern American draft, George Q. Flynn, suggests that the American tradition is rooted in its colonial past, when military service was seen

less as a part of citizenship and more as a burden imposed by government. Operating under a heritage that stressed minimal

government interference with individual choice, these cultures were able to sell military service only as a matter of national defense in an emergency. (Flynn, 2002, p. 3)

According to the Militia Act of 1792, “each and every free able-bodied white male . . . [between] the age of eighteen years and under the age of forty-five years . . . [was] enrolled in the militia” (O’Sullivan and Meckler, 1974, p. 36); however, by the time of the Mexican War (1846–1848), service in the militia had ceased to be compulsory.

Ironically, the first American Congress to pass a “national” conscription law was the Congress of the Confederate States of America. The North followed when, on March 3, 1863, President Lincoln signed the Union’s first draft law, the Enrollment Act. The draft, however, was a despised institution because there was little sense of equal sacrifice. Following in the French tradition, wealthy men were able to buy their way out of service—commutation—or hire a substitute to serve in their stead. The draft riots in Boston, New York, and other Northern cities attested to its unpopularity. In the most perverse way, the draft was effective in the North, not because it brought in large numbers of people, but because it persuaded “elected officials to raise much higher bounties to entice men to enlist and thus avert the need for governmental coercion” (Chambers, 1987, p. 64).

Between the Civil War and World War I, including the Indian Wars and the Spanish-American War, America relied on volunteerism and the *new* volunteer militia of the states—the National Guard—to provide the manpower needed to defend the country. On April 2, 1917, President Wilson asked Congress for a Declaration of War. Four days later, the day Congress actually declared war on Germany, the president asked for a draft, and on May 18, 1917, he signed the Selective Service Act of 1917 into law. Unlike the Civil War draft, the new draft was widely accepted. Frederick Morse Cutler described the “marvelously complete response . . . the popular support and approval accorded the selective service,” and how, on the day young men reported for registration, “a feeling of solemnity possessed all hearts; a holiday was declared; at the stated hour, church bells rang as though summoning men to worship” (Cutler, 1923, p. 174). While the law did not allow

for bounties or personal substitution, it did provide for deferments based on essential work. The term Selective Service was used to capture the idea that, while all men of a specific age group—eventually 18 to 45 years of age—might be required to register, only some would be selected for military service in line with the total needs of the nation. The 72 percent of the armed forces that were draftees made a better case for equality of sacrifice than did those drafted during the Civil War. When the need for the mass army ended, however, so did the need for and legitimacy of the draft.

With war raging in Europe, conscription returned on September 16, 1940, when President Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, the first peacetime conscription law in the history of the United States; the draft was sold as a democratic mechanism. In the preamble of the act, Congress declared that service should be shared according to a fair and just system.

Even before the end of World War II, however, with victory clearly ahead, Congress, under considerable pressure from the public, pressed President Truman to end the draft; the draft ended on March 31, 1947. In less than a year, however, the world situation had so deteriorated and the Army's experience with this version of an all-volunteer force had been so disastrous—with a requirement of 30,000 recruits a month, only 12,000 volunteers were coming forward—that President Truman asked for a resumption of the draft. By February 1949, however, inductions were suspended, and by the summer of 1949, the Associated Press reported that “unless an unforeseen emergency develops, the peacetime draft of manpower for the armed forces is expected to expire June 25, 1950” (Associated Press, 1949). On June 24, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. Three days later, Congress voted to extend military conscription.

The Korean War, and the war in Vietnam a decade later, did not mobilize and unite the country as the two World Wars had done, or at least had initially done; opinion polls showed that World War II was “unquestionably much more highly supported by the public than the Korean and Vietnam wars” (Mueller, 1973, p. 63). When the Korean armistice was signed, American troops remained in Korea and the draft stayed in place. In truth, this was not the end of a war but

the end of a battle. The Cold War and draft continued. The problem of equity was captured in the title of one of numerous government studies of the period, *In Pursuit of Equity: Who Serves When Not All Serve?* (Marshall, 1967). In addition, LTG Lewis Hershey, the Director of Selective Service, would admit that “equity was unattainable” and that “we defer people . . . because we can’t use them all” (Flynn, 1985, p. 218). The noted military sociologist James Burk found that

the perception of inequities eroded public confidence in the draft. In 1966, for the first time since the question was asked, less than a majority (only 43 percent) believed that the draft was handled fairly in their community. Although the public still supported the draft, the problems protesters exposed raised serious questions about its operation during the Vietnam War. (Burk, 2001)

Burk’s observations on inequities and public confidence echoed those of Alexis de Tocqueville more than a century before when he wrote, “The government may do almost whatever it pleases, provided it appeals to the whole community at once; it is the unequal distribution of the weight, not the weight itself, that commonly occasions resistance” (de Tocqueville, 1835, Chapter 23).

On October 17, 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, the Republican candidate for president, Richard Nixon, addressed the nation on the subject of conscription. He called for an end to the draft because “a system of compulsory service that arbitrarily selects some and not others simply cannot be squared with our whole concept of liberty, justice and equality under the law” (Nixon, 1968). One week after taking office, Nixon told his Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, to “begin immediately to plan a special commission to develop a detailed plan of action for ending the draft” (Nixon, 1969). On February 21, 1970, the Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (known as the Gates Commission) forwarded to President Nixon its recommendation to end conscription. The commission unanimously found the cost of an all-volunteer force was “a necessary price of defending our peace and security . . . [and that conscription] was intolerable when

there is an alternative consistent with our basic national values” (Gates, 1970, p. 10). On September 28, 1971, President Nixon signed Public Law 92-129 and ushered in the era of the all-volunteer force.

When the Congress debated the end of conscription in 1970, the fate of the draft was very much uncertain. The issue made strange bed-fellows. Some liberals in Congress, such as Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), feared that an all-volunteer force would be made up of the poor, black, and uneducated. Some conservatives, such as Senator John Stennis (D-Miss.), remembering the Army’s experience in 1947, thought that a volunteer force would not attract sufficient numbers of recruits. Both sides agreed, however, that pay should be fair; as pay rose, so did the number of young men who volunteered. The end of the draft was certain when it became clear at market wages that there would be enough volunteers to man the force.

What History Tells Us

Since the time of the Civil War, the United States has used conscription four times. The draft was successful in meeting the manpower needs of the country twice, and twice volunteerism effectively replaced it. Conscription was successful during the two World Wars when the conflict had general popular support, the entire male population of military age was included (registered), and selection was judged to be fair and sacrifice perceived to be equal—equal in terms of the chance to serve, not in terms of the economic consequences of serving, or as the preamble of the 1940 draft law put it, “shared generally in accordance with a fair and just system of selective compulsory military training and service.” When the cause did not enjoy the full support of the people, as in Vietnam, or the selection appeared to be random or biased with inequitable service, as in both the Civil War and the Vietnam War, conscription was unsuccessful.

American history suggests that conscription works only when (1) the cause enjoys overwhelming support among the general population and (2) there is a generally held belief that all are participating with equal sacrifice. Without both of these conditions in place, conscription has not been a viable way to raise the manpower needed by the military. Are the conditions right now for a return to conscription?

In the fall of 2004, an overwhelming majority of population—85 percent—replied “no” to the question, “Do you think the United States should return to a military draft at this time, or not?” (Gallup Brain, 2006b). Thus, it would appear that the current conflict does not enjoy the popular support needed to bring back the draft. Moreover, even if the military is not able to retain sufficient numbers of people to meet all its future requirements, it is unlikely that the numbers of men who would need to be drafted would be so large as to meet the criterion of “equal sacrifice” for the draft to be judged equitable.

To Go “Soldiering”: Managing the Force Without a Draft

How can a volunteer force be maintained, even during periods of conflict? The government can (1) increase the supply of volunteers to either enlist or reenlist into the armed forces, (2) reduce the demand for manpower by restructuring the current force, or (3) try to ameliorate the most negative aspects of deployment and family separation that result in military personnel and their families making the decision to leave the military.

Increasing the Supply of Volunteers

While some may deride it, history has shown that volunteers increasingly respond to bonuses and pay, with higher levels of compensation resulting in a greater number of volunteers. The uses of “bounties,” or what today are called bonuses, to encourage soldiers to both enlist and reenlist is as old as the Army itself. On January 19, 1776, General George Washington wrote to the Continental Congress urging its members to “give a bounty of six dollars and two thirds of a dollar to every able bodied effective man, properly clothed for the service, and having a good fire lock, with a bayonet” (as quoted in Assistant Secretary of Defense, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD[M&RA]), 1967a, p. I.1). This first enlistment bonus eventually grew to \$200 by the end of the war (Kreidberg and Henry, 1955, p. 14). Within weeks, on February 9, 1776, Washington, faced with the prospect of needing troops for another year, also noted that the Congress “would save

money and have infinitely better troops if they were, even at the bounty of twenty, thirty or more dollars, to engage the men already enlisted” (ASD[M&RA], 1967a, p. I.2).

The notion that an all-volunteer force might be sustained during periods of conflict through the use of incentives was new and untried before the current war in Iraq. Crawford Greenewalt, a member of the Gates Commission, wrote to Thomas Gates in 1969 (as the commission was completing its work), “While there is a reasonable possibility that a peacetime armed force could be entirely voluntary, I am certain that an armed force involved in a major conflict could *not* be voluntary” (Greenewalt, 1969, emphasis in the original). Today, new financial incentives have been developed for both recruiting and retaining the personnel needed. The \$420 billion National Defense Authorization Act of 2005 continued a full range of recruiting and retention bonuses, as well as extended health benefits for some reservists, and provided a new educational assistance program for the reserves tied to the Montgomery GI Bill. However, although using financial incentives to attract and retain military personnel seems to have been generally successful in allowing DoD to maintain the size of the active military, it comes at a substantial cost. David S.C. Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, remarked at a recent conference examining the rising cost of military personnel that

it’s important to keep in mind that the military compensation system, whatever its idiosyncrasies, does work reasonably well in producing the results that we want. . . . It’s critical to keep in mind the compensation system is not an end of itself. . . . The system is, after all, an instrument to reach the results we want, which is to supply young Americans who are willing to take on some of the most difficult and demanding tasks that society might ask them to do. It’s not the only reason they serve, but it’s an important element of their decision to serve, and it’s certainly important in their family’s decision to support such service. . . . Cost is important and we want to be efficient, but it is critical to start with what . . . [we want] to achieve. (Horowitz and Bandeh-Ahmadi, 2004)

Reducing Demand by Transforming the Force

In 2004, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld told the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee that the force was “stressed” because it was “not properly aligned or organized for the post–Cold War era” (Rumsfeld, 2004c). His solution was to (1) increase the size of the Army by 30,000 troops; (2) increase the number of deployable brigades from 33 to 43, with the goal of reducing the frequency of, and increasing the predictability of, deployments; and (3) “rebalance” skills between the active and reserve components.

Family Program to Ameliorate the Most Negative Aspects of Deployment

There is more to managing the force than just compensating people for their service or organizing the force to make sure that it can best meet current demands. Providing support services for service members and their families helps ameliorate the most negative aspects of deployments. However, traditionally, military life has not been “family friendly.” Until World War II, with the exception of the period of World War I, the adage “If the Army had wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one” aptly summed up the service’s attitude toward families. While the Cold War–era Army in no way resembled the pre–World War II organization of the same name—the postwar Army was many times the size of the prewar Army and had worldwide responsibilities—the Army’s approach to addressing family concerns remained reactive and piecemeal. It took the move to the all-volunteer force to really change things.

On the eve of the all-volunteer force, the *Fiscal Year 1971 Department of the Army Historical Summary* made no mention of military families per se; it was only implied by concern that “the Army needs a total of 353,440 housing units for eligible families [when] available family housing on and off post total[s] 220,600 units” (Bell, 1973, p. 55). By 1978, however, the Army understood that its approach to its Quality of Life program, originally established to “improve services and activities for enlisted personnel in their daily life,” needed to be

expanded “to bolster community of life support activities” (Boldan, 1982, p. 91). Citing the all-volunteer force, the Army noted before the end of the draft that

less than half of the soldiers were married. By the end of 1977, over 60 percent fell into that category, many more were sole parents, and a considerable number were married to other soldiers. The changing composition of the Army necessitated increased attention to community services to sustain morale and retain highly qualified personnel. (Boldan, 1982, p. 91)

In October 1980, the first Army Family Symposium was held, in Washington, D.C. On August 15, 1983, Army Chief of Staff John A. Wickham signed the *Army Family White Paper—The Army Family*. It provided for the annual *Army Family Action Plan*, the Army theme for 1984 (“Year of the Family”), and the establishment of installation-based Family Centers.

In 1990, service members were deployed overseas in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, while their family members stayed behind. Despite the establishment of Army Community Service and 24-hour Family Assistance Centers at the seven stateside posts from which large numbers of troops deployed, and other programs, after-action reports showed that “[f]amily members of deployed service members had innumerable problems and questions, felt confused and abandoned, and often did not know where to turn to obtain resolution and answers” (Reeves, 1998). The Army established family support groups for every deployment and declared that “[q]uality of life is the Army’s third highest priority, immediately behind readiness and modernization” (Reeves, 1998).

After the Gulf War and throughout the 1990s, ever-increasing deployments placed new demands on soldiers and their families; the Chief of Staff of the Army told Congress that Army families must be prepared to deal with the stress and uncertainty that deployment brings (West and Reimer, 1997).

In April 2002, DoD published *The New Social Compact* as a reciprocal understanding between the department and service members and their families. The document declared: “Service members and families

together must dedicate themselves to the military lifestyle, while the American people, the President, and the Department of Defense must provide a supportive quality of life for those who serve” (Molino, 2002, p. 1). The compact provided an “overview of services’ delivery systems and strategies” (Molino, 2002, pp. 103–113). Each of the services has since developed programs to mitigate family stress. With so many programs, however, it is hard to know which ones work and which ones do not work, and under what circumstances.

Effectiveness of Military Family Support Programs. From the very beginning of the modern family program, policymakers have been asking for some level of proof that family support programs are “cost-effective.” The *Department of the Army Historical Summary* for FY 1981 noted, “The Quality of Life Program, after three years of planning and programming, at last received enough funds to make a noticeable difference for soldiers and their families” (Hardyman, 1988, p. 108). With costs projected to run \$1.6 million over the next six years, the *Summary* commented: “Quality of life efforts have been handicapped in the competition for limited resources by the Army’s inability to quantify the benefits derived from implementing the initiatives. There was no obvious way to measure soldiers’ satisfaction and its effect on soldier commitment” (Hardyman, 1988, pp. 108–109). In 2004, policymakers were still looking for some way to determine which programs were cost-effective. The *First Quadrennial Quality of Life Review* reported that, despite the general recognition that quality of life “impacts the retention of service members and the readiness of the armed forces, . . . research that can inform policy on these issues is surprisingly inadequate” (DoD, 2004, p. 187).

Today, surveys and focus groups are the primary means we have for learning about these programs, but they provide an incomplete picture. Academic research that focuses on how people make the decision to stay or leave also provides little insight into where DoD should spend its money. Problems persist in determining the correct sampling design and the analytic and statistical approaches to follow. Overdue is a valid and reliable research design for the collection and analysis of information to assess the performance of the variety of family support programs.

Summary and Conclusion

Headlines notwithstanding, the all-volunteer force has done extremely well during these stressful and uncertain times. Commissioner Greenewalt's certainty in 1970 that "[a]n armed force involved in a major conflict could *not* be voluntary" (Greenewalt, 1969, emphasis in the original) has been proven wrong. History suggests that the conditions favorable to conscription—overwhelming support for the cause and equality of sacrifice—are not present today. The senior leaders in the administration and many in Congress are of an age at which former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger's words in 1987—"We know what the draft did to the social fabric of this country in the '60s" (as quoted in Chambers, 1987, p. 259)—are fair warning. The American military has been very resilient in finding ways to make the all-volunteer force work. However, a number of new and expanded compensation programs have been put in place, and retention has remained high; each of the services has restructured to provide additional personnel to meet the demands of new missions; and family programs have been expanded to mitigate stress.

As it has been from the beginning, the all-volunteer force remains fragile. Accordingly, DoD has provided a wide range of support programs to help service members and their families cope with the stress and uncertainty of heightened military operations and deployments. To date, increases in the operational tempo for active and reserve forces, including multiple tours in the combat areas of Afghanistan and Iraq, have not resulted in significant recruitment shortages or low retention. However, only time will tell.