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# A Tragic Success An Examination of the Transition to an All-Volunteer Force between 1968 and 1978 and its Unintended Consequences

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# **A Tragic Success**

An Examination of the Transition to an All-Volunteer Force between 1968 and 1978 and its  
Unintended Consequences

by

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An Examination of the Transition to an All-Volunteer Force between 1968 and 1978 and its  
Unintended Consequences

Peter Andrew Wineman

Abstract

By 1968 conscription as a means to raise the fighting force necessary to conduct the United States' defense and foreign policy missions had been in effect for a half century. Since World War I, two generations of Americans had come to accept the military draft as a regular part of life. The generation that came of age during the 1960s and its reaction to the controversial U.S. military intervention in Vietnam changed this national sentiment.

In response to public disapproval, a campaign promise to end the draft and the war in Vietnam helped Richard Nixon win the presidency in 1968. Although the U.S. would not leave Vietnam until 1975, planning for a transition from conscription to an all-volunteer force began immediately. For some, the cost, quality, and quantity of the new force were the paramount concerns during the planning phase. However, others saw that the transition to an all-volunteer force would have far reaching demographic consequences that would radically alter how the United States waged war.

In the early years of the transition, many of the critics were proven correct as costs surpassed earlier predictions and the demographics of the new all-volunteer force increasingly failed to represent U.S. society. By the 1980s, the all-volunteer force was a permanent fixture and the voices of critics began to fade away. The end of the Cold War and the First Gulf War in 1991 highlighted the military supremacy of the all-volunteer force. After 2001, the U.S. found itself involved in two long counter insurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Where the consequences of the transition to an all-volunteer force have become starkly apparent.

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## Introduction

The United States has maintained an all-volunteer military for much of its history. From 1789 until 1917, with the crucial exception of the Civil War, the United States was able to maintain its military without resorting to mass conscription. At the beginning of the twentieth century, industrialization and mechanization of warfare during World War I vastly increased the size of the military. In response to these concerns and beginning with the Selective Service Act of 1917, the size and scope of the US military increased exponentially during both World Wars and later Cold War. This reliance on the military draft meant that by the 1960s, three generations of Americans had lived with military service as a constant part of life. At the same time, by the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war protests were gaining momentum as public support for the escalating War in Vietnam was waning. The military draft, which had been accepted as a civic duty by their parents and grandparents generation was now seen as an infringement of personal freedom by the generation that came of age during the 1960s.

By 1968, increasing unpopularity for the Vietnam War and growing resistance to the military draft created a unique opportunity for the Republican presidential nominee Richard Nixon. During his presidential campaign, Nixon recognized this public dissent by promising to end the war in Vietnam with honor and also end conscription. Upon taking office in 1969, both promises were eventually kept, though not in the timeframe originally promised and without consulting the military advisors and generals who would ultimately oversee their implementation. While far more complex than a political decision by Nixon, the transition from conscription to an all-volunteer military had serious consequences for the U.S. military, government, and society going forward through the end of the twentieth century to present day.

How did the US military between 1968 and 1980 move from a military system based on universal obligation and broad representation to an all-volunteer force that was determined by the operation of free market ideals rather than civic duty? In what ways did the logistical requirements involved in ending the war in Vietnam while also continuing to deter communism around the world influence the transition process? Born out of a political decision that was implemented by career officers and politicians of an older generation, how were problems and predicted consequences associated with ending the draft viewed? For the U.S. government and military, in forecasting immediate and long term problems of the move to an all-volunteer force, what consequences were deemed acceptable? What did the transition to an all-volunteer force mean for the servicemen and women that would inevitably carry the burden of fighting and dying in future US military conflicts in the pursuit and maintenance of imperialist objectives? For the American people, what led to the popular outcry for the end of the draft and what was at stake in allowing military service to be dictated by free market economic forces, social inequality, and political factors? Finally, after over forty years, three wars, and numerous smaller military interventions, what are the principal legacies of this transformation? Is America better off because of it?

Before answering these questions, it is important to understand how the U.S. military operated just prior to the Vietnam Era and Nixon presidency. This helps provide context for the argument that the transition from conscription to an all-volunteer military force in the 1970s was a radical departure from the last 50 years of U.S. military policy and had lasting consequences for the American republic.

Speaking generally on military conscription, John Whiteclay Chambers II wrote in *Draftees or Volunteers: A Documentary History of the Debate Over Military Conscription in the United States, 1787-1973*,

Since its origin in ancient times, conscription has always proven a contentious issue. Decried by some as the most odious of levies, the ‘blood tax,’ the selection of people for compulsory military service has been praised by others as the invigorating and patriotic obligation of every able-bodied male citizen. Feeder of armed hordes of invaders, it has also been the provider of valiant bands of defenders. From Julius Caesar to Adolf Hitler, some leaders have abused the tremendous military power it gave them. Always controversial, the coercion of citizens to support their leaders’ policies by force of arms has occurred in different times, places, and manner.<sup>1</sup>

While Chambers was speaking to the universal nature of conscription and the problems associated with required national military service, the focus of this paper is the United States. A nation of which in *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force*, Bernard Rostker wrote, “Conscription is not the norm for America. Americans have historically distrusted standing militaries.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet after World War I, like baseball and Fourth of July barbecues, military service and patriotic duty came to equally define America and what it meant to be an American. The next world war, had an even greater impact. Hitler and the Axis powers had provided the U.S. and the American people with a common enemy, the war was a collective effort, and to this day the idea that its struggles and victories were shared by all U.S. citizens has become cemented in our collective memory. In popular memory it has acquired the glow of the last Good War. From its crucible emerged a generation dominated by veterans and patriotic Americans who felt that military service was a duty rather than a choice.

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<sup>1</sup> John Whiteclay Chambers, *Draftees or Volunteers: A Documentary History of the Debate Over Military Conscription in the United States, 1787-1973* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1975), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2006), 2.

In Korea, the next generation received their opportunity to be drafted and serve their country in their own foreign conflict. Though unlike World War II, this war's legacy would be tarnished when Korea was split in two with no decisive victory as in 1945. In the 1950s, the 'Greatest Generation' gave birth to the first of the 'Baby Boomers' who were as unruly as they were numerous. As they came of age during the 1960s, their generation's war would prove more controversial than the last. The Vietnam War along with their protests at home eventually led Nixon to promise to end conscription in his 1968 presidential campaign. Likewise, their efforts influenced the Civil Rights Movement and added the 26th amendment to our constitution, lowered the voting age to 18.

In the background of all of this social and political upheaval was the Cold War with the Soviet Union. In *The Long War*, historian Andrew Bacevich described "growing up in the Midwest during the 1950s and early 1960s" where he came to understand "That the Cold War provided the organizing principle of the age was self-evident, even to a young boy."<sup>3</sup> Bacevich went on to argue,

Crisis became a permanent condition. In Cold War America, urgency, danger, and uncertainty permeated public discourse. Presidents competed with one another in proclaiming states of national emergency that seemingly never got revoked. All of this had a powerful disciplining effect...Americans in the decades after World War II embraced an especially compelling faith; for the great majority of citizens, skepticism became not simply intolerable but unimaginable. The essence of that faith, to which all but a handful of marginalized contrarians devotedly adhered, was contained in twin convictions. According to the first, the United States was a nation under siege, beset by dire threats, its very survival at risk. According to the second, only the capacity and willingness to assert all of the instruments of hard power, instantly and without hesitation, could keep America's enemies at bay.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *The Long War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), vii.

<sup>4</sup> Bacevich, viii.



Bacevich outlined the divide between the older and younger generations during the 1960s. Conscription created the “capacity and willingness to assert all the instruments of hard power”<sup>5</sup> necessary to protect the U.S. against the Soviet Union. This was the ideology held by the professional military establishment that had served in World War II and Korea and later oversaw the direction of the war in Vietnam. For many in the younger generation at the time, who were fighting and dying in the jungles of Southeast Asia in a war whose objectives were unclear, conscription had become a symbol for their discontent with an unjust status quo. The transition from conscription to the modern all-volunteer force began there, while the consequences of that transition have continued to be shaped up to the present day.

It is important to note that my experience as a United States Marine Corps infantryman from 2010 to 2014 has motivated and helped to shape this thesis. The consequences of this transition are real and personal. During my four years in the Marines, I was deployed to Helmand Province Afghanistan with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. There I served alongside men and women from a multitude of diverse backgrounds, whose reasons for enlistment were as varied as their races, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds. For many, the decision to join the military during a time of war was primarily patriotic. Some joined in search of adventure or adrenaline while others joined because the military provided them an opportunity to obtain a college degree in return for their sweat and blood. Sadly for some, the decision to join the military was one of last resort, paycheck every two weeks and three meals a day.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., viii.

In the 1854 poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, the British poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson immortalized a futile cavalry charge during the Battle of Balaclava, a strategically inconsequential Crimean War engagement. Acting on a misunderstood order, the brigade charged a down a mile-long valley directly toward a line of Russian artillery; one-third of the men died or fell wounded—and nearly three-quarters of their horses were destroyed—in a twenty-minute fiasco of which Tennyson wrote,

Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Was there a man dismayed ?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Someone had blundered:  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die,  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.<sup>6</sup>

Like the brave six hundred, the servicemen and women of our most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have not asked why the United States sent them to fight in these foreign war, conflicts that have carried on for a decade and a half, the longest continuous period of hostilities in American history. Rather, every one of them a volunteer, they have performed their duty with professionalism and stoicism, trusting that their country and its citizens will recognize their sacrifice and not waste it.

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854), Lines 9-17.

## Part One: Planning (1968-1971)

In order to comprehend Nixon's political motives for ending the draft and moving towards an all-volunteer force, it is important to understand the political and social climate of the late 1960s. By 1968, public disapproval for the war in Vietnam and by association the draft had reached its climax. On January 30th, the Vietcong launched its surprise Tet Offensive leading the U.S. to increase its involvement in the unpopular foreign conflict. As draft calls increased, draft card burnings and student protests increased, while many at home began to question the probability of the U.S. military ever winning the war in Vietnam. For those doing the fighting, by the end of the war, 58,220 U.S. servicemen died and 153,303 were wounded in Vietnam.<sup>7</sup>

Socially, the U.S. was in a state of upheaval by 1968. In the ongoing Civil Rights Movement, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was recognized as a formidable achievement. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4th added more tension to the precipitous situation in the country. Additionally, the overrepresentation of black servicemen in Vietnam and in the draft left many feeling that the current system of conscription was inadequate, unequal, and most importantly, unconstitutional. Politically, in November 1963, President John F. Kennedy had also died by an assassin's bullet and Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn into office. After his election in 1964, Johnson increased the U.S. military presence in Vietnam, a decision that would prove costly in the following election of 1968. Prior to that election, the summer of 1968 radically altered the United States, riots across the nation and around the world exhibited the widespread public distaste for numerous social and political issues, all culminating in the

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<sup>7</sup> Anne Leland and Nese F. DeBruyne, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2015), 3.

American people's adamant disapproval for the war in Vietnam and conscription based military force.

### **The Gates Commission**

The transition to the all-volunteer force began as a campaign promise by Richard Nixon in 1967 while speaking to students at the University of Wisconsin. Nixon said, "What is needed is not a broad based draft, but a professional military corps. The nation must move toward a volunteer army by compensating those who go into the military on a basis comparable to those in civilian careers."<sup>8</sup> In *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force*, Bernard Rostker who worked at the Department of Defense (DoD) during the transition and later for the RAND corporation continued, saying, "By August 1968, these views were a plank in the Republican Party platform...Almost a year later, on October 17, 1968, when [Nixon] was the official candidate of the Republican Party for President...he put himself squarely on the side of an all-volunteer force."<sup>9</sup>

Their promise to end the draft helped the Republicans win the 1968 presidential election, though it would take until 1971 for the Nixon administration to achieve its objective of transitioning to an all-volunteer force. Nixon's first step in the transition from campaign promise to an all-volunteer force, was the creation of the Gates Commission on March 27, 1969. Though many in the Nixon administration agreed on the necessity of a transition from conscription to an all-volunteer military, the continuing U.S. military presence in Vietnam and the ongoing Cold War meant that the timing of the transition was debated at length. Created in order to report on

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<sup>8</sup> Robert B, Semple Jr., Nixon Backs Eventual End of Draft (New York: New York Times, November 18, 1967), 21.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2006), 35-36.

the viability of an all-volunteer force, The Gates Commission was immediately met with opposition by many within the Pentagon who felt that a study concerning the transition towards an all-volunteer military would be better suited for an internal governmental review. In fact, within the Pentagon at the very same time as the Gates Commission, Project Volunteer, an internal study into the transition to the all-volunteer force, was already underway. Brig. Gen. Willard Latham, wrote in *The Modern Volunteer Army Program: The Benning Experiment, 1970-1972*, “The Volunteer program (VOLAR) and the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA) concept was an experiment to reach the stated national goal of a zero draft. VOLAR and MVA are two acronyms that are surrounded by misconceptions and arouse often-heated pros and cons from service personnel.”<sup>10</sup> This lack of coordination between Nixon’s administration and his military leaders at the Pentagon highlighted the organizational failures during the planning phase of the transition to the all-volunteer force.

Members selected by the Nixon administration to the Gates Commission also did little to appease the many critics of the transition. Renowned economists, and outspoken proponents of the all-volunteer force Milton Friedman, a University of Chicago professor and Alan Greenspan, an economic consultant in New York City both joined the Commission alongside the Chairman, Defense Secretary Thomas Gates. One of the few critics on the panel, Gates told Nixon he was “opposed to the whole idea of a volunteer force.” Other members of the Commission chosen were a U.S. Congressman from Missouri Thomas Curtis, who was a former lawyer and Naval officer during World War II. As well as Frederick Dent, the president of the textile manufacturer Mayfair Mills and later Secretary of Commerce under Nixon from 1973 to 1975. The youngest

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<sup>10</sup> Brig. Gen. Willard Latham, *The Modern Volunteer Army Program: The Benning Experiment, 1970-1972*, CMH Pub 90-2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), 3.

member Stephen Herbits, was a 27 year old student in only his second year of law school. Chosen to be the voice of the younger generation on the commission, Herbits “was also one of the principal architects of the influential 1967 congressional monograph, *How to End the Draft: The Case for an All-Volunteer Army*.” It seemed that while the Commission was directed to be objective in its analysis, the committee was filled with fierce advocates for ending the draft. During the first meeting, on May 15, 1969, the Commission was told by its Chairman that “it was not necessary for the Commission members to assume at the outset that an all-volunteer solution was either feasible or desirable.” The political consequences of any conclusion besides ending the draft along with the very makeup of the Commission's members said otherwise.

By December of 1969, a brief seven months later, the Commission came to its conclusion and by February of 1970 published its findings. In its report the Commission stated,

We unanimously believe that the nation’s interests will be better served by an all-volunteer force, supported by an effective stand-by draft, than by a mixed force of volunteers and conscripts: that steps should be taken promptly to move in this direction; and that the first indispensable step is to remove the present inequity in the pay of men serving their first term in the armed forces. We have satisfied ourselves that a volunteer force will not jeopardize national security, and we believe it will have a beneficial effect on the military as well as the rest of our society.<sup>11</sup>

In less than a year, the Gates Commission altered U.S. military manpower policy that had been in effect since the U.S. entrance into WWI. One of the main points of the Commission's argument was that conscription was an unjust tax. They argued that volunteers, draftees, and draft induced volunteers were underpaid and “this underpayment [was] a form of taxation.” Failing to provide adequate salaries for its soldiers, sailors, and airmen, meant there was a definite financial loss for those serving in the U.S. armed forces.

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas S. Gates Jr, *The Report of the President's Commission on and All-Volunteer Armed Force*. (Washington, 1970)

The Commission also systematically refuted the arguments against the transition to the volunteer force, most importantly, budgetary and national security concerns. Summarizing the arguments of the Commission on costs, Rostker wrote,

Although the budget for a volunteer armed force will be higher than that for a mixed force (volunteers and conscripts), the actual cost will be lower. This is not really a paradox because many of the costs of manning our armed forces are not reflected in the budget. Men who are forced to serve at artificially low pay are actually paying a form of tax, which subsidizes those who do not serve. Furthermore, the output of the civilian economy is lower because more men serve in the military than necessary for an all-volunteer force of the same strength.<sup>12</sup>

While not unfounded, the conclusion of the Commission would have been difficult for the American taxpayer to accept as they witnessed an already enormous U.S. military budget increase exponentially due to the transition to VOLAR and expanded U.S. military presence abroad. Of course, “The progress toward an all-volunteer force came at a cost, which became an important political issue during spring 1973.”<sup>13</sup> Documents sent to Roger Kelly, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs on April 9, 1973, laid out the projected DoD budget for the following fiscal year of 1974 along with the past years; 1964, 1968, and 1973 in order to better understand the monetary impact of the transition to an all-volunteer force.

For Fiscal Year (FY) 1964, DoD payroll for both military and civilians was \$15.8 billion. In 1968 it was \$23.1 billion, 1973 it was \$30.6 billion, and by 1974 it was projected to be \$32.0 billion. Overall, the DoD budget had increased from \$50.8 billion in 1964 to \$79.0 billion in 1974. The document also went on to describe the direct effects of all-volunteer force program costs. From pay increases, enlisted bonuses, recruiting and advertising, living quarters improvements, and other initiatives, the total cost of programs “directly” tied to the all-volunteer

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<sup>12</sup> Rostker, 79.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

force totaled \$3.14 billion. Compared to the total DoD budget, “AVF (All-Volunteer Force) costs in FY 1974 make up: 7.1% of total personnel costs, 4.0% of total budget.”<sup>14</sup> Of course, what was only a consequence of the all-volunteer force, and what was necessary both prior to and after the transition was not easily discernible.

Undoubtedly the transition to the all-volunteer force was costly, but the actual percentage change in the overall DoD budget was and continues to be debated at length. In 1973 the DoD reported the numbers above, though others argued “that pay and related costs increased from about 42 percent [of the total DoD costs] in fiscal year 1968 to 56 percent in fiscal year 1973.”<sup>15</sup> This 33 percent change between 1968 and 1973 did not yet account for the change in proportions of different enlisted levels. Unlike the conscription based military that relied on a larger percentage of lower ranking, less expensive troops that were constantly rotating out of the military after their two year obligations, the all-volunteer force would require a higher proportion of mid and senior level ranks to ensure that the force was effective, causing costs to increase even more.

The truth was most likely somewhere in between; nevertheless, the transition certainly led to an increased DoD budget and therefore a larger financial levy ultimately paid by the American taxpayer.

In response to other critiques of the transition to an all-volunteer force, the Commission argued that a standby draft would allay national security concerns in a social and political climate where fears regarding the Cold War often influenced policy decisions. In regard to the effectiveness of an all-volunteer force, the Commission argued “The United States has relied

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<sup>14</sup> Roger Kelly, *Materials for Congressional Meetings*. (Washington: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 1973)

<sup>15</sup> Rostker, 291.



throughout its history on a voluntary armed force except during major wars and since 1948. A return to an all-volunteer force will strengthen our freedoms, remove an inequity now imposed on the expression of the patriotism that has never been lacking among our youth, promote efficiency of the armed forces, and enhance their dignity.”<sup>16</sup> While the admittance of the need for a standby draft helped calm some fears regarding the ability of an all-volunteer force to continue the mission of the U.S. military in the 1970s and beyond. The continuing war in Vietnam and larger Cold War were real concerns and the Gates Commission failed to satisfy the criticism from those who feared the U.S. was harming its national security by ending the draft.

Broadly, the Gates Commission report was principally an economic document, whereas Project Volunteer offered more comprehensive conclusions on possible consequences of the transition. Other concerns raised by the Gates Commission, and more so by Project Volunteer and other external studies, were that the future all-volunteer force would be lacking in quality, racially unequal, and made up almost entirely of a mercenary force recruited solely by financial motivation. In regard to quality, the Gates Commission argued, in comparing the quality of an all-volunteer force with that of a mixed force of conscripts and volunteers, that the all-volunteer force was far more desirable. They said, “The career force contains men voluntarily serving beyond any period of obligated service. True enlistees are men who would have joined even if there was no draft. Draft-motivated enlistees are men who say they would probably have joined if there were no draft. Draftees are, of course, men inducted under Selective Service procedures.”

<sup>17</sup> The idea that true volunteers were better than draft-motivated enlistees and draftees is not difficult to comprehend, though the Gates Commission failed to account for the economic

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<sup>16</sup> Gates, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 136.

motivations that would lead to large percentages of volunteers for the new all-volunteer force to come from lower socioeconomic classes and educational backgrounds.

In response to the “charge that the all-volunteer force [would] be manned by ‘hired killers’ obsessed with violence,”<sup>18</sup> the Gates Commission argued that like other national and state services such as; local and federal police forces, the F.B.I, and the U.S. Marshals, were not made up of ‘hired killers’ and the all-volunteer force should not be expected to be any different. In fact, they said, “To suggest that men who enlist to serve their country do so only for pay is to demean the hundreds of thousands who voluntarily serve today. More than half of all the men in today’s forces are true volunteers.”<sup>19</sup> The argument that the U.S. military is in effect a mercenary force persists to present day, and the points made by the Gates Commission on this matter seem to offer some plausible defense for the maintenance of an all-volunteer force.

Apart from quality, racial inequality became the harshest critique for those who opposed the transition to an all-volunteer force. Critics feared that economic incentives would “increase the attractiveness of military service primarily among lower income groups, where the proportion of negroes [was] high. A predominately black enlisted force might develop. This will result according to some, in the black and the poor bearing a disproportionate share of the burden of defense.”<sup>20</sup> It is important to recognize that the “Jim Crow” South along with discrimination across the nation, racial inequality in Vietnam was an important issue for the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s, and both continued to be divisive issues for U.S. society going forward. It must also be noted that since WWII the U.S. military was recognized for having progressive racial policies and offered opportunities for social and economic advancement for

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 141-142.

those who would have been otherwise barred from the similar opportunities in the civilian job market. Yet to say that the U.S. military was without discrimination and racial inequality would be equally misguided.

Careful to comment on the issue, the Gates Commission said, “Many of these questions and concerns cannot be answered rationally. Racial attitudes and fears are emotionally based.”

Continuing, they argued,

The racial aspects of the relationship between the armed forces and society have been given special consideration by the Commission. We have concluded that the racial composition of the armed forces cannot be fundamentally changed by ending the draft. Even if higher pay appealed only to the ‘poor’ twice as many whites as blacks would be attracted. The proportion of blacks below the poverty line in 1967 was 38 percent while only 11 percent of whites were in the same category. But, in absolute numbers, more than twice as many whites (17.6 million) as blacks (8.3) million were below the poverty line.<sup>21</sup>

Of course while the Gates Commission was not wrong in highlighting the large disparity between the number of whites and blacks, their argument failed to account for the fact that blacks, especially young males, were chronically and systematically discriminated within the civilian workforce of the 1960s and 1970s. Since WWII, the U.S. military had become, while perhaps not out of choice, a safe haven for minority employment. Though still discriminated against, the military offered young blacks the opportunity to hold a job and gain invaluable technical skills that could help lead to a brighter economic future.

Providing a rough estimate of future black accessions, the Gates Commission forecasted, “The best estimate of the proportion of blacks in the all-volunteer force is 14.9 percent, compared with 14.1 percent in a mixed force of conscripts and volunteers. In the Army, the proportion of blacks in the volunteer force is 18.8 percent.”<sup>22</sup> Even if these numbers proved to be

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 143.

higher, the Gates Commission adamantly opposed any restriction on black recruitment within government services, and that “the participation of blacks in municipal, state, and national government reflects the confidence blacks have in the government as a hirer of last resort.”<sup>23</sup>

Further documenting the issue of race in the all-volunteer force, in a letter dated May 20, 1975 to Congressman Ronald V. Dellums, from the Secretary of the Army, Howard H. Callaway said, “As of 31 December 1974, the black enlisted content of the Army was 22.5 percent, or 2 times higher than the national average of blacks in the population, and 1.4 times higher than the average DoD black enlisted content.”<sup>24</sup> The letter further highlighted black representation in different military occupational specialties (MOS), where there was notable black overrepresentation in combat arms, and low skill supply and service fields. In agreement with these statistics, Charles C. Moskos Jr. a professor of sociology at Northwestern University, in *The Enlisted Ranks in the All-Volunteer Force*, argued that according to Department of Army statistics, from 1973, the percentage of black enlistments had gone from 26.8% to 31.9% by November of 1977.<sup>25</sup> These statistics stand in stark opposition to the findings of the Gates Commission, which continued to fail in forecasting the demographic realities of a transition to an all-volunteer force.

### **Project Volunteer**

At the same time as the Gates Commission’s research, the internal Department of Defense study (Project Volunteer) was implemented throughout the military. Each service created a task force, and began to research the viability of the transition towards the all-volunteer

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>24</sup> Howard Callaway, *Memorandum For The Deputy Secretary of Defense, Letter to Mr. Dellums*. (Washington: Secretary of the Army, 1975)

<sup>25</sup> Charles C. Moskos, *The Enlisted Ranks In The All-Volunteer Force*. (Charlottesville: White Burkett Miller Center of Public Affairs, 1978), 8.

force. Unlike the Gates Commission, which was made up of civilian economics professors, business professionals, and a law student, Project Volunteer was headed by Roger Kelley, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and staffed by other members from the Pentagon. Notably, “other members of the committee were the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis, the Assistant Secretaries of the Military Departments for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, the Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Personnel from the Military Services, and the Joint Staff Director of Manpower and Personnel.”<sup>26</sup> The value of this study being conducted by lifetime military professionals cannot be undervalued. These were the men and women who understood the current situation in the military, and could therefore better predict probable consequences for this abrupt and radical transformation to an all-volunteer force.

Along with committee members from the Pentagon, each military service “was responsible for its own efforts, and each service responded differently.”<sup>27</sup> This delegation to the different services along with the makeup of Project Volunteer’s committee, made the study far better suited than the Gates Commission to determine how and when the U.S. military could and should make the transition to an all-volunteer force. By allocating the work required in studying the feasibility of the transition to each service within the Department of Defense, Project Volunteer seemed to offer far more realistic conclusions to the questions posed by both Project Volunteer and the Gates Commission.

Within Project Volunteer, each of the services responded and ultimately arrived at different conclusions. This was due to the different ways in which an all-volunteer force was

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<sup>26</sup> Rostker, 143.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

predicted to affect the varying branches. The Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force “treated the transition to the all-volunteer force as business as usual.”<sup>28</sup> This was because for them, desirability, size, and technical requirements meant that their services would not be overly affected by the transition. Unlike the other services, the Army was not only “the service that most directly benefited from the draft and thus had the most at stake, the new Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, had already commissioned a study of the feasibility of an all-volunteer force. When he took over this post in summer 1968--several months before Nixon’s ‘all-volunteer force’ speech of October 17, 1968.”<sup>29</sup>

In opposition to the Gates Commission on the racial equity of an all-volunteer force, for the Army, the transition to an all-volunteer force was concerning for a number of reasons. Their internal conclusions were that “an all-volunteer force would be costly and possibly not representative of the American people, i.e, that it would be predominately black.”<sup>30</sup> Other points highlighted manpower concerns as well as lowered quality standards due to the absence of draftees and draft induced volunteers. These realistic fears led to the call for large increases in recruitment spending as a requirement for any replacement of conscription while besides predicting it, no recommendation was made regarding racial inequality.

Overall, both the Gates Commission and Project Volunteer agreed on the feasibility of an all-volunteer force, “with a large-enough pay raise and support for non compensation programs, they sharply disagreed over the timetable for achieving an all-volunteer force.”<sup>31</sup> This disagreement could be attributed to both the political motives of the Nixon administration to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 150.

expedite the conclusions of the Gates Commission into rapid change, along with national security concerns from the Pentagon and from those within the U.S. military who would ultimately enact the transition.

In comparing the two, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs outlined their differing conclusions regarding the transition. For compensation, meaning increase to both enlisted and officer pay, the Gates Commission called for an “Enlisted Pay- 50% increase during first term of service, 9% in second term...Officer Pay- 28% increase in first 3 years of service. Effective July 1, 1970.”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Project Volunteer recommended a “Major increase in military pay of first-term personnel and pay adjustment for all ranks to be effective FY 72.”<sup>33</sup> In regard to other compensation concerns and housing projects, both seemed in agreement that there were necessary changes and additions to be made in order to make the all-volunteer force desirable economically.

Unlike the Gates Commission, Project Volunteer recognized the importance of recruiting. “They placed the highest priority on building an effective recruiting force. In contrast, the Gates Commission recommended a small increase in recruiting resources of \$8 million annually.”<sup>34</sup> Again, the Gates Commission failed to adequately predict the funds necessary needed to enact the transition to an all-volunteer force. Just a year later, in a 1971 request for funds by the U.S. Army, the service most impacted by the transition to an all-volunteer force asked for \$58.6 million for recruiting and advertising. Arguing, “A key element of our total effort to achieve zero

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<sup>32</sup> *Comparison of Gates Commission and Department of Defense (Project Volunteer) Recommendations on an All-Volunteer Force*. (Washington: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, 1970), 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Comparison of Gates Commission and Department of Defense (Project Volunteer) Recommendations on an All-Volunteer Force*. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Rostker, 149.

draft has been and remains the recruiting and advertising programs. Using reprogrammed Army funding in FY 1971 and Project Volunteer funding in FY 1972, we are increasing our recruiter strength from the previously authorized 2,900 level to over 6,000 by the end of FY 1972.”<sup>35</sup> Over the course of the 1970s, Project Volunteer was proved correct, as recruiting and advertising became integral in supplying and ultimately maintaining the all-volunteer force. By 1979, the total DoD budget for recruiting and advertising was \$83.1 million,<sup>36</sup> ten times the cost that the Gates Commission had estimated a decade earlier.

The Gates Commission and Project Volunteer provide evidence of what both the Nixon administration and Pentagon leaders saw as predicted problems with the transition to the all-volunteer force. Quantifiable consequences involving costs and quality were paramount. While demographic consequences involving race and social class raised by the Pentagon in Project Volunteer were interestingly less stressed by the Gates Commission. The campaign promise of Nixon in 1968 proved difficult to stop growing public disapproval for the Vietnam War and by association the draft meant that the transition to the all-volunteer force was all but a foregone conclusion. Predicted changes and unforeseen problems characterized the following transitional period. As the Vietnam War came to a close and public opinion of the military improved, America was forced to come to terms with fact that the all-volunteer force in its infancy was already failing to represent the society it was meant to protect.

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<sup>35</sup> *Army Requests for FY 1973 Project Volunteer Funds*. (Washington: Department of the Army, 1971)

<sup>36</sup> *Joint Recruiting Advertising Program for FY 79 - ACTION MEMORANDUM*. (Washington: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, 1979)



## Part Two: Implementation (1971-1975)

Even though conscription continued until June 30, 1973, the legislation authorizing the creation of an all-volunteer force had been signed into law in 1971. At that point its implementation began with earnest as the Nixon administration, Department of Defense, and individual services sought to effect the changes demanded by the Gates Commission and Project Volunteer. In so doing they confronted numerous challenges, both predicted and unforeseen. Quality, quantity, race, and the role of women in the new volunteer force led to continued research and the formation of further case studies, often conducted on an *ad hoc* basis as the transition happened.

Many of these issues were addressed by the Central All-Volunteer Force Task Force, which “was established [January, 1972] to respond to a number of criticisms to [the Assistant Secretary of Defense Roger Kelly’s] hands-off approach”<sup>37</sup> during the earlier Project Volunteer. The goal of this task force was to exclusively focus on manpower requirements, and “evaluate alternative means for maintaining required military force levels in a zero-draft environment. Each study was designed either to decrease the demand for new personnel or to increase the eligible pool of potential recruits.”<sup>38</sup> This meant that the focus of the Central Task Force was to ensure that the new all-volunteer force did not lack the manpower requirements it needed to continue the U.S. war mission in Vietnam and deter the Soviet Union in the ever present Cold War.

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<sup>37</sup> Rostker, 199.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

### **True Volunteers**

During the transition, one of the first issues raised had to do with the number of "true volunteers," as those enlistees not induced to volunteer by threat of draft were known. Without realistic true volunteer numbers, it would have been difficult for the Department of Defense to forecast recruitment levels going forward. Fortunately, "the implementation of the lottery system by the Selective Service in 1970 provided a clear indicator of the number of true volunteers." Enlistees whose birth dates corresponded to lottery numbers higher than the numerical range of men drafted unknown were assumed to true volunteers. For the second half of 1972, "the rate was about 20 percent." Of course 20 percent would not be enough to maintain troop levels after the end of the draft in 1973. Therefore other means of fulfilling manpower quotas had to be enacted. This disparity between true volunteers and manpower minimums led to the increase in recruitment and enlistment bonus spending, the substitution of civilian workers for soldiers in certain support roles, and a dramatic expansion of women in the military.

### **Bonuses**

Enlisted bonuses were seen as a simple and relatively inexpensive way of attracting more recruits. "Between 1971 and 1973, the Army initiated a number of bonus programs and enlistment options--unit of choice, stabilized tours at preferred geographic locations, and guaranteed military occupational specialties in the combat arms (later extended to non combat career fields)."<sup>39</sup> This early focus on the combat arms fields was logical because those were the least desirable jobs and the ones that certain branches like the U.S. Army and Marine Corps often had the most difficulty filling. To help alleviate this concern, by 1972 Congress authorized the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 212.

U.S. Army and Marine Corps to offer a \$1,500 enlistment bonus for a four year enlistment in the combat arms fields. This shift from the two year to four year total enlistment also “proved particularly important over time...and a \$2,500 bonus in place during May and June 1973 had a more pronounced positive effect on enlistments into the combat arms.”<sup>40</sup> While bonuses did prove effective in drawing new recruits, critics of the all-volunteer force argued that the monetary bonuses preyed on the poor and socio-economically disenfranchised.

### **Advertising**

Another medium utilized by the U.S. military in order to gain more recruits was advertising. A relatively new concept at the time, the Army only began testing the effectiveness of advertising during Project Volunteer. The initial results were not encouraging. Little money was allocated in 1970-71 and the test results were so lackluster that “Congress went on to formally prohibit the use of FY 1972 funds for paid radio and television advertising.” Prior to Project Volunteer’s pilot project, the U.S. military had used only free public service advertising to appeal for recruits, and instead relied on the draft to meet manpower goals. The Army’s desire to be the first to test its own advertising is a testament to the different approaches taken to the transition by different branches. For the Army, an all-volunteer force would be much harder to maintain compared to the Air Force or Navy, where desirable jobs and technical skills that could be easily transferred to the civilian world would undoubtedly draw future volunteers.

Unlike the other branches, during a FY 1973 request for funds, the U.S. Army argued,

In the advertising area, we have included in the FY 73 base budget \$12.7 million increase over the FY 72 level of \$3.1 million. In order to extend the reach and frequency of messages carrying the Army’s career opportunities to our young population, we need to expand our FY 72 program by making greater use of magazines, newspapers, billboards,

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<sup>40</sup> Rostker, 214.

direct mail, etc. Based on our FY 71 and FY 72 experiences, an additional \$19.2 million from FY 73 Project Volunteer funds is requested for use of these media.<sup>41</sup>

Similar to the civilian job sector, the U.S. military was now in the business of selling a product, and the exponential increase in their advertising budget highlights the importance of advertising on the formation and maintenance of the all-volunteer force. Along with enticing new recruits, another goal of the increased advertising budget was an attempt to transform the public perception of the U.S. military, especially the U.S. Army. Public opinion of the military had also deteriorated sharply during the Vietnam War; events like the My Lai Massacre in 1968, as well as growing disillusionment with the overall war effort, had serious ramifications for U.S. military recruitment efforts.

### **Recruiting**

Similarly, military (and especially Army) recruiters recognized their distinct disadvantage in attracting volunteers for inherently dangerous combat arms specializations. The Army argued, “A key element of our total effort to achieve zero draft has been and remains the recruiting and advertising programs. Using reprogrammed Army funding in FY 1971 and Project Volunteer funding in FY 1972, we are increasing our recruiter strength from the previously authorized 2,900 level to over 6,000 by the end of FY 1972.”<sup>42</sup> Recruiting became the best method for achieving the manpower needs of the Modern Volunteer Army, and as a result each branch of service rapidly invested greater amounts of monetary and human resources to their respective recruitment programs.

From 1971 to 1973, “The Army initiated a number of bonus programs and enlistment options--unit of choice, stabilized tours at preferred geographic locations, and guaranteed

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<sup>41</sup> *Army Requests for FY 73 Project Volunteer Funds*. (Washington: Department of the Army, 1971), 5-6..

<sup>42</sup> *Army Requests for FY 73 Project Volunteer Funds*. 5.

military occupational specialties in the combat arms (later extended to non combat career fields”

<sup>43</sup> All these changes were intended to make a career in the U.S. military more attractive. In 1973, a report by the General Research Corporation evaluated recruitment efforts during the early years of the transition. A part of a larger evaluation of the Modern Volunteer Army, the report, *Evaluation of Recruiter Assistant and Unit Canvasser Recruiting Programs*, was created to determine the effectiveness of recruiters, recruiters assistants, and canvassers. They determined that “The presence of additional unit canvassers and recruiter assistants appears to stimulate additional high school graduate and category I-III enlistments.”<sup>44</sup>

Providing some recommendations going forward, they recognized “ a large difference in productivity among different types of recruiters...these differences may be traceable to the characteristics of the particular recruiters selected and perhaps the choice of stations to which the recruiter is sent.”<sup>45</sup> The study confirmed that race, age, rank, and place of birth all influenced the productivity of a recruiter and canvasser in a certain geographic, socio-economic location. While the cost effectiveness of certain recruiting practices were scrutinized, overall, the report found that the recruitment effort as a whole was working.

### **Civilianization**

Decreasing the number of servicemen and women by increasing the number of civilian substitutions was another viable means to achieve an operational all-volunteer force. The Gates Commission contended that “Many positions in the force structure currently manned by uniformed servicemen could be staffed with civilians at lower budgetary costs and with no loss

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<sup>43</sup> Rostker, 212.

<sup>44</sup> David W. Grissmer, V. W. Hobson, and R. W. Rae, *Evaluation of Recruiter Assistant and Unit Canvasser Recruiting Programs*. (McLean:General Research Corporation, Operations Analysis Division, 1973), 54.

<sup>45</sup> Grissmer, 55.

in immediate effectiveness.” The commission members indeed argued that because civilian manpower was less expensive than military manpower, civilianization would be a source of major savings. “The commission finally suggested that, at a force level of 2.5 million men, about 106,000 positions could be civilianized.” These positions would principally come from such support fields as food services and supply; once they had been contracted out, soldiers could return to being soldiers. Project Volunteer, which also recommended the further use of civilians in the military, stressed as usual practical considerations, and cautioned that any increase must begin after the end of the War in Vietnam: career mess sergeants could not instantly be transformed into first sergeants of infantry or artillery companies. Ultimately in practice, “the number of positions civilianized was politically determined and was a fraction of the number the Gates Commission staff originally proposed be civilianized.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Women in the Military**

Though the Central Task Force approached the role of women in the all-volunteer force similarly to civilianization, women offered an important and for the most part untapped section of the labor force. Planners hoped that women could prove integral in outfitting the all-volunteer force without conscription. “Each service was asked to present plans to reach a specific numerical goal--the services, with the exception of the Marine Corps, supported this initiative and agreed to meet and exceed the goals the task force had set.”<sup>47</sup> The Central Task Force also concluded that single women in the labor force were likely candidates for military service. Because “survey results show that few women have more than scant knowledge of the roles of military women,”<sup>48</sup> female recruitment became a priority; together with with an increased

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>47</sup> Rostker, 201.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 202.

emphasis on advertising and with better retention policies, it was hoped that qualified women would form a substantial part of the all-volunteer force.

In March 1973, a special report by the Secretary of Defense Elliot L. Richardson on the all-volunteer force outlined objectives for female recruitment efforts. Richardson wrote, “Currently, more than 80 percent of job specialties Defense-wide are open to women. In FY 1972, 14,000 women enlisted in the four services combined. FY 1973 goals call for enlisting 21,700 women--an increase of more than 50 percent...They are all high school graduates, or have GED equivalents, and have average or above average mental ability.”<sup>49</sup> By 1977, the Department of Defense was planning for 80,800 enlisted women.<sup>50</sup> For proponents of the all-volunteer force, women solved not only problems involving troop levels, but also offered an answer to quality concerns that continued to influence the U.S. military's poor public perception.

### Costs

By 1972, the cost of the all-volunteer force had already surpassed any estimates made by either the Gates Commission or Project Volunteer. For the entire Department of Defense,

The FY 1972 program that was finally approved contained \$463 million for the 20-percent first-term pay raise, \$105.2 million for recruiting and advertising, \$66.5 million for such special problems as ROTC and medical, \$209 million for quality-of-life ‘experiments,’ \$10 million for an Army-only combat arms enlisted bonus, and \$446 million of ‘unallocated’ funds.<sup>51</sup>

Two years later, Rostker described how, “the FY 1974 budget was a replay of the previous year, with one exception. By the winter, recruiting was high, and the 68-percent entry-level pay increase of November 14, 1971, was having the desired effect. From the

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<sup>49</sup> Elliot L. Richardson, *Special Report of Secretary of Defense on the All-Volunteer Force and the End of the Draft*. (Washington: Secretary of Defense, 1973), 16-17.

<sup>50</sup> Richardson, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Rostker, 167.

originally programmed volunteer force funds of \$3.5 billion, \$3.1 billion had previously been committed to ongoing programs that were to be continued during FY 1974.”<sup>52</sup> Contemporary officials were well aware of, and concerned by, these increases. In a 1978 report to Congress, the Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) discussed the additional costs of the all-volunteer force. It concluded, “The move from a conscripted to an all-volunteer force caused substantial annual cost increases of more than \$3 billion since 1973 [more than twice what] The Gates Commission estimated that a 2-million man all-volunteer force would cost about \$1.47 billion a year (in 1970 dollars)”<sup>53</sup> Nor were these increased costs limited to the Defense Department's budget. From the Department of Labor alone, costs attributed to the AVF due to “number of discharge[e]s filing for unemployment and the costs of their average claim” were \$8,521,000 in 1974, \$32,970,000 in 1975, and \$73,407,000 in 1976.<sup>54</sup> All the programs that had helped the AVF transition prove successful added substantially to the overall cost.

While the GAO reported the costs were more than double those of the Gates Commission, they also conceded that the two estimates could not be properly compared because “the Gates Commission made assumptions about force mix...accessions, training, and retention that did not come true and [the GAO report] did not include the social costs considered by the Gates Commission.”<sup>55</sup> Of course different parameters surely led to different estimates, and unintended consequences, while not the fault of the planners, were none the less real. Even with the social costs of conscription eliminated, the all-volunteer force had quickly surpassed any

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>53</sup> *Report to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States, Additional Cost of the All-Volunteer Force.* (Washington, 1978)

<sup>54</sup> *Report to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States, Additional Cost of the All-Volunteer Force.* 48.

<sup>55</sup> *Report to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States, Additional Cost of the All-Volunteer Force.*



estimates of the Gates Commission and other proponents. By the mid-1970s it was clear that the new all-volunteer force would be directly tied to the investments that the United States was willing to make in it; its real total costs were wildly out of line with the projections that had been used to justify the transition.

### **Quality**

For the Central Task Force, no topic was more contentious than the predicted quality standards of the transitioning all-volunteer force. How to measure quality was also debated due to its inherently biased nature. During the Vietnam period, the U.S. military used five mental categories, with V being unacceptable, IV being the lowest accepted, III average, with II and I being the highest. This method came to define the Quality debate of the transition to the all-volunteer force. Applying these five categories in order to document quality, Rostker outlined how,

Following the general line of the Gates Commission, the task force used two different methods to calculate the minimum mental standards for each of the services. The first method adjusted to the mean mental requirement, and the second method adjusted to the lowest mental requirement. Without addressing the differences among the services, the task force saw the application of either method as having the effect of deflating quality requirements.<sup>56</sup>

This language by the Central Task Force was intentional so that “the lowest mental requirement” could be used for all services. For example,

In the case of the Army, there is a projected shortage of 12,000 accessions, assuming Army adheres to its objective of 20% mental category IV [the lowest acceptable mental category] for male accessions. We estimate that this 12,000 accessions shortage can be overcome by increasing male mental category IV input to 25% for FY 1973.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Rostker, 202.

<sup>57</sup> Rostker, 203.

In other words, the Central Task Force found itself compelled to accept a higher number of the lowest eligible mental category in order to alleviate manpower concerns. This was not a new tactic for the U.S. military, since manpower concerns during World War II had previously led to lowering of mental requirements. More recently, at the height of the Vietnam War in 1966, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara had created Project 100,000 as a means to not only supply the military with necessary personnel, but also champion the Project as helping President Johnson's "War on Poverty." The Project ordered the recruitment of people who had previously been below military mental and medical standards with the intention of training to meet acceptable levels during their term of service thus bettering their social and economic opportunities. Unfortunately the reality of Project 100,000 was far different, becoming ammunition for critics of the military and its push to an all-volunteer force. Critics argued that the military would be forced to lower quality standards, leading to an overrepresentation of the poor and uneducated in the enlisted ranks.

In March 1973, a special report by the Secretary of Defense Elliot L. Richardson on the all-volunteer force and the end of the draft highlighted and commented on these concerns.

Regarding reports of lower quality levels, Richardson argued that,

the trends in mental ability of new entries by fiscal year show a modest decline in men coming into military service having above average mental abilities. However, the number of adequate to fill jobs requiring complex technical training and the ability to complete such training successfully. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of men entering service with average mental ability, which is adequate for most military jobs. The declining trend in Mental Group IV personnel is the result of emphasis placed on recruiting people with greater mental ability. Overall, the learning capacity of new entries is adequate in meeting job requirements when the proportion of Mental Group IV personnel does not exceed about 22 percent. Conversely, when the overall proportion of Mental Group IV personnel falls below 15 percent, there is a tendency toward many people being under-challenged by their job assignments.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Richardson, 11-12.

Richardson had data showing the mental ability of new entries from 1969 to 1973. While above average (categories I and II) and below average (IV) recruits decreased slightly as proportions of the whole, average (category III) recruits increased slightly. So far, it seemed that the all-volunteer force while perhaps raising the lowest level of mental aptitude slightly, had failed in attracting the above average personnel required. for an increasingly technologically focused and dependant military.

Another definite mark of quality for the all-volunteer force was its number of high school graduates. Interestingly “Because of a sharp decline in the percentage of high school graduates among Army enlistees during the first half of FY 1973, the overall percentage of high school graduates among enlistees for all of the Armed Services combined dropped from 71 percent in FY 1972 to 63 percent in the first half of FY 1973.”<sup>59</sup> This decline served as proof for the critics of the all-volunteer force. While the Army was most to blame, the fact that new accessions between 1972 and 1973 led to a lower overall high school graduation rate seemed to fit the narrative that the all-volunteer force was being serviced by the poor and uneducated. In response, “Starting February 1, 1973, the Army placed a ceiling of 30 percent non-high school graduate enlistments each month. Army recruiters will direct more attention toward high school graduates and this shift in emphasis should increase the Army percentage of high school graduates to the 70 percent level which is desirable.”<sup>60</sup>

Some of Richardson’s claims were evidently contradicted by a fact sheet from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Manpower and Reserve Affairs from the fall of 1973. In "Recruiter Malpractices," the analyst Dan Huck reported that “because of the pressure placed on

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 15.

recruiters to meet enlistment objectives, many have resorted to a variety of improper practices to meet these objectives, including assisting applicants on tests, concealing physical defects and overlooking a police record”<sup>61</sup> While official recruiting statistics showed an increase in average mental categories along with a decrease in mental category IV enlistments, the 1813 cases of recruiter malpractice that were under investigation (and the 329 proven cases) between January 1972 and October 1973 called into question the reliability of Richardson’s report.<sup>62</sup>

The Department of the Army, where most of the abuses occurred, further outlined the problem in an internal document of the Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army Manpower and Reserve Affairs dated August 6, 1973. Discussing the problem, Brigadier General Robert M. Montague Jr. said, “In early 1973, the USACIDC [U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command] reported that recruiter malpractice were widespread throughout the Command and that a large number of recruiters had a background of serious offenses of a felony nature.”<sup>63</sup>

Outlining the U.S. Army’s overall assessment of the problem, Montague said, “The number of alleged recruiting/processing irregularities/malpractices is of great concern to this command. The overall magnitude must be viewed in terms of number of recruiting personnel directly involved in recruiting and processing (approximately 6,000), the number of applicants processed (approximately 241,000 during the period 1 Jan 72 - 30 Jun 73).”<sup>64</sup> While this information does not mean that the Department of Defense was entirely wrong in its analysis of the overall mental aptitude of the transitioning all-volunteer force. Army recruiting problems along with published lower mental aptitude levels must be taken into account when evaluating

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<sup>61</sup> Dan Huck, *Fact Sheet Subject: Recruiter Malpractices*. (Washington, 1973)

<sup>62</sup> Huck.

<sup>63</sup> Robert M. Montague Jr, *Memo on Recruiter Malpractice to Mr Stephen Herbits*. (Illinois: Department of the Army Headquarters United States Army Recruiting Command, 1973), 3.

<sup>64</sup> Montague, 5.

the transitioning force and when predicting future readiness. It must also be noted that during the transition, the quality argument was inherently racist and was used as a way to limit the number of minority accessions during the transition. This is because at the time, minority youths educational achievement levels were woefully lower than their white peers. Even after the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s, segregation and “separate but equal” educational policies had inflicted a heavy toll on the minority generation coming of age in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Which in turn meant that to reduce the number of non-high school graduate accessions was to unfairly limit the number of minority accessions. Within the quality debate, the argument that the all-volunteer force was becoming less educated and therefore less qualified were in fact thinly veiled protests that the all-volunteer force was becoming blacker.

Nonetheless, even with the heated debates over cost, quality, and race, from 1971 to 1975, proponents of the transition were for the most part pleased with the progress of the transition. Increased recruitment and advertising efforts were proving effective. In a memorandum to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the U.S. Army reported, they were “at 97 percent of programmed strength at the end of September [1973].”<sup>65</sup> Of course at the same time, projected costs for the all-volunteer force had already been proven woefully small. At the same time, questions regarding racial composition and ‘quality’ of the new all-volunteer force were being raised with greater concern. On December 17, 1974, in a statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Assistant Secretary of Defense William K. Brehm reported, “In FY 1974, the representation of new enlistees and the active force as a whole was close to that of the general population with the exception of minority representation. Black personnel constituted

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<sup>65</sup> Howard H. Callaway, *Memorandum to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Subject: Army Recruitment*. (Washington, 1973)

about 21% of new enlistees compared to 13% [closer to 11% based on 1970 U.S. Census information] in the general population.”<sup>66</sup> Between mid-1973, when the last U.S. serviceman was drafted, and mid-1975 when the last draftee was discharged, the demographic balance of the armed forces shifted toward ever-heavier minority and female representation. In subsequent years, proponents and critics of the volunteer military debated the significance of this change as the predicted and unintended consequences of the transition became increasingly apparent.

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<sup>66</sup> William K. Brehm, *Report to the Senate Armed Services Committee on Population Representation in the All-Volunteer Force*. (Washington, 1974)

### **Part Three: Consequences (1975-1978)**

The fall of Saigon in 1975 is often seen as the end of the Vietnam War, but the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 actually began the process. During the final years of the Nixon presidency, military demobilization also positively influenced the end of the war and ongoing transition to an all-volunteer force. Later, the Watergate scandal in 1974 led to Nixon's resignation and transition of power to his vice president, Gerald Ford. Continuing Nixon's policies, there was little shift in direction from the new administration in regard to the all-volunteer military. Meanwhile the second wave of the feminist movement, a result of larger social protests from the 1960s, was gaining traction; race relations continued to be strained as discrimination and segregation remained prevalent, especially in a civilian job market; and the economy as a whole suffered under the double plague of sharply increasing unemployment and annual inflation rates that exceeded ten percent. These political, social, and economic factors helped ensure that the U.S. military was perceived as both an attractive employment option and a facilitator for economic and social upward mobility for marginalized racial and socio-economic segments of the U.S. population.

Quickly following the end of the war in Vietnam in 1975, the transitional phase from conscription to recruitment ended. Both critics and proponents of the all-volunteer force began to conclude their analysis of this radical transformation, ultimately making their initial political, fiscal, and moral judgements on the new volunteer force. For proponents of the all-volunteer military, markers of success gave them a reason to celebrate. Achieving what many had thought impossible, the Nixon administration, Pentagon, and individual services had achieved what Nixon had promised seven years earlier; an all-volunteer force capable of supplying the United

States with the quality and quantity of men and women necessary to fulfill its national security obligations at home and abroad.

In 1976, in a statement to the Committee on Armed Services, another advocate of the all-volunteer force, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs William K. Brehm said, “The Peacetime Volunteer Force is a reality, and it is working...The challenge faced by the Department of Defense in making the Volunteer Force concept work was to attract service members in sufficient quantity and quality to meet national security needs.”<sup>67</sup> In regard to both quantity and quality the statistics affirmed Brehm’s assertion. A Military Manpower Strength Assessment for Fiscal Year 1976 discussing “High School Graduate or Equivalent Enlistments Non-Prior Service, Men and Women.”<sup>68</sup> showed that overall 78% of new enlistments were high school graduates, an encouraging figure notwithstanding the fact that the Army and Marine Corps continued to trail with rates of 73% and 68% respectively.<sup>69</sup> By November of 1976, the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense was reporting that “The total active strength of the four military services at the end of September 1976 was 2,084,000. This was more than 99% of the Services September objective of 2,102,00.”<sup>70</sup>

Of course the end of the Vietnam War led to the downsizing of the military’s total strength, making manpower objectives for the all-volunteer force more achievable. Nonetheless, it seemed that in very quantifiable ways, the new all-volunteer force had been achieved successfully. Yet as the all-volunteer force left its transitional phase, the question “was no longer

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<sup>67</sup> William K. Brehm, *Testimony of William K. Brehm on Military Posture, hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representative, 94th Cong., 1st Sess.* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975)

<sup>68</sup> *News Release: Military Manpower Strength Assessment Recruiting Results For Fiscal Year 1976* (Washington: Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense Public Affairs, 1976), 1.

<sup>69</sup> *News Release: Military Manpower Strength Assessment Recruiting Results For Fiscal Year 1976.* 4.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



the feasibility of the volunteer force...The debate now centered on the cost of the all-volunteer force, [again] the issue of quality (both cognitive and physical), [and] how representative this new force was of American society.”<sup>71</sup>

### Costs

The evident success of the all-volunteer force, as we have seen, came at a considerable cost, and "the effects on the budget were foremost in policymakers' minds."<sup>72</sup> While there was widespread public outcry concerning the high cost of the transition from conscription to the all-volunteer force, there was also vocal defense for the monetary feasibility of the all-volunteer force. Defending the all-volunteer force in 1976, before the Armed Service Committee in 1976, Assistant Secretary of Defense Brehm asserted “that most of the cost increase was attributable to pre-all-volunteer force legislation in 1967,”<sup>73</sup> which were policies put in place by the U.S. military to make military pay competitive with salaries in the civilian job market. While there was never consensus on whether or not earlier legislation was to blame, Congress was unmistakably concerned about fiscal sustainability, and indeed had been since 1973, when it had created the Defense Manpower Commission to monitor “the continuing rise of defense costs, especially manpower costs.”<sup>74</sup>

The Defense Manpower Commission argued in a report to the Secretary of Defense in 1976 that three factors “shape[d] our manpower program,” determined total costs, and decreed that the armed forces (regardless of expense) could not be cut further for fiscal reasons. The Commission found that

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<sup>71</sup> Rostker, 313.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>74</sup> Curtis W. Tarr, *Background of the Defense Manpower Commission. Memorandum to William K. Brehm* (Washington, 1974), 1.

we are now in an era of nuclear parity, [and therefore] we must have strong conventional forces in order to assure that, together with our allies, we can keep the nuclear threshold high... Various pressures have combined to reduce our military strength to the point where we now have 600,000 (21%) fewer people on active duty than we did in 1964. During the same period, Soviet active military strength has increased by 500,000 (20%). We believe we cannot cut active military strength further and still meet our defense needs for conventional forces.<sup>75</sup>

Although “variety of forces” was ambiguous, the Commission outlined how in shifting to an all-volunteer force, the U.S. government was balancing cost with efficiency.

The Commission also recognized that any increase in manpower costs were the most attributable fiscal consequence of the transition. They noted that between FY 1964 and FY 1976, manpower costs as a percentage of the overall Defense budget had increased from 55% to 64% of the overall Defense budget.<sup>76</sup> In terms of dollars, “From 1964 to 1976 Defense annual payroll costs have increased from \$22 billion to \$50 billion, even though active military and civilian manpower levels have declined 3.86 million to 3.14 million.”<sup>77</sup> This meant that the annual pay of the average service member had risen by nearly 280% in twelve years' time, a drastic increase in DoD spending. Recognizing the problem for FY 1977, the Commission concluded that to control manpower costs it would be necessary both to “reduce strengths [and] reduce the average cost per person.”<sup>78</sup>

These recommendations in favor of “restraining increases in military and civilian pay... [and] reducing personnel turnover and turbulence” were at odds with the basic economics of the all-volunteer force. Reducing military pay below comparable civilian rates would weaken both first-time recruitment and the services' ability to induce uniformed personnel to sign on for

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<sup>75</sup> Murray, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 16.

second, third, and lifetime enlistments. By 1976 it was clear that the all-volunteer force was dependant on the volatility of the labor market. In order to raise and lower troop levels, all the DoD could do was make minor changes to the total force level or alter retention rates of their enlisted and officer ranks. This became the basis for military manpower doctrine during the remainder of the twentieth century.

### **Race**

Beginning in the planning phase, race relations emerged alongside escalating costs as problems of the greatest urgency for the new all-volunteer force. *In The Black Officer Corps: A History of Black Military Advancement from Integration through Vietnam*, Isaac Hampton II described how in the last years of conscription, “As the Vietnam War escalated, a growing number of white and African American [citizens] began to question the validity of America’s involvement in the war. The disproportionate number of black combat fatalities in Vietnam and the systematic racism that infused the draft process, helped chip away African Americans’ support of the war.”<sup>79</sup> Growing hostility towards the military by blacks posed a grave problem as the armed forces moved toward an all-volunteer force which everyone understood would be dependent on minority and female participation to fill ranks depleted by the end of conscription. Black representation was key and any hostility towards the military had to be addressed.

Racial tensions in the military were not new, “Four presidents from 1948 up to the mid 1970s...seriously addressed the challenge of racial tension within the military and the drive for equality.”<sup>80</sup> Racial violence in society during the 1960s in places like the Watts neighborhood of L.A., Detroit, Memphis, and Chicago from the mid-1960s through the early '70s led to

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<sup>79</sup> Isaac Hampton II, *In The Black Officer Corps: A History of Black Military Advancement from Integration through Vietnam* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 38.

<sup>80</sup> Hampton, 106.

“uprisings...in the armed forces at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Fort Benning, Georgia, Great Lakes Naval Base, Illinois, Travis Air Force Base, California, and Goose Bay, Newfoundland, and Labrador. The Navy also had its share of racial unrest on the high seas aboard the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk and Constellation in 1972.”<sup>81</sup> The consequences of these events was an immediate and in many ways effective push towards achieving racial harmony within the services by the U.S. military during the transition.

Racial unrest “led to the creation of the DoD Directive 1100.15 in December of 1970”<sup>82</sup> that demanded research on ways to improve race relations within the military. Recommendations that came out of this directive and other external studies by organizations including the NAACP came to similar conclusions. A main point “recommended an education program on race relations for the entire military.”<sup>83</sup> Other points showed there was a failure by military commanders to “monitor equal opportunity provisions and enforce military regulations that were created to end practices of discrimination.”<sup>84</sup> While the U.S. military had been desegregated in 1948, widespread failure to enforce anti-discrimination policies had led directly to the deteriorating situation on military bases a generation later.

The DoD was not quick to respond and it took another race riot at Travis Air Force Base in 1971 to accelerate the process. Finally, in the summer of 1971 with the transition to the volunteer force certainly on the minds of the DoD leadership, Secretary of Defense David Packard signed Directive 1322.11, “which authorized the implementation of the Department of Defense Education Program in Race Relations for Armed Forces Personnel.” Though, this

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<sup>81</sup> Hampton, 106.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 120.

Program did not focus on equal opportunity; the armed forces believed that under its unique laws, post 1968, it could assure equal treatment for all its personnel. “The mission of Race Relations Education was anticipatory and targeted the root causes of prejudice, racism, inequality, and racial tension.”<sup>85</sup>

In the years that followed these policies were successful in altering race relations within the transitioning volunteer force. “The reaction of most African American officers to [Defense Race Relations Institute (DRRI)] race relations programs was positive. Because of their own personal experience with racism, they saw a need for change in the system. Many black officers volunteered for DRRI training classes.”<sup>86</sup> By solving or at least diffusing the racial tensions in the military, the DoD provided the platform for further minority participation in the new all-volunteer force. Hampton argued, “Establishing racial harmony and fairness within military institutions was a critical and necessary internal step the armed forces had to take as its personnel increasingly consisted of higher numbers of African Americans, women, and other minorities.”<sup>87</sup> Both critics and proponents of the volunteer armed forces would point to these shifting demographic trends as evidence supporting their positions. For critics, racial harmony meant a black invasion, while proponents saw the all-volunteer force as a catalyst for social and economic upward mobility for young blacks who had been disenfranchised by educational and economic discrimination.

These policy changes within the military, and by consequence government and civilian world, meant that racial discrimination was increasingly identified and criticized. By 1975, this focus on racial issues meant the discussion regarding representativeness had come to mean black

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<sup>85</sup> Hampton, 121.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

overrepresentation almost exclusively. Racial composition and internal race relations had also become paramount issues for American society and the center of much of the social unrest. This in turn led to greater media coverage and political response. By necessity, questions about race being linked to marginalization had been forced on both the U.S. military and federal government. From the mid-1970s, the armed forces have become more receptive to these issues, and willing to draw on the experience of both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam in the interest of reforms as crucial to the survival of the volunteer military system.

Of course racial discrimination remained symptomatic in the U.S. government and the military, neither of which was immune to sentiments widely held in society; yet the ability of the U.S. military to address these problems to a certain degree was laudable. Race riots during the Vietnam Era led to the creation of service-wide, mandatory race relations classes aimed at healing internal divisions and preventing disputes from becoming destructive. At the same time, policy changes involving grooming standards and post exchange products became counterpart efforts by the services hoping to make enlistment attractive to young blacks facing poor employment prospects in the civilian economy. This was one cause for the shift in racial demographics that came to define the all-volunteer force.

Continuing to serve as the central argument for critics of the volunteer force, this apparent racial minority overrepresentation had become evidently clear by 1976. The same *Military Manpower Strength Assessment for FY 1976* that had highlighted positive trends involving quality also documented racial demographics, reporting that “each Service registered an increase in both the number and proportion of black enlistees.”<sup>88</sup> In the U.S. military overall,

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<sup>88</sup> *News Release: Military Manpower Strength Assessment Recruiting Results For Fiscal Year 1976*. 4.

for the Transition Quarter 1976 (July 1 to September 30), blacks made up 20% of new enlistments, although they were 29% of the Army and 18% of Marine Corps' new enlistments during the same period.<sup>89</sup> Again, these statistics were markedly higher than U.S. census numbers, which recorded that blacks accounted for just 11.1% and 11.7% of the overall population in 1970 and 1980 respectively.<sup>90</sup> The early planning prior to and during the transition dramatically underestimated this dramatic demographic consequence of the transition towards an all-volunteer force.

Army and Marine Corps enlistment numbers also highlighted how blacks continued to be overrepresented in certain branches of the military and underrepresented in others, specifically those services where higher educational and technical skill levels were required. Highlighting this, for FY 1976, blacks made up just 11% of the Air Force and just 8% of the Navy's accessions for FY 1976.<sup>91</sup> Service wide technological advances requiring greater levels of educational attainment and certification certainly helped to create this disparity, which highlighted the shortcomings of minority schooling and the continued relegation of racial minorities to lower skilled occupations.

At least one analyst working for the Army, Mark Eitelberg, tried to counter the intuitive impression that the volunteer system was producing racial imbalance. In 1977 he reported to the Army Research Institute that "for enlisted personnel, Blacks and other ethnic groups are still 'overrepresentative' in the Army than in the civilian population. A comparison of figures on race

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>90</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *A Look at the 1940 Census, Decennial Census of Population, 1940 to 2010* (Washington: 2010), 9.

<sup>91</sup> *News Release: Military Manpower Strength Assessment Recruiting Results For Fiscal Year 1976*. 4

for 1974 and 1975 shows that these differences in representation are decreasing.”<sup>92</sup> The brief window of time he studied, between 1974 and 1975, diminished what was in fact a drastic shift: between 1970 and 1975, Bernard Rostker has observed, “black accessions as a percentage of the total doubled from 14 to 28 percent.”<sup>93</sup> Rostker also described how the greatest change was in the military reserves, where “In FY 1970, only 1.8 percent of all accessions in the reserve components were black. By FY 1975, that number had grown to 27.5 percent. The corresponding number for the Army Reserve was 42.4 percent.”<sup>94</sup> The Gates Commission forecasts had been profoundly mistaken: the shift in the demographics of the enlisted ranks in the U.S. military and especially the Army under VOLAR had been decisive, and within a very short span had begun to produce a military that was increasingly unrepresentative of American society.

The shift toward minority overrepresentation, however, did not extend to the officer corps, which continued to be heavily dominated by whites. In the early years of the transition, a careful quantitative study by Air Force Colonel Douthard Butler, tracked the efficiency ratings and promotions of black officers in the Army from 1965 through 1971 and “revealed startling disparities in the ratings given to white and black officers. These disparate ratings resulted in a pernicious, devastating impact on black officers’ promotions, career enhancing assignments, accessions into the Regular Army, selections for advanced military schooling, and, ultimately, underrepresentation in the leadership of the Army’s officer corps.”<sup>95</sup> Pentagon officials initially denounced the so-called Butler Report and sought to suppress its findings; only when the Army was forced by inquiries under the Freedom of Information Act to release it did the longstanding

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<sup>92</sup> Mark Jan Eitelberg, *Evaluation of Army Representation* (Alexandria: Human Resources Research Organization, 1977), 37.

<sup>93</sup> Rostker, 329.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>95</sup> Hampton, 69.



pattern of discrimination against black Army officers become public. Butler's damning findings confirmed the conviction, widespread among black officers during the 1960s and 1970s, that they had been victims of systemic racism. The transition to an all-volunteer system, according to Isaac Hampton II, encouraged African American officers to regard it as their duty to be catalysts for change, in order to ensure that future generations could have a better opportunity for military advancement.

### **Women in the Military**

Apart from certain racial groups, women quickly became another demographic minority within the all-volunteer force. Yet their impact was and continues to be profound; indeed, . Rostker has argued, women were “the single group most responsible for the success of the all-volunteer force.”<sup>96</sup> In their book *Women and the Military*, Martin Binkin and Shirley J. Bach agreed, stating, “Although it appreciated the great uncertainties involved, the Department of Defense realized that it had to further expand the role of women. Early in 1972, a task force established by the secretary of defense set out to prepare contingency plans for increasing the use of women to offset possible shortage of male recruits after the end of the draft.”<sup>97</sup> Highlighting how the DoD recognized that women were an untapped pool of potential recruits, their decision to increase recruitment goals for women in the early years of the all-volunteer force also reflected pressure by feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) to extend progressive government policy reforms within the military.

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<sup>96</sup> Rostker, 559.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Binkin and Shirley J. Bach, *Women and the Military* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1977), 14.

Nonetheless the strides came unevenly. In total, by 1976, women made up 8% of the overall armed forces: 12% of the Air Force, 2% of the Marine Corps, 5% of the Navy, and 9% of the Army. The increases continued thereafter, to the point that some senior officers wished to see them halted: a memorandum from Chapman B. Cox for the Secretary of Defense dated June 25, 1987, over a decade later described “how the Navy announced a plan to cap its female enlisted end strength at a level of 46,796 roughly 9% of the overall enlisted force. Cox then outlined how between 1987 and 1992, the female percentage of the overall enlisted naval force remained between 9.0 in 1987 to 9.6 in 1992.”<sup>98</sup>

In the officer corps, women were at first woefully underrepresented, and became less so relatively slowly. Between 1971 and 1976, female officers increased by only 4%, from 12,900 to 13,400, according to service wide DoD statistics. During the same five years, the total number of women in the armed forces grew from 42,800 in 1971 to 108,800, an overall increase in excess of 250 percent. Thereafter the numbers of women in the officer corps grew—from the 13,400 female officers in 1976 the DoD projected 20,200 by 1982, an increase of 15 percent—but female officers continued to be heavily underrepresented, with persistent disparities between the services. By 1976 for each service there were 4,800 female officers in the Army, 3,500 in the Navy, just 300 in the Marine Corps, and 4,800 in the Air Force.<sup>99</sup> While women made up 50 percent of the population, traditional gender roles and military policies that discouraged female participation helped limit the number of women in the military.

These numbers can be attributed to lack of interest but more importantly limitations placed on female recruitment. Binkin and Bach described how in 1977 the number of women in

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<sup>98</sup> Chapman B. Cox, *Navy Progress on Achieving Female End-Strength Goals- Action Memorandum* (Washington: Department of the Navy Force Management and Personnel, 1987), 1.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

the military was limited. Concluding the limitations set by the different services, Binkin and Bach argued,

Contrary to widely held beliefs, the major restrictions on the recruitment and functions assigned to women in the United States military establishment are not explicitly incorporated in federal law... More limiting are the set of policies established by the military services themselves based on their own interpretations of the national will as expressed through Congress. Together, these laws and policies relegate women to a minor role.<sup>100</sup>

The authors made clear that modest increases in the number of women in the military did not represent the growth of gender equity in either the military or American society as a whole. In fact, the military's decision to subtly increase the role of women could be argued as purely economic. A 1971 report *Innovations for Achieving an AVAF* (All Volunteer Armed Forces), directed by Dr. Stephen Enke summarized the economic value that women brought to the all-volunteer force. Enke argued, "If the services cannot maintain their desired strengths when the draft ends, one or more of them may want to increase the number of servicewomen."<sup>101</sup> Speaking in terms of costs, Enke went on to say the choice was between, "Enlisting more women or giving an extra general pay increase to over a million first-termers...Compared with such a substantial increase in aggregate military compensation, enlisting additional service women is really the most economical way to fill the projected annual shortfall."<sup>102</sup> The fact that the U.S. military's decision to increase the number of women was based on costs rather than equality is not surprising, and speaks to the way in which the military planned and implemented the all-volunteer force. However, whatever the reason for its implementation, the increase of women

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>101</sup> Stephen Enke, *Innovations for Achieving an AVAF*. (Washington: GE/TEMPO, 1971)

<sup>102</sup> Enke, *Innovations for Achieving an AVAF*.

in the military during the transition to the all-volunteer force had profound impacts both progressive and regressive on the U.S. military going forward.

Dwarfed by race relations during the planning phase and early years of the transition, gender and the future problems it could cause were noticeably absent from the discussion. Unlike race relations, which the military had been dealing with for decades, gender relations as a policy topic was relatively new. An increase in the number of sexual assaults, active duty pregnancies, and cases of gender discrimination, stand as unforeseen consequences of the transition to an all-volunteer force.

Legal disputes involving female service members during the late 1960s and 1970s highlighted this growing problem. In 1973, Supreme Court case *Frontiero v. Ferguson* detailed the unequal treatment of service women regarding military spouse benefits. Ultimately the court ruled that civilian males spouses of servicewomen were due the same benefits as their female counterparts. In 1974, *Crawford v. Cushman* brought an end to the military policy of involuntarily discharging women who became pregnant during their military service.

Summing up the consequences of the transition from conscription to the all-volunteer force in 1976, The Defense Manpower Commission final report highlighted areas of friction, as well as progress. "The Commission," they concluded,

Looking at the impact of the socio-economic change in the All Volunteer Force, found that there was a general level of improvement in education and mental groups which has a positive effect on the force, and although there were a greater number and percentage of blacks, this did not affect in any way the ability of units to carry out their mission. There had been a slight increase in the number of women but their lack of acceptance by some Service members has hampered their utilization and a program was need to change this situation. Since the All Volunteer Force there have been insignificant changes in current geographic origin and an analysis by the Commission indicates that it is not a poor man's Army.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Murray, 6.

Addressing both positive and negative aspects of the transition, the report offered no moral judgement on the all-volunteer force. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, William Brehm, offered another conclusion, which sought to affirm the Nixon-Ford legacy. In an address to Congress, he stated, “The challenge faced by the Department of Defense in making the Volunteer Force concept work was to attract Service members in sufficient quantity and quality to meet national security needs. To date [1976] the Department has been successful in this effort.”<sup>104</sup> Often failing to account for less quantifiable consequences of the transition, this focus on quantity and quality was common for proponents of the all-volunteer force. Looking back, Rostker was more critical, arguing that “The obsession with rising costs of personnel, reductions in recruiting resources, and early fielding of the [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, a new mental assessment instrument for recruits] proved a poor foundation for the new Carter administration”<sup>105</sup> and all-volunteer force of the late 1970s. “So poor, in fact, that, by the end of the Carter term, former President Nixon pronounced the all-volunteer force a failure and reluctantly concluded that we should reintroduce the draft.”<sup>106</sup> A powerful statement considering the birth of the all-volunteer military had been in a 1968 Nixon campaign promise.

Considering the beginning of the all-volunteer military had been a consequence of Nixon's 1968 campaign promise, this seemed to critics of the volunteer system a powerful admission of defeat. It also proved a premature for the military system that was still in the process of becoming financially, organizationally, and culturally viable. In fact, the shock of

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<sup>104</sup> William K. Brehm, *Briefing by Assistant Secretary William K. Brehm at Hearings on S.2965, Part 3: Manpower, hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel, 94th Cong. 2nd Sess* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976)

<sup>105</sup> Rostker, 303.

<sup>106</sup> Richard M. Nixon, *The Real War* (New York: Warner Books, 1980)

discovering the true costs of the all-volunteer armed forces was already beginning to wear off. With the heavy increases in military budgets of the 1980s and the armed forces' increasingly convincing demonstrations of professional competence and effectiveness, the voices of skeptics faded. By the end of Ronald Reagan's second administration, the volunteer military had become not just an accepted, but a celebrated feature of American life.

## Conclusion

With the tumultuous decade of the 1970s over, by the 1980s, the all-volunteer force had proven itself capable of fielding the quantity and quality demanded. While there were small notable military engagements during the Reagan administration, by the end of the decade, and with the Vietnam War 15 years in the past, public interest in the military lessened. The financial consequences of creating and now maintaining the all-volunteer force became a permanent piece of the ever increasing overall defense budget. Any adverse moral or social consequences as a result of the transition to the all-volunteer force were not enough to counterbalance the easily quantifiable successes of the new military.

By 1990, “the fall of the Soviet Union and the drawdown of the force structure presented a new set of challenges for researchers, who for years had struggled to keep qualified personnel in service and now had to try to develop programs to get some of them to leave voluntarily.”<sup>107</sup> Further documenting this radical shift in military policy as a consequence of the end of the Cold War, Rostker argued “The paradigm for managing the all-volunteer force shifted...success of the all-volunteer force was originally seen as rising and falling on the number of non-prior service recruits who could be induced to join and limited by the shrinking size of the youth population. Little attention was given to how higher retention might affect the personnel force.”<sup>108</sup>

The all-volunteer force displayed its ability to recruit and maintain a sufficient number of men and women who were capable of performing highly technical duties required as the U.S. military rapidly embraced modern military technology as it neared the 21st century. For fierce

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<sup>107</sup> Rostker, 592.

<sup>108</sup> Rostker, 640.

advocates of the all-volunteer force, the only question that remained was whether or not the all-volunteer military could fight a large-scale conflict.

Small military engagements during the 1980s such as the invasions of Grenada in 1983 or Panama in 1989 failed to provide critics or proponents of the all-volunteer force with any concrete evidence that determined the force's willingness to fight. However in the early 1990s, U.S. military actions during the First Gulf War answered that question. Discussing the lessons learned from that conflict, defense analyst Nick Timenes wrote, "First, the all-volunteer force worked...The enlisted force exhibited unprecedented skill, commitment, maturity, and professionalism."<sup>109</sup> Ben E. Rich, one of the founding engineers of the so-called Skunk Works, the Lockheed Martin Advanced Development division responsible for the development of the F-117 stealth fighter and many other high-technology weapons systems, understood the First Gulf War as the ultimate validation of America's new military system. Describing the first hours of the war in his memoir, *Skunk Works*, Rich wrote, "We learned that night, and for many nights after, that stealth combined with precision weapons constituted a quantum advance in air warfare. Ever since World War II, when radar systems first came into play, air warfare planners thought that surprise attacks were rendered null and void."<sup>110</sup> U.S. technological military advancements during the Cold War proved this idea to be false.

Recounting the early hours of the attack first hand, Air Force Colonel Barry Horne vividly described his role in the attack:

Saddam Hussein had sixteen thousand missiles and three thousand antiaircraft emplacements in and around Baghdad, more than the Russians had protecting Moscow. The only aircraft used to attack Baghdad that night were the F-117As [stealth attack

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<sup>109</sup> Nick Timenes, *Desert Storm Lessons Learned--A Second Opinion memorandum to Assistant Secretary of Defense* (Washington, 1991)

<sup>110</sup> Ben E. Rich, *Skunk Works: A Personal Memoir of My Years at Lockheed* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1996), Kindle edition.



fighters], Colonel Horne wrote, “We came at Baghdad in two waves. Ten F-117As in the first wave, to knock out key communications centers, and then the second wave of twelve airplanes an hour and so later...[The Iraqi Army] could detect us, but they couldn’t track us...In only three bombing raids that lasted a total of about twenty minutes, combined with attacks from Tomahawk missiles, we absolutely knocked Iraq out of the war. From that first night, they were incapable of launching retaliatory air strikes and sustaining any real defense against our airpower...and that was just the first night. We went back night after night over the next month.”<sup>111</sup>

January 17, 1991 was the first time that the U.S. military utilized its stealth attack aircraft capabilities and the results were devastating—but no more dramatic than the ground war, which in approximately 100 hours expelled the Iraqi Army from Kuwait and then reduced it to rubble. There could have been no more effective demonstration of the professionalism, competence, and power of the American armed forces.

And then, a little over a decade later, they did it again, during the Second Gulf War of 2003. American coalition troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom took only three weeks to reach Baghdad and topple the Hussein regime. In *Take Down: The 3rd Infantry Division’s Twenty-One Day Assault on Baghdad*, war correspondent Jim Lacey recounted the incredible efficiency of the all-volunteer force in its push to Baghdad in the spring of 2003. Celebrating the division’s performance Lacey observed that

technology helped, but the real reason the 3rd ID [Infantry Division] succeeded so brilliantly was that they simply outfought the Iraqis. In every encounter of the war the 3rd ID dominated their opponents, even after giving them the first shot. By any standard this is a remarkable feat, considering that the average combat soldier was still in his teens and probably fewer than one in fifty 3rd ID soldiers had ever seen combat before.<sup>112</sup>

There is no doubt that the all-volunteer force was lethally effective during the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Both technological superiority, military training, quality and leadership all

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<sup>111</sup> Rich, *Colonel Horn describes his part in the bombing of Baghdad during the First Gulf War*, Kindle edition.

<sup>112</sup> Jim Lacey, *Take Down: The 3rd Infantry Division’s Twenty-One Day Assault on Baghdad* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 259.

played a role in the U.S. military's quick decisive victory during the initial invasions. In 2003, however, unlike the First Gulf War, U. S. troops quickly found themselves under attack by insurgents, and trying to manage the much more difficult and exhausting tasks of military occupation and counterinsurgency warfare—precisely the kinds of operations that the all-volunteer force was never meant to engage in. Describing the transition from invasion to occupation in Iraq, General Weber of the 3rd Division said, “For the 3rd ID, conducting stability operations in a post-Saddam Iraq was not even a consideration they planned for.” Lacey continued, “As far as [the 3rd ID] knew, they would topple the regime and go home. It is therefore unfortunate that the insurgency that flamed up in the wake of the regime's demise has been allowed to obscure one of the most remarkable military achievement in history.”<sup>113</sup>

Though Lacey by no means exaggerated the military achievements of the 3rd Infantry Division and all-volunteer force generally, he failed to recognize that the insurgency was a consequence of the invasion and the U.S. military meant for rapid lethal short term missions was now responsible for a sustained counter-insurgency campaign. As the Iraq War ground on, in parallel to the even longer U. S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, similarities to the debacles of the Vietnam War and the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-89 cannot be ignored. No military, regardless of its numerical or technical superiority has been successful in these long chaotic campaigns. Nonetheless, the prolonged wars in Iraq and Afghanistan against complex and constantly shifting enemy insurgencies ensured the continued need for an orthodox military.

In 2004 during the early years of the Iraq War, the ever present need for troops on the ground led to debate over bringing back the draft in Congress. In those debates, Secretary of

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<sup>113</sup> Lacey, 258.

Defense Donald Rumsfeld speaking to the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee said, “A draft simply is not needed. We have 295 million people in the United States of America and there are some 2.6 million active and reserve forces serving. We are capable of attracting and retaining the people we need, through the proper use of pay and other incentives.”<sup>114</sup> Rumsfeld was proven correct as the U.S. military showed it was capable of fighting in two separate conflicts at the same time during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

In terms of financial costs, a Congressional Budget Office Testimony in 2007 on the *Estimated Costs of U.S. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and of Other Activities Related to the War on Terrorism* outlined the costs attributed to our most recent foreign wars. As a consequence of the transition to an all-volunteer force, the CBO testimony found that between 2001 to 2007, the Global War on Terrorism cost the U.S. government \$604 billion. This included costs for military operations, financing of local national security forces, diplomatic operations and foreign aid, and veterans’ benefits and services. Projecting future costs, the CBO foresaw that between 2008 and 2017, the Global War on Terrorism would cost the U.S. government \$1,055 billion.<sup>115</sup>

Also researching the financial impact of the Global War on Terrorism, Amy Belasco a specialist in U.S. defense policy and budget, settled on an even larger total in *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* a report for the Congressional Research Service in 2014. In her report Belasco concluded:

With the enactment of the FY2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act on January 1, 2014 (H.R. 3547/P.L. 113-73), Congress has approved appropriations for the past 13 years of

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<sup>114</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Department of Defense News Briefing--Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers* (Washington, 2004)

<sup>115</sup> Peter Orszag, Briefing by CBO Director to the Committee on the Budget U.S. House of Representatives on *Estimated Costs of U.S. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and of Other Activities Related to the War on Terrorism* (Washington: CBO, 2007), 2.

war that total \$1.6 trillion for military operations, base support, weapons maintenance, training of Afghan and Iraq security forces, reconstruction, foreign aid, embassy costs, and veterans' health care for the war operation initiated since the 9/11 attacks.<sup>116</sup>

Agreeing with the earlier CBO report, Belasco showed that the CBO estimates were perhaps too cautious because by 2014 the U.S. had already spent \$1.6 trillion. Documenting peak levels of costs and troop levels, Belasco stated that by 2014, "Annual war costs also decreased from a peak of \$195 billion in FY 2008 to \$95 billion enacted in FY 2014."<sup>117</sup> Regardless of inflation the difference between FY2008 and earlier projections by the Gates Commission that estimated that a 2-million man all-volunteer force would cost about \$1.47 billion a year (in 1970 dollars)<sup>118</sup> are astounding.

Demographically, by the twenty-first century the all-volunteer force continued to change dramatically. Progress involving women in the military was notable, though there was much work to be done. David Chu wrote in *Population Representation in the Military Services--Fiscal Year 2002*, "Women comprised about 17 percent of NPS (non prior service) active duty accession and 24 percent of NPS accessions to the Selected Reserve compared to 50 percent of 18 to 24 year-old civilians."<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, for FY 2002, Chu noted, "Military women, across the enlisted force and officer corps in both the Active and Reserve Components, [were] more likely to be members of a racial/ethnic minority group than are military men...[and while] Women are still a minority in the Total Force. However, their representation has grown greatly

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<sup>116</sup> Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* (Washington, Congressional Research Service, 2014), 1.

<sup>117</sup> Belasco, 1.

<sup>118</sup> *Report to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States, Additional Cost of the All-Volunteer Force*. (Washington, 1978)

<sup>119</sup> David S. C. Chu, *Population Representation in the Military Services--Fiscal Year 2002, final report* (Washington: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, 2004), V.

since the inception of the All Volunteer Force.”<sup>120</sup> In fact, Chu had seen sustained annual increases of about three percentage points since FY 1994. As of 2014, according to the *Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2014 Summary Report*, “Female representation among enlisted accessions/commissioned officer gains were as follows: Army - 16.2 percent enlisted 21.3 percent officer, Navy - 23.1 percent enlisted and 22.3 percent officer, Marine Corps - 10.7 percent enlisted and 11.3 percent officer, Air Force - 19.8 percent enlisted and 27.3 percent officer.”<sup>121</sup>

Racially, the modern all-volunteer force continues to be used by both critics and proponents of the volunteer force. Remarking on the performance of minorities during Desert Storm, Timeness wrote, “There are severe limits to the efficacy of the military services as agents of social change. The role and performance of minorities in the enlisted force is a huge success...[Although] minorities are still seriously underrepresented in the officer corps. The problem is demographic, and will be hard to fix.”<sup>122</sup> Later, after our more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the *Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2014 Summary Report* stated, “Although racial minorities make up 23.4 percent of civilian benchmark (the civilian labor force age 18 to 44), 32.9 percent of DOD’s enlisted forces in FY14 are racial minorities.”<sup>123</sup> For officers, where “The civilian benchmark for (Active Component) AC commissioned officer gains is the 18 to 39 year-old college graduate population, in which 23.3 percent of men and 24.1 percent of women are racial minorities...And, although racial minorities

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<sup>120</sup> Chu, V.

<sup>121</sup> *Population Representation in the Military Services--Fiscal Year 2014* (Washington: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness), 32.

<sup>122</sup> *Desert Storm Lessons Learned--A Second Opinion memorandum to Assistant Secretary of Defense*.

<sup>123</sup> *Population Representation in the Military Services--Fiscal Year 2014*. 37.

are somewhat underrepresented in commissioned officer gains, this underrepresentation is entirely due to the minority underrepresentation of men.”<sup>124</sup>

What is notable about these statistics is that while minority men continue to be overrepresented in the enlisted ranks and underrepresented in the officer corps, the greatest change has been for minority women, who are now dramatically overrepresented in both. While females make up only 14.8 percent of the overall enlisted force, compared to about 25.1 percent in the civilian labor force ages 18 to 44, enlisted minority women make up just over 50 percent of total women in the Army and Navy, 25 percent in the Marine Corps, and 38 percent in the Air Force.<sup>125</sup> The study described how, “Gender differences in the occupational distribution of the enlisted force are well known. Women are overrepresented in administrative and medical occupations, whereas men are overrepresented in warfighting and engineering occupations, which include infantry, gun crews, seamanship, and electrical occupations.”<sup>126</sup> Of course the decision by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter in March of 2016 to open all combat jobs to women will certainly have an impact on these statistics in the future. Nonetheless, segregation, and over or underrepresentation of certain races and genders in different job fields as well as the enlisted and officer corps continues to afflict the all-volunteer force.

While these statistics from 2014 highlight more recent demographic changes, David Chu aptly summarized the overall consequences of the transition to an all-volunteer force in 2002. He wrote,

Although the force is diverse, it is not an exact replica of society as a whole. The military way of life is more attractive to some members of society than to others. Among the enlisted ranks, the proportion of African-Americans continues to exceed population counts of the civilian labor force. Hispanics are underrepresented in the military, but their

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>125</sup> *Population Representation in the Military Services--Fiscal Year 2014*. 37.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

percentages have increased over the years. Minorities comprise proportionally less of the officer corps; however, their representation levels are in keeping with minority statistics among the pool of college graduates from which second lieutenants and ensigns are drawn. Women continue to be underrepresented in the military, compared to their proportion in civilian society. However, accession statistics show that women continue to gain in both numerical and proportional strength.<sup>127</sup>

By 2002, progress was slow, racial minorities, especially blacks, continued to be overrepresented while women continued to be underrepresented. In regard to quality and its willingness to fight, Rich, Horne, and Lacey all highlighted that the all-volunteer force was perhaps the most capable fighting force the world had ever seen. Though between the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and the invasion of Grenada in 1983, this question had not yet been answered. In fact, prior to the First Gulf War in 1991, the all-volunteer force was used sparingly, with questions of its military capability still unanswered. Since 2001, the all-volunteer force has shown its professionalism and demonstrated its capacity for combat year after year, invading two countries where long wars of occupation quickly followed.

This constant state of war since 2001 is as much a product of the transition to an all-volunteer force as the proven battle worthiness of the modern American armed forces. Because while the transition from conscription to an all-volunteer force was caused by public outcry for the war in Vietnam, the end of conscription has also meant, for the last 40 years, the effectual end of any broad-gauged public protests against the growth of a continually interventionist U.S. foreign policy. As a result, the American people have let pass, largely without notice, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as innumerable small and clandestine operations against al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and other terrorist organizations in the Middle East, Africa, and across the developing world.

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<sup>127</sup> Chu, viii.

Andrew Bacevich, a retired Army colonel turned historian, and the author of numerous works including *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country*, has tried to come to terms with the all-volunteer force in the post 9/11 era. In *Breach of Trust*, Bacevich wrote that

a civil-military relationship founded on the principle that a few fight while the rest watch [has] turned out to be a lose-lose proposition--bad for the country and worse yet for the military itself. Rather than offering an antidote to problems, the military system centered on the all-volunteer force bred and exacerbated them...Designed to serve as an instrument of global interventionism (or imperial policing), America's professional army has proven to be astonishingly durable, if also astonishingly expensive. Yet when dispatched to Iraq and Afghanistan, it has proven incapable of winning.<sup>128</sup>

Bacevich was no stranger to the costs of our most recent wars: in 2007 he lost his son, First Lieutenant Andrew J. Bacevich, Jr., to an improvised explosive device in Salah Ah Din Province, Iraq. Understandably, Bacevich questioned why his son died as he witnessed the fiscal, human, and moral cost of our recent conflicts that have yet to bear any visible or tangible reward.

Seeking the source of our current foreign policy failures in history, Bacevich has argued there was a turning point following World War II. He argued, unlike our most recent conflicts, "World War II became an indisputably communal undertaking, involving quite literally everyone. So, too, did the war's actual conduct." Since 1945, however, the U.S. military has failed to achieve a winning record. Korea and Vietnam, along with our more recent debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan, are all, in Bacevich's view, examples of a failed U.S. foreign policy of imperial interventionism. In its modern form, this policy relies on small highly trained military units to conduct its fighting on the ground when necessary, and stealth fighters, unmanned drones, and other high-technology weapons systems at all other times. As the nature of warfare

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<sup>128</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *Breach of Trust How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 13.



has changed, so too has the nature of our modern military, which has come to rely on highly professional volunteers, a kind of warrior caste within American society, to carry out whatever operations may be necessary.

After 44 years, it is time to reflect on the moral impact of the modern all-volunteer military on American society. What is the financial, human, and moral price for having less than one percent of the overall U.S. population serve in the military? How do we come to terms with a Department of Defense budget that, according to the Congressional Budget Office, “grew from \$384 billion to \$502 billion between fiscal years 2000 and 2014 in inflation-adjusted (real) terms--an increase of 31 percent”? How do we count the cost of the 4,412 dead and 31,949 wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom, or the 2,352 dead and 20,065 wounded in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (the toll as of 2014)? To what extent are we even aware of the the costs these wars have exacted from the countless thousands of dead, wounded, and displaced Iraqi, Afghani, and Pakistani citizens who have become collateral damage of an adventurist American foreign policy? However we answer these questions, the starting point must be with the modern all-volunteer armed forces that have become the principal tool by which American foreign policy is carried out.

Bacevich has observed that “the all-volunteer force is not a blessing. It has become a blight. Americans can, of course, choose to pretend otherwise, but those choosing such a course cannot be said to love their country. Nor can they be said to care about the wellbeing of those sent to fight on the country’s behalf.” In 2017, as the effects of our misguided wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused the rise of the Islamic State around the world, we must reexamine the questions and fears raised by the Gates Commission, Project Volunteer, and early planners of the

transition to the all-volunteer force. The policy-makers who planned VOLAR, and the administrators and soldiers who created it, had no way to predict these grave consequences, no way of anticipating the radical changes in the way in which the U.S. military wages war that have followed from their actions. If few still deny that the all-volunteer force is powerfully effective in projecting American power abroad and capable of protecting our nation at home, it remains to be seen that our modern all-volunteer force can be engaged indefinitely; yet the capacity to maintain what amounts to a perpetual state of war is another unintended consequence of the transition to an all-volunteer force. Military defeats no longer carry harsh political consequences they once did; and as the military grows increasingly unrepresentative of U.S. society the possibility of its indiscriminate and immoral use by politicians in our government will continue to increase.

In *The Long War*, a comprehensive examination of U.S. foreign policy and how it was crafted and perceived during and since World War II, Bacevich bitterly muses on how the U.S. became a “national security state” intent on shaping every future conflict into a “good war,” even as its actions tend to produce quite the opposite result:

So the national security state forges ahead, protected by images of the Good War...Like F. Scott Fitzgerald’s boats beating against the current, we are borne back ceaselessly into the past, and not even the real past but an ever more idealized version of what never was and never shall be.<sup>129</sup>

The same can be said of our society and government’s sentiments regarding the all-volunteer force. The debates held during the early formative years of the transition by the Gates Commission and Project Volunteer have ceased. The all-volunteer military is here to stay and with it comes a moral price that cannot be quantified. This price will be paid by future

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<sup>129</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *The Long War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 548.

generations and the very foundation of our democracy will be at stake. By allowing the few to protect the interests of the many, we have created a situation in which the greatest military force ever assembled can be employed and exploited in conflicts that are neither popularly understood nor in the best interest of our long term national security.

Today, the lives of the brave Americans who serve in our current all-volunteer military have become more expendable than ever. Those who make this commendable sacrifice do so with the understanding that their service is meaningful and necessary in order to protect those they love. Our most recent conflicts have shown that often, the lives sacrificed have less to do with national security than with a foreign policy that accepts war as a normative state: a policy that depends in turn on the increasingly unrepresentative, all-volunteer military forces that execute it. The time has come, therefore, to ask the real price of reliance on an all-volunteer military force. What are the future consequences of its continued exploitation? Does it truly strengthen our democracy and national security, or—as Andrew Bacevich and this thesis argue—does it fatally weaken both?

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