

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 31
Number 2 *Parameters Summer 2001*

Article 11

5-7-2001

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Recommended Citation

Morgan, Matthew J.. "Army Recruiting and the Civil-Military Gap." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 31, 2 (2001). <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol31/iss2/11>

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Army Recruiting and the Civil-Military Gap

MATTHEW J. MORGAN

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From *Parameters*, Summer 2001, pp. 101-17.

An interesting episode illustrating part of the civil-military dissonance in the United States occurred a couple of years ago. It escaped the attention of much of the major media, although some readers may be familiar with the 1999 case of US Air Force Lieutenant Ryan Berry. Lieutenant Berry protested against being in close quarters with a woman officer during his duty assignment at a missile silo at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota. The lieutenant claimed that the close proximity to a member of the opposite sex over the long 24-hour shifts presented an intolerable temptation to break the precepts of his conservative Catholic faith. Berry's former commander had accommodated the lieutenant by adjusting the shift schedule so he would not have to work with any of the 83 female officers who served on watch duty at Minot. However, Wing Commander Colonel Ronald Haeckel responded to complaints of unfair treatment toward Berry and to the unfavorable unit morale climate by reversing this policy and refusing to afford Lieutenant Berry special consideration.

The scope of that controversy seems to reveal a classic Huntingtonian conflict between the armed forces and society: the functional imperative of maintaining readiness versus the social imperative of the freedom to follow one's dictates of conscience and religious conviction. Lieutenant Berry attracted the support of several prominent conservative advocates, including Cardinal John O'Connor, the Family Research Council (which undertook a "Saving Lieutenant Ryan" public relations campaign), and 77 members of Congress. While one officer's personal conflict with the military is not evidence of a civil-military crisis, of course, the opposition of Berry's supporters to functional military necessities is more disturbing. Even those conservative factions which have traditionally advocated the interests of military readiness appeared in this circumstance to be ignorant of or apathetic toward the nation's security needs.

This failure to adequately appreciate the requirements of military readiness--which have historically been prioritized by government authorities, as the Supreme Court record shows[1]--is characteristic of a growing trend of disinterest and unawareness among not only cultural and political elites, but also among the public at large. This broadening estrangement between the military and society has sparked interest among scholars. While some have focused on an increasingly hostile and politicized military, others charge that civilian culture is distancing itself from the military through a progressive deterioration of values, and still others emphasize the growing chasm among elite spheres.

Although occurrences such as the appointment of General Colin Powell, USA Ret., as Secretary of State would seem to suggest otherwise, the distance between elites in society and the military arguably is growing.[2] However, in a democratic society, trends among elites are inevitably related to developments in the general public. As Senator John McCain, a member of the Armed Services Committee, has pointed out, "Most Americans don't care that much about national security and defense issues anymore,"[3] and elected officials obviously take a greater interest in those issues their constituents believe are important.

The disconnect between today's armed forces and society may be aptly described as one of apathy rather than hostility.[4] The peacetime military seems to be often viewed as irrelevant to the major issues of popular life. This leads to less attention to military affairs and a reduced familiarity and comfort with the military, which may become a self-perpetuating trend.

The significance of these developments to the military and to national security is that the quality of the association between the military and society affects numerous facets of military resourcing. The amount of funding and personnel provided by a democratic nation depends on the perceptions and will of the public. Much of the Army's reaction to the

recruiting challenges posed by the strong economy of the 1990s, consequently, was to address extrinsic incentives. In the short term, at least, the Army's effort seems to be working. However, an effective long-term solution to military recruiting difficulties may be possible only if we can resolve the underlying divide in civil-military relations.

The Current Recruiting Situation

It is difficult to portray the Army's recruiting situation accurately in simple terms, without qualifiers. The perception in some quarters seems to be that the active Army is falling short of its recruiting goals year after year. But that is clearly not the case. In Fiscal Year 2000, the Army met its active-duty recruiting goal of 80,000 new accessions, and with a 22-percent increase in "high-quality recruits, defined as high-school graduates who scored high on the Armed Forces Qualification Test." In late January 2001 the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lieutenant General Timothy Maude, described the manpower situation as "healthy" and expressed confidence that the Army would meet its FY 2001 recruiting goals for both the active Army and the Army Reserve. And in terms of retention, the Army "continues to mystify the external audience," said Lieutenant General Maude, by continuing to exceed its reenlistment targets "during the entire drawdown, [despite overseas] deployments, and against a strong economy." [5]

Further, FY 2000 was not an anomaly. In the decade of the 1990s, the active Army recruiting goals were met--indeed, exceeded--in six years. In two other years the Army came within a few dozen recruits of meeting its goals--shortfalls of less than one-tenth of one percent. Only in FY 1998 and 1999 did the pattern change. In Fiscal Year 1998, active Army recruiting fell 801 short of the goal of 72,550, a shortfall of slightly more than one percent. And in FY 1999 the real anomaly occurred, with active Army recruiting falling 6,290 short of the goal of 74,500, a shortfall of about 8.4 percent. [6]

Despite this generally commendable recruiting record, however, the situation is not as rosy as the statistics make it seem. Some observers have called the Army's manpower situation "desperate" and characterized by "unprecedented recruiting and retention challenges." [7] The situation has even been identified as a "recruiting crisis for the volunteer force," [8] and highly respected sociologist Charles Moskos has said that "no problem is more serious in our armed forces than recruitment shortfalls." [9] Another source indicates that youth interest in military service declined from 32 percent in 1973 to approximately 10 percent in 1999. [10] A 1999 RAND study found "indications that the current [undesirable] recruiting situation to some extent reflects ongoing and permanent changes." [11] In June 2000, a General Accounting Office report to the Senate noted "mounting problems in recruiting sufficient numbers of qualified enlisted personnel." [12] And for years, the perception of Army recruiting shortfalls has occupied a significant amount of attention both within the services and in the media. So where lies the truth?

One thing is certain: Meeting the Army's recruiting goals has not been cheap or easy. Recruiting standards have been changed to access recruits who are not high-school graduates, and the Army has placed increased emphasis on recruiting in order to meet its goals, incurring significant costs in the process. [13] The 2000 GAO report noted that "DOD is experiencing a recruiting challenge that has called for an extraordinary increase in the attention and the resources focused on this area." The report stated, "From fiscal year 1993 through 1998, the Army increased its number of recruiters from 4,368 to 6,331 and increased its advertising expenditures from \$34.3 million in FY 1993 to \$112.9 million in FY 1999 (in FY 2000 constant dollars)." The report also noted that there was a huge increase in the offering of enlistment bonuses. [14] Clearly, while the Army's success in meeting its recruiting goals is to be applauded, that success has not come without significant effort and cost.

Several RAND studies have indicated that the supply of potential recruits is higher than most observers might expect. Reports revealed that throughout the 1990s, there were actually more potential recruits available in the pool of high-quality youths than before the drawdown, relative to accession requirements. [15] This indicates that there are significant societal forces working against the recruitment effort.

The continued flow of young Americans through the armed forces is one of the most visible linkages between the military and its client population in a peacetime environment. [16] Increased difficulties in attracting young Americans is indicative of a weakened link between the armed forces and society. Andrew Bacevich has argued, "To the question 'Who will serve?' the nation's answer has now become: 'those who want to serve.'" [17] The significant fact here is that there seem to be fewer and fewer who want to serve. There is some evidence to suggest that the role of the armed

forces has changed to such a degree that the structure of enlistment decisions has been "altered radically." [18]

An article by Don Snider in *The Wall Street Journal* in January 2000 argued that recruiting will continue to struggle and be dependent on economic fluctuations in the coming years. [19] A forthcoming study from the Foreign Policy Research Institute argues that the divergence between the military and society makes sustaining an all-volunteer military increasingly difficult. [20] Lieutenant General Maude also has spoken, albeit with optimism, about the difficulties the Army must overcome in attracting large numbers of high-quality recruits against corporate competition in a strong economy. [21]

Obviously economic concerns such as the job market and supply and demand affect the success of military recruiting; however, this article will focus instead on the sociological issues. These factors may be more widespread, more difficult to change, and ultimately more important in identifying long-term trends significant to successful recruiting. In March 2001, General John Keane, the Army's Vice Chief of Staff, noted "We did a lot of research and found that we were disconnected [from] the American youth." He suggested that American teenagers "do not see the military as a career or a way to get ahead," and are "more likely to view enlistment in the military as a last resort." That may be a somewhat consistent attitude historically in our country, but it's nonetheless troubling. As General Keane pointed out, "The absolute truth is that the American people . . . do not look at the military option as a choice for their youngsters, [but] raising and maintaining an army is a shared responsibility in which everyone has a stake." [22]

Several factors have contributed to the apparent sociological gap in civil-military relations. These include the end of the draft, changes in the Reserve Office Training Corps (ROTC), shifts in regional origin of military members, decrease in the size of the Army, increase in service-members' children making the military a career, rise in US Military Academy accessions (versus other commissioning sources), and significantly greater average length of service. The gap is a function of demographics, strategy, defense spending, and military policy. [23] Many determinants have led to the current relationship between society and the military.

The gap appears to be more severe now than it was in the past. General John Shalikashvili, USA Ret., has expressed apprehension: "I share deeply the concern that we are living through a period when the gap between the American people and their military is getting wider." [24] To determine how this civil-military gap may be making recruiting more difficult and to formulate practical solutions, it is appropriate to explore the several significant components that contribute to the civil-military problem and their relationship to attracting young Americans to military service. These factors include the relevance of the military to society, public opinion, a disparity of values, evolving military professionalism, the isolation of the military, and conflicting social needs.

Social Attitudes about the Relevance of the Military

The significant characteristic of the relationship between the armed forces and society is difference, not comparability. Rather than the growing disparity between civilian and military values, the waning presence of the military in the lives of most Americans has caused it to decline in prominence. Institutional presence is defined in terms of both a material dimension (social contact) and a moral dimension (normative ordering of priorities for what constitutes a good society). [25]

A discussion of the emerging multicentric world acquaints us with the latter dimension. In this world, the utility of military power for achieving political ends is diminishing. While military power is still important, it is less important than it used to be. Two reasons, both technological in nature, account for this change. First, the destructive power of modern weapons is so great that no one can imagine any benefit coming from their use, if they were used without restriction. Second, modern armed forces are so expensive that it represents a great burden on even the wealthiest societies to contemplate their use. Security concerns are consequently focused increasingly on questions of economic rather than military security. [26] Humanitarian missions, rather than warfighting, are increasingly becoming the Army's central focus, [27] and since these missions attract lower levels of public attention, they may adversely affect recruiting. Another indication of the degree to which military issues have become obsolete in modern life is the military's repeated appearance in debates on issues of social equality and cultural change. Political advocacy groups such as homosexual activists and radical feminists have chosen to use the military as "key terrain" to conquer in furthering their cultural agendas. [28]

"The US military is now more alienated from its civilian leadership than at any time in American history," were the first words of Richard Kohn's 1994 article "Out of Control," describing the crisis in civil-military relations.[29] One commentator in late 1998 felt that the "extraordinary efforts to avoid military service during the Vietnam War by top political and military opinion leaders in Washington (President Bill Clinton, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, columnists George Will and Patrick Buchanan)" were extremely significant in measuring the relationships and attitudes among political elites.[30] The House of Representatives had 320 veterans in 1970, but fewer than 130 in 1994.[31] Moreover, in 1997, for the first time ever, neither the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, nor any of their deputies had ever been in uniform. Key leaders have become "increasingly devoid of military experience or understanding." [32]

A detailed demographic analysis of military experience among members of Congress from 1901 to 1999 had significant findings in this regard. What is unique about the contemporary decline is that in the late 1990s, for the first time in the century, there were fewer veterans in the House than could be expected given the distribution of veterans in the population.[33] This becomes a concern if it translates into a relative lack of congressional interest in defense issues.[34] And the trend suggests that fewer and fewer civilian political decisionmakers in the future will have military experience, as military participation by America's elite declines.[35]

One of the reasons for the military becoming increasingly distant from the elite segment of society is the smaller prevalence of military issues and training in higher education. The closing of many college ROTC units across the country, as well as successful bans of recruiters from campuses, indicates further divisions that are taking place between society and the military.[36] Dr. Kohn has stated, "Our best colleges and universities . . . neglect the study of war and the military, and abhor ROTC." [37]

Current trends suggest that the military is a political tool that is being regarded as less and less significant. One writer has contended that the military was prominent from World War II through Desert Storm, but predicted it would face the prospect of fading from public attention and experience manpower problems similar to those in Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand.[38]

The American Public

According to John Hillen, the American people as a whole appreciate traditional military culture.[39] Unlike the rest of government, the modern military perennially enjoys a high level of popularity.[40] James Burk has suggested that the mass media are reluctant to simply accept and report what military officials say they are doing (which is, of course, part of the media's watchdog responsibility).[41] This squares with much of the military's perception of the media (and a significant portion of the public's perception as well) that there is an active media bias against military institutions. A content study of the media found, however, that media coverage is not as negative as is commonly believed. This study examined the content of media coverage of military affairs over a period of time.[42] It is therefore plausible to conclude that public confidence might be high despite the civil-military gap because of the widespread misconception that the media underrates the military.

Despite the public confidence in the military institution, however, there appears to be a deficit of social capital to support the armed forces.[43] One reason for this may be a declining civic participation among Americans generally. As Andrew Bacevich has written, "In a society in which half of the eligible voters did not even bother to show up at the polls in the [1996] presidential election, the notion of an obligation to participate in the country's defense has become an anachronism, an oddity from another time." [44]

James Kitfield has referred to a "nearly unbridgeable cultural divide" between American society in general and the US military.[45] Some of this seeming social irrelevance of the military may flow from popular entertainment. Public demand for novels and movies that examine the contemporary military seems slight. The last large crop of serious works in this vein came in the wake of the Vietnam War. Subsequent American military involvements overseas were much shorter and more successful, and, whatever their ambiguities, did not lead to the kind of soul-searching that might inspire great novels and films, or to a rising public appetite for portrayals of the interventions in Grenada or Panama. Recent popular films which have focused on military affairs have been distanced in time (either in the past or in the future) such as *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Soldier*, and *Starship Trooper*, or distanced in subject,

such as *The General's Daughter* or the remake of *Gone With the Wind*, whose central focus is not the military, although military affairs are part of the plot. Those films that do focus on the military here and now emphasize social imperatives and the very forces which marginalize the military function at the expense of social interests, or they suggest that the armed forces are out of touch with social values, as in *Courage Under Fire* and *G.I. Jane*.^[46] In time, it will be possible to better gauge the importance of such recent films as *Three Kings* and *Rules of Engagement*.

Kathy Ross, a civilian with the US Army's public affairs unit in Hollywood, emphasizes that films about the military life are "vital to recruiting sergeants."^[47] The image of the military presented in popular entertainment affects how people think about the military.^[48]

High levels of public confidence in the military do not necessarily indicate a healthy civil-military relationship; on the contrary, grouped with other evidence, it seems to be the result of an ultimately uninformed populace regarding a military that is becoming increasingly irrelevant to most citizens. And an increasingly distant and unimportant military surely will have more difficulty enticing the active participation of its citizens.

Values

Dramatic sociopolitical changes dating to the end of World War II (increased hedonism, greater personal expression, opposition to the military lifestyle, resistance to authority, and increased moral criticism), started the decline of mass armies in Western industrial nations, and over the past 30 years the process has become increasingly apparent. The end of conscription in most of the West is a response to these pressures. This offers an alternative explanation to the relevancy of the civil-military rift to recruiting: a decline in the acceptance of military authority, which is a factor frequently associated with youth attitudes against military service.^[49]

In addition to changes in attitudes toward authority, changing political beliefs also are affecting the military's ability to attract new personnel. William Mayer's work has shown that a strong case can be made that there has been a trend toward more liberal positions on most social values.^[50] American society may be more liberal and individualistic now than when Huntington's theory of objective civilian control was first formulated in *The Soldier and the State*.^[51] This shift may have special significance for the civil-military gap, because while a plurality of civilian leaders are classified as liberals, only a small fraction of military officers are in that category.^[52] A 1998-99 study of opinions across the armed services even found that military dislike for then-President Clinton was not a significant factor in these results. Even if the "studies had ended with the survey in early 1992, when George Bush [senior] was in the White House and a Clinton presidency seemed a very improbable long shot . . . the primary trends described here would already have been in place."^[53]

On a more fundamental level, basic assumptions and values are influencing the propensity for military service. William Bennett has documented a "palpable culture decline" and an actual shift in the public's beliefs, attitudes, and priorities over the past decades.^[54] This shift in popular values might affect the civil-military gap and military recruiting. For instance, a growing affinity for free will and individual expression damages both the ability of citizens to understand the military culture and the likelihood that they would become a part of it. Research has shown that young Americans who expect to serve in the military place a lower priority on personal freedom than do their peers.^[55] As more and more Americans place a higher priority on personal freedom, fewer expect to find themselves in uniformed service.

Youth attitudes are shifting to take them further from the military perspective. Interviews with youths on the subject revealed several characterizations. "They don't like to be told what to do." "Most teenagers don't want to commit to anything." Teens "don't like getting up early."^[56] Such attitudes don't comport well with a military career.

Professionalism and Citizen-Soldiers

The changing requirements of the military profession are also factors that affect the military's role in society. While the United States has a long tradition of citizen-soldier style service, today's active force entails more permanent and professional types of service. As one author has argued, "For the force in being, the mission of peacekeeping requires it to be permanently mobilized while its dependence on technologically sophisticated weapons of mass destruction means that the military division of labor is much more complex. Consequently, greater emphasis is placed on longer-service professionals instead of short-term conscripts."^[57]

The consequences of this involve a sort of incubation of the military away from society that will reinforce isolation from more generalized values. For workers across different fields, a career-oriented workforce can be expected to produce more attitudinally distinct groups.[58] Jacques Van Doorn had earlier predicted that the gap between military and civilian sectors of society would broaden as a consequence of the declining size and legitimacy of standing armies that leads to less universal service or substitution of voluntary service, with a smaller and increasingly professional military becoming more isolated, inward-looking, rigid, and conservative.[59]

This isolated military will further exacerbate the civil-military tension due to the underlying distrust of the American society toward a standing military, a distrust that has been common in American history.[60] Indeed, John Lehman has suggested that one of the most important elements of the American civil-military dynamic is our tradition of citizen-soldiers. Our soldiers and sailors historically were expected to be drawn largely from civilian pursuits for limited terms, assuring a constant leavening of civilian cultural values within the military and in turn carrying back to the civilian world a respect for and understanding of military culture.[61] Any future failure to develop this respect and understanding will hamper efforts to recruit from the civilian society.

This "cross-fertilization" has been an important contribution to the military and society that the citizen-soldier has made throughout the history of the United States. Unfortunately, today's military cannot produce or enjoy the same benefits since the professional force is necessarily more isolated and disparate from the population at large. Professionalization is a response to pressures from both changing technological and security conditions, but its effects on civil-military relations and recruiting are not all beneficial and cannot be ignored.

The Isolated Military

James Burk has asserted that the "military is and ought to be isolated and institutionally different." [62] While it is true that the military--like any profession[63]--has distinctive values and beliefs, and while it is true that the military requires these differences for its functional mission, we must still assess the effects of its isolation on civil-military relations. More specifically, how does this isolation affect recruiting?

The separation between the military and society is not only the result of differences in values, but the result also of physical separation, creating limited military social and community ties.[64] Military bases, complete with their own schools, churches, stores, child care centers, and recreational areas, can be characterized as never-to-be-left islands of tranquility removed from the seemingly chaotic, crime-ridden civilian environment outside the gates.[65] Additionally, the increasing incorporation of technological functions that traditionally have not been part of the warrior role may in fact make the military less dependent on its parent society and therefore even more isolated from it and more inward-looking.[66]

In addition to physical and intellectual separation, the modern force is not demographically representative of the population at large.[67] John Lehman argues that "we have created a separate military caste." [68] He points out that while most American community leaders have had military experience, few of their children have. Exacerbating the situation is the fact that cadets and midshipman who are children of career military parents are present in record numbers at the service academies.

There is significance in these trends. An insulated military has reduced visibility in the civilian population, and a relatively invisible military is going to engender little support and understanding for its budgetary and recruitment needs in a population that expects lower expenditures on the military in peacetime. Increased involvement of military personnel in local communities would contribute to the integration of the Army into society more broadly, but base closures and increases in non-monetary benefits and base facilities are removing those opportunities for military contact with the society at large.[69]

Social Imperatives

Some have argued, to the contrary, that the gap is decreasing between military and civilian cultures, that the occupational model and politicization of the military indicate the armed forces are moving toward mainstream society. Indeed, "the post-Cold War period has witnessed a convergence of views on several issues." [70] Related work also has

proposed that prospective soldiers should be encouraged to view military service more as part of the job market than in terms of a civic obligation, as the military has assumed more traits of a competitive entity in the civilian market for human resources.[71] Recent recruiting efforts have emphasized personal benefits to recruits such as education and character traits desired by civilian employers. These recruiting efforts and their results seem to have confirmed the trends outlined in that research. But as one writer has warned, "The danger to the republic does not arise from any military threat to liberal American society, but from the reverse: the civilianization of the US military ethos." [72]

In the modern military, pressure grows to incorporate women into all assignments, including combat roles. How far this movement should go has been a matter for intense debate, especially in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War.[73] Traditionally, the courts have been reluctant to extend the protection of constitutional rights to military personnel. They have deferred to the idea that the military is a unique institution, exempt from the usual standards of review based on established constitutional norms. However, the courts are yielding to the military less and less of this traditional authority.[74]

These developments do provide superficial evidence of a military that's converging with its larger parent society, but when we reconcile these pieces of evidence with our previous discussion, they seem to confirm that there actually is a civil-military gap based on indifference to the military. A lack of interest and awareness of the importance of the military's distinctive function has allowed what Huntington called "social imperatives"[75] to become more dominant than the military's functional mission.

The military has become less of an instrument for its traditional purpose, a protection device against external enemies, and more a vehicle for advancing any number of other societal goals. The military is a tool with a unique and defining mission of the exercise of coercive power. But in the process of creating an institution capable of exerting coercive power, society has necessarily, if unintentionally, created an instrument that has a number of auxiliary capabilities. The military has the ability to execute manpower-intensive state programs, notably construction and disaster relief. Civilians can use the military to redistribute wealth, via the defense budget, to particular regions or corporate interests. And the military offers a way for civilian leaders to address questions of social injustice, by leveling the playing field for disadvantaged social groups, strategically distributing wealth and opportunity, and even coercively changing individual attitudes through enforced sensitivity training.[76]

As society uses its opportunity to accomplish these various ends, thereby neglecting the military's main role, we can observe that the most significant trend is not a convergence of values, but evidence of the view that the traditional military is increasingly irrelevant to a growing segment of our society. This evidence in turn suggests that there will be fewer available recruits; because as most people seek meaning or significance in their lives, they will be less likely to become part of an institution whose main role is seen as increasingly insignificant and marginalized.

Recommendations

In advancing a position that the civil-military gap should not be closed, it has been pointed out that no criteria establishing an "acceptable" gap have been articulated.[77] However, it appears from the trends discussed above that the civil-military gap has actual and dangerous implications. The recruiting challenges that the Army faces are at least in part a consequence of our inability to establish strong ties between the military and society.

Many leaders, such as Congressman Ike Skelton, have advocated limiting the separation between military and civilian America.[78] Three broad approaches can support narrowing the civilian-military gap: (1) adoption of mandatory national service; (2) curtailing on-post facilities that enable military personnel to acquire most of their needs without much contact with civilians; and (3) changes in the education of the officer corps.[79] Some of the following policies are being considered by Army leaders, and some are even under way in various forms, but others of these recommendations might require a significant departure from current thinking in order for decisionmakers to seriously entertain them.

Conscription has been, for some, a popular choice in discussions on the subject of civil-military relations despite the assured impracticality of implementing such a policy, given our national experience during the Vietnam era. If both sexes were drafted, with the possible support of feminists who are usually opposed to the military (who would then see the military as treating women as equals), the option might be somewhat more palatable, but it would still run into

what would most likely be insurmountable opposition.[80] The fact that our Western allies are abandoning conscription is also notable. Another possibility would be to combine the draft with some sort of nonmilitary national service. However, this variation would conflict with some of the same attitudes about citizenship that are inhibiting successful recruiting for military service. In a democratic society, a plan that runs so counter to the nature of citizens' perceptions of their civic duty would not be sustainable, even if it were achievable. Recall that "as the Nazi war machine was rolling over Western Europe in 1940, a conscription bill passed the House of Representatives by only a single vote, and President Harry Truman's proposal for a one-year stint of universal military training went nowhere." The unlikelihood of instituting national service is also indicated by the lawsuits against some school boards that have imposed minimal requirements of community service for high school graduation.[81]

The second approach would monetize the benefits enjoyed by military personnel, replacing them with higher pay scales. Such a policy would make it easier to recruit soldiers and officers because their pay would be more competitive with the civilian market. (While the addition of non-monetary benefits can be a recruiting incentive, the simplicity of comparing salaries is something much easier to contemplate. Witness the mass exodus of junior officers in the past decade to higher-paying civilian jobs.) It might also be beneficial in reducing the rapidly escalating costs of those benefits. Its central focus, however, would be to alleviate the potential civil-military dangers of an isolated military identified by several scholars[82] and discussed above.

The final approach involves the education of officers. Some authors have advocated eliminating the service academies (despite the political difficulties of this) due to their tendency to generate a more isolated military culture. However, others have posited that officers accessed through ROTC are no different ideologically than those accessed through the academies.[83] Advanced civil schooling may also have a limited effect since most attitudes are deep-set long before officers would be sent to further schooling. Nonetheless, the contacts engendered by graduate education at least provide opportunities for both military and civilian students to challenge stereotypes they hold of one another.[84] Expanding ROTC, especially at elite schools, and shortening the military academy service requirement to encourage officers to pursue careers in civilian society would be beneficial in closing the gap.[85]

A RAND study recommended increasing the number of soldiers who attend college or receive college credit before enlisting.[86] They prescribe this course of action in order to attract more college-bound youths into military service. Another recent analysis argued a similar course of action as part of the recommendations from an examination of youth subgroups.[87] There are difficulties with this proposal since the GI Bill no longer has a monopoly on tuition-assistance programs. Many private employers provide tuition assistance, and government aid not contingent on service is widely available.[88] Nonetheless, targeting college-bound students might also have beneficial civil-military implications because there would then be more military experience among the college-educated segment of society. Many have advocated expanding college assistance programs, but this is an incentive rather than a means of shifting our social attitudes about the military. Charles Moskos has argued that a shorter enlistment would make recruiting these students easier, since they could perform a tour of duty during a 15-month interregnum in their college education.[89] Many students might well consider taking such a break from school to do something different and positive in a foreign locale. These shorter terms of service would have the added benefit of enhancing the civil-military linkage.

Other suggestions involve the education of the civilian public rather than the military. Courses in high schools and universities dealing with civil-military issues and national civic responsibilities could be seeded by relatively small grants and have a large payoff if they reduced the civil-military tension[90] and contributed to more successful recruiting efforts. Establishing special preparatory programs could enable more of today's inner-city youths to enlist, and expanding ROTC at historically black colleges could open new avenues for civil-military progress.[91]

Even more creative solutions have been suggested. For instance, the Army suffers from an inability to contemplate lateral entry by talented civilians at levels high enough to be attractive to successful executives or professionals. Almost all other large organizations, with the exception of well-established religions, routinely bring in at least a small percentage of executives from the outside as a way of bringing special talents and fresh perspectives to bear on enduring problems. In addition to organizational benefits, this interchange between the military and civilian elite spheres would help reduce the civil-military gap.[92]

Lieutenant General David Ohle, former Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, has stated that the Army is undertaking a retention-based strategy with the rationale that keeping soldiers for longer periods of time will reduce the stress on recruiting.[93] While this strategy might sustain the force, it will also further separate the military from society-- indeed, it is exactly the opposite of the strategy advocated by Dr. Moskos and the Foreign Policy Research Institute report.[94] This strategy could have the unintended effect of making recruiting even more difficult as even fewer citizens are exposed to the military. Trends of lowered recruiting (which a retention-based strategy is designed to allow) could have the effect of accentuating the differences between civilian and military institutions and thereby widening the civil-military gap.[95] This could lead to even more difficulties in the future.

It seems intuitive, and supported by the evidence, that in order to continue to access sufficient numbers of high-quality recruits, senior leaders will need to address farther-reaching concerns involving the overall relationship between the military and society. Failing to be more progressive in the military's relationship with the public may cause further problems. Without attention to the sociological underpinnings of recruiting, it may be difficult for our armed forces to attract the social support needed to sustain operations in the 21st century.

NOTES

The author is grateful to Dr. Michael Desch of the University of Kentucky and Dr. Morten Ender, Dr. Don Campbell, and Dr. Gina Kolasinski of the US Military Academy for their support and suggestions in the development of this article.

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Reviewed 7 May 2001. Please send comments or corrections to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil