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The Great Enabler: The AVF and the Use of Force

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The Great Enabler: The AVF and the Use of Force

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Abstract

America's All-Volunteer Force (AVF) is a highly-debated concept in the realm of U.S. civil-military relations. While the quality of today's AVF is rarely disputed, some question whether or not it has led to a too-frequent use of American military force. This paper contends that the American AVF enables the use of military force as a foreign policy instrument, but not for the reasons laid out by the 1973 Gates Commission. With the return to the AVF in 1973, Congress and America's military leaders took steps to prevent U.S. presidents from embarking on military adventures. However, U.S. presidents' use of military force to resolve foreign policy disputes that are not necessarily vital to the national interest is enabled by the AVF as a military manpower system, and is an essential instrument to maintaining the liberal international order from which the United States benefits greatly.

The Great Enabler: The AVF and the Use of Force

Conscription is the taproot of militarism and war.

—Jan Smuts¹

The continuing war in Vietnam figured prominently into the 1968 presidential campaign. Into its third year and after the shock of the Tet Offensive, the war was exceptionally unpopular and appeared to be a losing proposition. Protests against the war raged across the United States and the draft was a particular target of disdain. In his bid for the presidency that year, Richard Nixon promised to end the draft if elected. He fulfilled that promise in 1973 when the United States ended the draft and returned to a military comprised completely of volunteers.

The All-Volunteer Force (AVF) has since been a highly-debated concept in the realm of civil-military relations. While the quality of today's AVF is rarely disputed, some question whether or not it has led to a too-frequent use of American military force. This concern was specifically addressed by the commission established by President Nixon to study the feasibility and impacts of returning to an AVF, and the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (the Gates Commission) concluded that this concern was unjustified. Recent history, however, suggests otherwise.

This paper contends that America's AVF has enabled the use of military force as an instrument of foreign policy, though not necessarily for the reasons laid out by the Gates Commission. With the establishment of the Clinton Doctrine in the 1990s, the United States embarked on a number of military operations for reasons other than the preservation of national sovereignty. The strongest advocates for the use of military force, however, have been civilian policy makers, not a military elite as stated in the concerns addressed by the Gates Commission.

This paper demonstrates that the AVF is not a new concept in American history, and that it is grounded in tradition and moral philosophy. After a discussion of the Gates Commission findings on the AVF, I show how Congress and America's military leaders took steps to prevent presidents from embarking on military adventures. Yet despite these efforts, American presidents, especially in the 1990s, were able to employ the AVF for reasons not always critical to the country's vital interests. Finally, I conclude the AVF, while enabling the use of military force, is an essential system that allows the United States to stand as the world's guardian of the liberal international order.

Resurrecting the All-Volunteer Force

The United States has alternated between conscript and volunteer military manpower systems throughout its history. Possessing a distrust of standing armies, the country's founders relied on volunteers in the state militias and the federal armed forces for the defense of the nation. Some of the nation's founders were concerned that a standing army would encourage the use of force to settle international disputes.² Geography played a large role as well: protected from the rest of the world by two oceans and a huge frontier, the United States did not need a large army like those common in Europe at the time.³ As a result, the United States from its founding maintained a small military force focused on expanding the country westward, protecting territorial outposts, and securing its overseas commerce to help fuel the growing nation's economy. Quality within this AVF suffered greatly, however, as the U.S. military had to compete for recruits with an ever-expanding economy.⁴ And while this AVF satisfied the young country's needs for a time, the United States resorted to conscription during the American Civil War, World War I, and World War II.

The scope and scale of industrial warfare demanded that the United States rely on conscription to raise the massive armed forces that fought in the American Civil War, World War I, and World War II. This departure from American military tradition was “rationalized on the grounds that the rights guaranteed to the individual by the government implied an obligation upon him to defend his rights by defending the government that assured them.”⁵ With the nation’s survival and vital interests at stake, the idea of conscription on moral grounds was, for the most part, widely accepted by the American public. The United States returned to volunteerism when those conflicts ended and the threats subsided. However, communism continued its march across Eastern Europe and China, and in 1948 Congress again resorted to conscription to defend the nation. This draft remained in place until 1973, providing the military manpower to fight most notably in Korea and Vietnam. But during the Vietnam War, conscription’s legitimacy as a military manpower system became a heated point of contention in American society.

The Vietnam War, America’s longest armed conflict until the post-911 campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, became increasingly unpopular in the United States beginning in 1966 when the anti-war movement blossomed into mass protests.⁶ This popular movement had a particular dislike for the draft, and burning draft cards and avoiding military service (either through education deferments, joining the National Guard or reserves, or refusing to register for the draft) became popular forms of civil disobedience. Not since the New York City draft riots in July 1863 had conscription been opposed so vociferously, and certainly not on such a large scale as seen during the Vietnam War. Counter to the pre-established ideals of civic duty, the anti-war

movement viewed the Vietnam War draft as the government's infringing on citizens' rights by forcing conscripts to fight a war they did not support against an enemy that did not pose an existential threat to the United States.⁷ Rhodes Scholar (and future 42nd President of the United States) Bill Clinton articulated this idea in a 1969 letter to the professor of military science at the University of Arkansas Reserve Officer Training Corps program:

From my work I came to believe that the draft system itself is illegitimate. No government really rooted in limited, parliamentary democracy should have the power to make its citizens fight and kill and die in a war they may oppose, a war which even possibly may be wrong, a war, which, in any case, does not involve immediately the peace and freedom of the nation.⁸

This intense opposition to the draft and the Vietnam War propelled Richard Nixon to the presidency in the 1968 elections with his promise to end the draft. In 1970, he established The President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force to study the issue and make recommendations.

The President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force

On March 27, 1969, fulfilling one of his presidential campaign pledges from the 1968 presidential race, President Nixon announced the appointment of an Advisory Commission on an All-Volunteer Force chaired by former Secretary of Defense Thomas S. Gates. The purpose of the Gates Commission (as it came to be known) was to "develop a comprehensive plan for eliminating conscription and moving toward an all-volunteer armed force."⁹ The fifteen-member commission consisted of prominent businessmen, scholars, economists, a former Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, and the Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).¹⁰ The commission submitted its final report to President Nixon on February 20, 1970, stating: "We unanimously believe that the nation's interests will be

better served by an all-volunteer force, supported by an effective stand-by draft.”¹¹ The commission’s conclusions sounded the death knell for the draft that had fueled so much public discontent in the United States. The report was also significant because while the United States was returning to the AVF, the dissolution of the draft committed the country to maintaining a large military force comprised solely of volunteers.¹² America’s historic suspicion of standing armies and military adventurism once again came to the foreground, demanding that the Gates Commission address concerns about potential effects of returning to the AVF.

The Gates Commission considered nine separate “objections” to the AVF that arose while the commission was studying the issue. One of those objections, and the focus of this paper, was that “[a]n all volunteer force would stimulate foreign military adventures, foster an irresponsible foreign policy, and lessen civilian concern about the use of military forces.”¹³ According to this argument, the AVF would encourage military adventurism because of three “important inferences: (1) an all-volunteer force will be more aggressive than a mixed force; (2) the nation’s civilian and military leaders will risk the lives of volunteers with less concern than those of conscripts and (3) a doubtful foreign commitment could be undertaken and sustained with less popular dissent than if conscripts were used.”¹⁴

The commission, however, believed this objection to be unfounded. First, according to the commission, the military manpower system was irrelevant in deciding to use military force. The commission acknowledged existing pressures to use conscripted military force to solve foreign policy problems, and this would not change with the AVF. The nation’s leadership would still have to weigh the cost in blood and

treasure as well as domestic and foreign political costs before committing a conscript, blended, or AVF to a conflict. The president also had to weigh the possibility that any substantial commitment of military power may risk potential nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union. Finally, the commission argued the size and readiness (two important military factors considered during decisions to use military force) of the U.S. military would remain unchanged under either the AVF or the current mixed system of conscripts and volunteers. The main difference would be that under the mixed system, the President could independently increase draft calls to expand the size of the force (as President Johnson did during the Vietnam War). Under an AVF, however, the President would have to ask Congress to enact the standby draft and return to conscription. This request would then theoretically spark a national debate and public discussion on the necessity of employing military power and would only be used if supported by the American public.¹⁵

The Gates Commission also addressed the concern that an AVF would reduce the American public's interest in foreign affairs because fewer Americans would be called upon to serve. This lack of public foreign affairs interest would dilute the national debate about enacting the standby draft and lessen the effect of public opinion as a hedge against military adventurism. The commission stated that higher education levels, friendship and familial relations with service members, "the diffusion of mass communications, and the newsworthiness of compelling national security interests" would retain the public's interest in how the United States utilized the AVF.¹⁶ The commission also concluded that the AVF would make explicit the cost of using military force, thereby retaining the interest of American taxpayers whose tax dollars would

have to finance the endeavor, especially if expanding the AVF was required to wage a war.¹⁷

Finally, conscription advocates were concerned that this new AVF would violate one of America's most fundamental principles: civilian control of the military. AVF detractors argued that the AVF would be better trained and equipped and, therefore, more aggressive; it would have a higher degree of autonomy from the civilian leadership, and the AVF's military leadership would exploit international crises for its own gain.¹⁸ This argument suggested military leaders would actively seek to employ military force because there would be no point to having a professional, highly trained and well equipped force unless it was to be used. The commission concluded this objection to be irrational: they were advocating a change to the country's military manpower system, not the political authorities and processes that governed America's use of the military instrument of power.¹⁹

In the end, the Gates Commission concluded that objections to the AVF based on fears of its leading to military adventurism in U.S foreign policy were unfounded:

We have examined how the return to volunteer forces might affect the decision to use U.S. military power. We conclude that the recommended all-volunteer force will actually increase democratic participation in decisions concerning the use of military force. We reject the fear of increased military aggressiveness or reduced civilian concern following the return to an all-volunteer force.²⁰

President Nixon accepted the Gates Commission's recommendations. In 1973, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announced the formation of the All-Volunteer Force, thus ending conscription as America's military manpower system for the previous 25 years. However, the commission's rebuttals to the objection that the AVF would lead to military adventurism proved not to be entirely accurate, as did the reasoning behind the

objection that a professionalized AVF would instigate military adventurism. In the decades following the United States' return to the AVF, it was not the resultant professionalized military that would encourage use of the military instrument to solve foreign policy issues. With the specter of Vietnam still fresh in the minds of civilian and military policymakers, the Congress and Defense Department leaders sought to limit military force as the foreign policy tool of choice, and thus prevent military adventurism.

Hedges against Military Adventurism

As stated earlier, one of the objections to the AVF was that a president and his military leaders would be more apt to use military power as the nation's foreign policy tool of choice. With fewer Americans serving in the military the vast majority of the American public would lose interest in foreign affairs and would not care about the President committing volunteers to conflicts across the globe. Congress, however, did not completely subscribe to the Gates Commission's logic on why the AVF would not enable a President to engage in military adventurism. The Congress wanted to ensure that the "collective judgement of both the Congress and the President will apply" prior to committing U.S. forces into hostilities, in accordance with the intent of the Constitution's framers.²¹ In 1973 Congress passed the War Powers Resolution (over President Nixon's veto), requiring:

The President in every possible instance shall consult with Congress before introducing United States Armed Forces into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, and after every such introduction shall consult regularly with the Congress until United States Armed Forces are no longer engaged in hostilities or have been removed from such situations.²²

Most importantly, the resolution allowed the President only 60-90 days in which to cease using U.S. troops unless Congress authorized the use of U.S. troops or extended

the timeframe.²³ Another hedge against military adventurism came from the Department of Defense in the form of the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger (1981-1987), in a 1984 speech to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., articulated the conditions which he believed must be met before using military force. The Weinberger Doctrine called for committing U.S. military forces to combat only for reasons of vital national interests and only if the nation was committed to winning. Weinberger insisted that the nation's political and military leadership clearly define the political and military objectives, and commit enough forces to accomplish those objectives. He also required "reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress," and that the nation's leaders candidly articulate to the American people and Congress the threat and reasons for using force. Finally, the United States should only use force as a last resort. The Weinberger Doctrine's six criteria were "intended to sound a note of caution—caution that we must observe prior to committing forces to combat overseas."²⁴ While serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1989-1993, General Colin Powell invoked the Weinberger Doctrine advising President George H.W. Bush on the use of military force to expel Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait in 1990. General Powell added to the doctrine, however. The Powell Doctrine insisted the United States use overwhelming force whenever committing forces to combat.²⁵

The War Powers Resolution, the Weinberger Doctrine, and the Powell Doctrine all have roots in the tumultuous American political and military experience in Vietnam. They sought to curb the executive branch's ability to commit U.S. troops to combat

without proper national debate, but especially out of concern that the return to the AVF would enable Presidents to use force as the foreign policy tool of first resort. In practice, however, the War Powers Resolution and Weinberger and Powell Doctrines have only been mildly successful. The War Powers Resolution, deemed unconstitutional by every president from Nixon to George W. Bush,²⁶ is only invoked by Congress when disagreement arises among the elite (the president, politicians, media, intellectuals, national security experts) as to whether or not military force is the proper answer to a foreign policy issue.²⁷ From 1975 to March 2015, U.S. presidents submitted 160 reports to Congress in accordance with the War Powers Resolution. And while Congress authorized the use of force in 1991 and 2002 against Iraq, presidents and Congress have little appetite “to initiate the procedures of or enforce the directives in the War Powers Resolution.”²⁸ Generally, Congress is willing to let the President use military force without interfering and politicians do not want to appear to not “support the troops” given that the U.S. military is so highly regarded by the American people.²⁹ The War Powers Resolution has, however, shaped the way presidents use military power, preferring action that is limited in duration of 60-90 days so that they do not have to submit reports to Congress. The War Powers Resolution has therefore not constrained presidential use of force as a foreign policy instrument. Arguably, the military elites have been the most reluctant to use the military instrument of national power, and probably none more so than General Colin Powell.

As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell was concerned about using the military to further U.S. values when national interests were not at stake. In contrast to the 1991 Gulf War where Iraq invaded a sovereign country and gained

control of significant sources of oil, the efforts in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo injected the United States into the internal issues of those countries. The Clinton Administration sought to use military force for nation building in these countries when there was no existential threat to the United States.³⁰ General Powell's concern stemmed from the fact that these missions did not adhere to the Powell Doctrine because of a lack of coherent objectives and limitations placed on the military did not enable the overwhelming force favored by the military.³¹ More recently, during the debates to use military force to invade Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein in 2002, retired General Anthony Zinni was an outspoken critic of the Bush Administration's desire to invade Iraq: "It's pretty interesting that all the generals see it the same way and all the others who have never fired a shot and are hot to go to war see it another way."³²

Research by Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi reveals that civilian elites with no military experience are more likely to use force, albeit in more limited ways, than military elites. This is seen in a now-famous exchange between the United States' Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeline Albright and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Colin Powell during debates within the new Clinton Administration on employing military force. Ambassador Albright, frustrated by General Powell's adherence to the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines, asked General Powell: "What is the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"³³ Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott remarked during the 2002 debates on the Iraq invasion: "If the military people don't want to fight, what is their role? Do they want to be people that clean-up after natural disasters?"³⁴ Concerns that the AVF would give rise to a military so disconnected from society that military leaders would actively seek to

use the military instrument have proven false, but not because civilian leaders have prevented it. On the contrary, the United States' civilian leadership advocates more for the use of military force than military elites. Contrary to the Gates Commission's arguments that the AVF would not lead to military adventurism, the AVF enabled a more active use of force by the United States.

The All-Volunteer Force and the Application of U.S. Military Power

This paper has shown that the AVF is not a new or revolutionary concept in America; it has, in fact, been the norm throughout the vast majority of the country's history. To say that the modern AVF has led to military adventurism in U.S. foreign policy is also a fallacy. By most counts American presidents have used force abroad over 300 times since the country's founding.³⁵ According to retired lieutenant general and former Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, half of those "conflict-related military deployments" occurred after World War II; from 1946-1973, the United States conducted 19 overseas deployments, but 144 overseas deployments from 1973-2012 during the modern AVF.³⁶ These figures are often quoted to show that the modern AVF has contributed to military adventurism since 1973. The notion that an AVF leads to more frequent uses of force is also grounded in Kantian philosophy. Kant argued conscript armies in a republic link the people with their national leadership. They will, therefore, be "very cautious of decreeing for themselves all of the calamities of war."³⁷ This sentiment was also expressed by U.S. Representative Charles Rangel in 2006 when he advocated for a return to conscription: "Decision makers...would more readily feel the pain of conflict and appreciate the sacrifice of those on the front lines if their children were there too."³⁸ However, research suggests conscripted militaries may not be the hedge against military adventurism as conscription advocates believe.

Research by Kansas State University Political Science Professor Jeffrey Pickering indicates that nations with conscription as their military manpower system are more likely to use military force than nations with an AVF system.³⁹ Pickering found that the probability that states with conscription will use “belligerent military force” is 58 percent higher than states with AVFs. These states are also 39 percent more likely to engage in operations other than war, and a 227 percent higher probability of using force against non-state actors than states with AVFs. His study also found that military manpower systems have no impact on a nation’s decision to deploy military forces for humanitarian missions. In those instances, leaders only deploy their forces when they are confident that the risk to their soldiers’ lives is exceptionally low. More so than the military manpower system, a nation’s military capabilities play a larger role in determining whether or not a nation will use military force. The more capable the force, the more likely that force will be employed.⁴⁰ Pickering makes a compelling argument backed by statistical modeling, whereas conscription advocates rely on moral and philosophical arguments. What is not clear from his research, however, is the context within which the nations of his study employed military force, and to what degree their military manpower systems played a role in the decision to use force vice the need to protect vital national interests. Also, he does not clearly stipulate the form of government utilized by his subject nations. It stands to reason that dictatorships with conscript armies and suppressive regimes care less about public opinion and political consequences than democratic republics. Saddam Hussein and the Iran-Iraq War is a case in point. The subject nations’ places in the world order likely have an impact on how they use military force. The United States, as the world’s lone superpower in the

post-Cold War world, has a vital interest in maintaining the liberal international order that influences how and where it uses military force.

Arguably, the United States is more likely to use military force than other nations given its place in the world. The United States emerged from World War II as a superpower and the leader in the effort to stem the tide of international communism. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States assumed the mantle of preserving the liberal international order and used its military power—the highly capable and professional AVF—to protect that international order, protect its vital national interests, and promote national values.⁴¹ To do this, the United States at times has used force either as a deterrent to aggression by an adversary or as a means by which to compel an adversary to conform to the international order. The AVF enables the use of military force because it frees political leaders from the constraints placed on them by conscription as a military manpower system: namely a citizenry that resists conscription to fight a war where the country's vital interests are not at stake. The first Chancellor of the German Empire Otto von Bismarck put it succinctly when he stated, "Conscripts cannot be sent to the tropics."⁴² While the United States has no colonies to police as did the European powers of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the maintenance of the liberal international order has become Bismarck's "tropics" for the United States in late-20th and early 21st centuries. And while the United States has used its AVF as an instrument of foreign policy throughout the world in the maintenance of the international order, the American people have not completely ceded their role in the debate on when and how this force should be used.

Much of the literature surrounding the AVF focuses on the civic duty of a republic's citizenry to participate in the collective defense of the country, and that this has been diminished in the United States by the AVF. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry falls into this camp, stating: "We collectively claim the need for a robust armed forces given the multi-faceted foreign threats our country faces, and yet as individuals, do not wish to be troubled with any personal responsibility for manning the frontier."⁴³ Andrew Bacevich, a prominent critic of the AVF, believes that American political elites "neither seek nor seriously consider the views of the larger public" concerning foreign policy and the use of military force, and that "most citizens dutifully accept their exclusion from such matters."⁴⁴

The American public, however, has demonstrated that it remains interested and informed about its government's use of military power. Public outrage over American casualties in the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Beirut, the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia, and the raging insurgency in Iraq in 2006 forced presidents to withdraw forces (as in Beirut and Somalia) or to bring in fresh leadership and adopt a new strategy (hence the Iraq Surge and counterinsurgency doctrine).⁴⁵ The American public's frustration over the war in Iraq was a key factor in electing Barak Obama to the presidency in 2008 along with his campaign promise to end the war there. Public sentiment also profoundly influenced his operational approach to destroying the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014. President Obama's belief that the American public would not support another ground war in that region led to a strategy and operational approach that relied on U.S. and coalition airpower and intelligence capabilities in support of proxies fighting ISIS on the ground.⁴⁶

These examples prove Americans have not divorced themselves from the debate on the use of military force simply because they have less “skin in the game” due to the AVF. They are still part of the equation and continue to shape the character of the conflicts the United States engages in. The United States generally reserved the use of force to defend vital national interests, but the post-Cold War world changed that calculus. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States sought to promote its values throughout the world using military power. The AVF enabled this use of military power.

The United States in the post-Cold War world found itself as the world’s lone superpower, and it used that position to advance its values and principles instead of adhering to a strict defense of its vital national interests.⁴⁷ It became difficult for a president to justify inaction when people were suffering throughout the world, and America’s “possession of matchless military capabilities not only endowed the United States with the ability to right wrongs and succor the afflicted, it also imposed an obligation to do just that.”⁴⁸ President Clinton sent the U.S. military to solve conflicts in Somalia (though he did inherit this particular mission from his predecessor), Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo—conflicts of no strategic vital interest to the United States—and he did so unimpeded by the fact that he himself had avoided military service. While President Clinton weathered some criticism from the opposition party due to his lack of military service, he was enabled by the fact that the military of which he was the Commander in Chief was filled with men and woman who chose to be there. They were not forced into military service to fight a war like Vietnam. They had essentially accepted the “King’s Schilling” and as such would do the “King’s bidding.”⁴⁹

President Clinton's successor, George W. Bush, also benefited from the AVF. After the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush embarked on military campaigns in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) ostensibly for reasons vital to U.S. national interests. Though he had served in the Air National Guard during the Vietnam War, he received criticism for avoiding service in Vietnam. But, again, the military he sent into Afghanistan and Iraq was composed of volunteers who chose to serve. And as the wars dragged on, he neither raised taxes nor instituted conscription, thereby keeping the vast majority of Americans from feeling the wars' effects. President Bush won re-election in 2004, and the Republicans lost seats in the 2006 mid-terms due to public dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq; but Republican senators did well in states and counties left relatively unaffected by casualties in Iraq.⁵⁰ Public sentiment toward the conflict in Iraq enabled President Bush to continue prosecuting the war there, albeit after changing his strategy, operational approach, and civilian leadership in the Pentagon and military leadership in Iraq.

President Obama continued benefiting from the AVF and his use of military power. During the Obama presidency, the United States maintained forces in Afghanistan and the American public did not pressure him to withdraw those forces or demand progress in that campaign. As the president who fulfilled his campaign promise to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq in 2012, he once again deployed forces (though in significantly fewer numbers, especially ground troops) to the region to fight ISIS in 2014. That conflict is into its third year. Utilizing deficit spending without raising taxes, coupled with a volunteer military force, keeps the American public at bay and enables these campaigns to go on without much national debate. As stated by French international

relations scholar Etienne de Durand, "Mobilizing the population generally comes with a heavy price tag attached to it; the nonnegotiable need to show quick results."⁵¹

Conclusion

This paper demonstrated that the United States' AVF enables the use of force by America's political leaders. The AVF is a powerful instrument, grounded in the traditions of the country from its founding, and rooted in traditional liberal thought and philosophy concerning the relationship between the government and the governed in the defense of the nation. Today's scholars who warn the AVF erodes the concept of civic duty for the defense of the nation seem to have a love affair with the false notion that today's AVF is an aberration and incompatible with the ideals of republican democracy; and that the AVF removes the American public from the national debate on the use of force because the overwhelming majority of Americans do not choose to serve in their nation's armed forces. However, while the AVF enables presidents to use military force more freely, they must do so with an eye to the fact that they cannot use it with total disregard for American public opinion or without consideration for how its use will affect the AVF overall.

The American public still retains an interest in how the AVF is used and has shown the ability to hold its elected officials responsible. Americans place tremendous pride and trust in their armed forces and have immense respect for those who freely choose to serve in the military, especially in times of conflict. When they perceive that their military is being used in ways counter to the national values and interests, Americans tend to hold their politicians responsible. And for their part the political leaders acknowledge they have a fair amount of leeway concerning the use of military

force. However, this leeway is not a blank check and American political leaders must answer to American voters every election cycle.

Maintaining the AVF also requires willing volunteers. Men and women join the armed forces for any number of reasons, but they do so with the understanding that their lives will not be wasted in military adventures that do not protect the nation's vital interests. Americans who volunteer for military service essentially write a check to their government, payable with their lives, but with the expectation that they will not be frittered away on misadventures.⁵² America's political leaders must always keep this moral obligation in the forefront of their minds if they are to continue using volunteerism as the military manpower system for the U.S. military.

War theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously wrote that war is an extension of politics. The use of force is a legitimate instrument of foreign policy, but should generally be used when diplomacy and other instruments of national power have failed. The United States will continue to employ its military force in the defense of the liberal international order because it cannot continue to thrive in a world hostile to its interests or values.⁵³ It is therefore crucial that America's political and military leaders understand that America's AVF should not be an instrument of first resort simply because the American public writ large does not overwhelmingly contribute manpower to the military. If these leaders desire to retain the AVF as America's military manpower system of choice, they will need to rely on a steady stream of willing recruits to fill the military's ranks. That stream will dwindle to a trickle if the American public does not believe the lives of their servicemen and women are used in ways vital to the nation. For this

reason, America's leaders will always need the support of the American population before using military force.⁵⁴

The United States is the world's preeminent military power. The foundation of this military power is the relatively few men and women who, with the overwhelming support and admiration of the American public, choose to serve in its ranks. And while it stands to reason that the American public would willingly volunteer or acquiesce to a draft to defend their country against an actual existential threat, American security policy today seeks to keep threats at bay outside the nation's borders so that those threats never become capable of threatening the republic's survival. Historian T.R. Fehrenbach best described the importance of America's volunteer military in his book *This Kind of War: Korea, a Study in Unpreparedness*:

However repugnant the idea is to liberal societies, the man who will willingly defend the free world in the fringe areas is not the responsible citizen-soldier. The man who will go where his colors go, without asking, who will fight a phantom foe in jungle and mountain range, without counting, and who will suffer and die in the midst of incredible hardship, without complaint, is still what he always has been, from Imperial Rome to sceptered Britain to democratic America. He is the stuff of which legions are made.⁵⁵

Volunteers, therefore, are required to man the posts at the fringes in preservation of the liberal international order from which the nation benefits. Therein lies the AVF's necessity and true value to the United States.

Endnotes

¹ Jeffery Pickering, "Dangerous Drafts? A Time-Series, Cross-National Analysis of Conscription and the Use of Military Force, 1946-2001," *Armed Forces & Society* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 120-121, quoted from Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939* (New York: Garland, 1973), 346.

² John Whiteclay Chambers et al., eds., *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 595.

³ James Sheehan, "The Future of Conscription: Some Comparative Reflections," in *The Modern American Military*, ed. David M. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 178. The author quotes Alexis de Tocqueville who wrote that Americans have "no neighbors, and consequently they have no great wars...nor great armies, nor great generals." Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Everyman's Library, 1994), 288-289.

⁴ Chambers, *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, 594-595.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 764.

⁷ James Burk, "The Changing Moral Contract for Military Service," in *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II*, ed. by Andrew J. Bacevich (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 442.

⁸ "Bill Clinton Letter to Colonel Eugene Holmes," PBS, December 3, 1969, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/clinton/etc/draftletter.html> (accessed December 12, 2017). In his letter, to Colonel Holmes, Clinton stated he was "working every day against a war I opposed and despised with a depth of feeling I had reserved solely for racism in America before Vietnam."

⁹ Thomas S. Gates, *President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Force* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1970), vii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, viii-ix. Members included Milton Friedman, Alan Greenspan, Alfred Gruenther (former SACEUR), and Roy Wilkins (Executive Director of the NAACP).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, iii.

¹² Louis G. Yuengert, "America's All Volunteer Force: A Success?" *Parameters* 45, no.4 (Winter 2015-2016): 55.

¹³ Gates, *President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Force*, 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 156. The mixed force of volunteers and conscripts was the military manpower system in place at the time of the commission's study and report.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁶ Ibid., 156. “The claim is made that the ranks of the public attentive to foreign policy are swelled significantly by those citizens touched by the draft. It is a doubtful notion. The corollary—that public interest in foreign affairs will decrease significantly if volunteerism is adopted—is also doubtful. Volunteers have as many concerned relatives and friends as men who are drafted. Higher education levels, the diffusion of modern mass communications, and the newsworthiness of compelling national security events assure that foreign affairs will hold the attention of a substantial and growing public, regardless of the method used for procuring military manpower.”

¹⁷ Ibid., 155.

¹⁸ Ibid., 157.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 155.

²¹ *The War Powers Resolution of 1973*, Public Law 93-148, 87 Stat. 555, 93rd Cong., 1st sess. (November 7, 1973), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/50/1541> (accessed January 3, 2017).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Caspar Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," public speech, The National Press Club, Washington, DC, November 28, 1984, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/force/weinberger.html> (accessed December 23, 2016).

²⁵ Chambers, *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, 556.

²⁶ Matthew C. Weed, *The War Powers Resolution: Concepts and Practice* (Washington, DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, April 3, 2015), i.

²⁷ Gregory P. Noone, "The War Powers Resolution and Public Opinion," *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 45, no. 1/2 (Fall 2012): 145.

²⁸ Weed, *The War Powers Resolution: Concepts and Practice*, i. For a complete listing of WPR reporting instances, see pages 59-88.

²⁹ Noone, "The War Powers Resolution and Public Opinion," 151. According to Noone's research, the American public overwhelmingly supports the military during times of conflict and politicians are very attuned to this.

³⁰ Michael Mandelbaum, *Mission Failure: America and the World in the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 368.

³¹ Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6.

³² Ibid., 1. Quoted from Mike Salinero, "Gen. Zinni Says War with Iraq is Unwise," *Tampa Tribune*, August 24, 2002, 1.

³³ Ibid., 2. Quoted from Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine, 1995), 576-577.

³⁴ Ibid., 3. Quoted from Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, "Inside the Ring," *Washington Times*, October 11, 2002, 10.

³⁵ Ryan C. Hendrickson, *The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), 1.

³⁶ Karl W. Eikenberry, "Reassessing the All-Volunteer Force," *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no.1 (Winter 2013): 10, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2013.751647> (accessed December 1, 2016).

³⁷ Pickering, "Dangerous Drafts? A Time-Series, Cross-National Analysis of Conscription and the Use of Military Force, 1946-2001," 120, quoted from Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, ed., translated by H.B. Nesbit (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 94.

³⁸ Ibid., 120.

³⁹ Ibid., 119.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 129-131.

⁴¹ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 2, See pages 19-23 for national values and the international order.

⁴² Sheehan, "The Future of Conscription: Some Comparative Reflections," 179.

⁴³ Eikenberry, "Reassessing the All-Volunteer Force," 39.

⁴⁴ Andrew J. Bacevich, "The Elusive Bargain: The Pattern of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Since World War II," in *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II*, ed. by Andrew J. Bacevich (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 208.

⁴⁵ For Somalia see David P. Auerswald and Peter F. Cowhey, "Ballotbox Diplomacy: The War Powers Resolution and the Use of Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (September 1997): 522.

For Beirut see Andrew J. Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History* (New York: Random House, 2016).

See also Glenn P. Hastedt, *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, and Future*, 10th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2014), 181-183.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic Monthly* 317, no. 3 (April 2016): 70-90.

⁴⁷ Mandelbaum, *Mission Failure: America and the World in the Post-Cold War Era*, 368. See also Arnold A. Offner, "Liberation or Dominance? The Ideology of U.S. National Security Policy," in *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II*, ed. by Andrew J. Bacevich (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 2, 17, 35.

⁴⁸ Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History*, 143.

⁴⁹ Robert L. Goldich, "American Military Culture: Culture from Colony to Empire," in *The Modern American Military*, ed. by David M. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 89.

⁵⁰ Douglas L. Kriner and Francis X. Shen, "Iraq Casualties and the 2006 Senate Elections," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (November 2007): 508.

⁵¹ Octavian Manea, "Reflections on the French School of Counter-Rebellion: An Interview with Etienne de Durand," *Small Wars Journal*, March 3, 2011. Quoted in Robert L. Goldich, "American Military Culture: Culture from Colony to Empire," 89.

⁵² James Kurth, "Variations on the American Way of War," in *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II*, ed. by Andrew J. Bacevich (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 85.

⁵³ Eliot A. Cohen, *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 25.

⁵⁴ Burk, "The Changing Moral Contract for Military Service," 443.

⁵⁵ T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: Korea, a Study in Unpreparedness* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 658.