

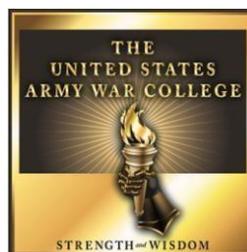
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The U.S. Military. . . America's Easy Button

by

Lieutenant Colonel Scott A. Myers
United States Army

Under the Direction of:
Dr. Marybeth Ulrich



United States Army War College
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Abstract

The United States continues to increase its military commitments to secure national interests at the expense of implementing other instruments of national power, despite protections deliberately embedded into the Constitution by America's Founding Fathers to fight this outcome. The nation's growing propensity to use military force as the primary instrument of national power is rooted in three distinct phenomena: the growing civil-military gap, Congress's failure to exercise its constitutional prerogatives to declare war, and the country's failure to ensure citizen sacrifice to support its wars. The result is a country with an empowered Executive that frequently employs the armed forces as the primary instrument of national power to protect its interests. If not rectified, America will continue this trend due to the turbulent strategic environment and growing threats from adversaries, which will likely jeopardize the nation's standing and reputation. This paper will discuss the causes of America's growing reliance on the military and offer solutions to better balance the nation's use of all instruments of national power to return the country to a state in closer alignment with the visions of the Founding Fathers.

The U.S. Military. . . America's Easy Button

[The Founders] great advice was that we should structure ourselves as a country in a way that deliberately raised the price of admission to any war. With citizen-soldiers, with the certainty of a vigorous political debate over the use of a military subject to politicians' control, the idea was for us to feel it – uncomfortably – every second we were at war.

—Rachel Maddow¹

America's Founding Fathers, fresh from removing the shackles of British Imperial rule, strongly desired to create governmental and constitutional safeguards against making war. Central to their concern was an understanding of European history where monarchs repeatedly carried out warfare for personal gain or glory. Abraham Lincoln, while serving his first term in Congress, reiterated the Founders' concerns and their intent:

The Provision of the Constitution, giving the war-making powers to Congress was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons: kings had always been involved and impoverishing their people in wars. . . This our convention understood to be the most oppressive of all kingly oppressions, and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us.²

Despite constitutional protections, the United States has increasingly turned to its military to secure or maintain national interests. In fact, over the past 40 years, the U.S. executed military operations in conflict zones over 190 times, roughly the same number of military actions the nation conducted in the first two centuries of its history.³ One explanation for this trend could be the era of U.S. hegemony that followed the Cold War; a period where American power was relatively unchecked. Significant advances in global communications, command and control, and transportation capabilities have also facilitated military operations world-wide. However, a more innate and troubling

phenomenon within American society is likely to blame for the nation's over-reliance on its military.

The disincentives for war that the Framers built into the American political system rely on citizens and Congress fulfilling their responsibilities to determine the military's role in pursuing the nation's foreign policy pursuits. Today, U.S. citizens are less connected to the military and less affected by decisions to commit armed forces to hostilities than at any time in America's history. To further complicate matters, Congress has neglected its institutional responsibility for authorizing U.S. military operations. Consequently, the Executive branch gained an unprecedented autonomy to use force.

Ultimately, the widening civil-military gap, Congress's abdication of its constitutional prerogatives for declaring war, and changing war-time fiscal policies have created conditions where American citizens and their representatives no longer exert meaningful influence on the military's role in foreign policy. The result is a nation that too often requires the military to achieve national interests – tendencies that the Founding Fathers fought to guard against. This paper will examine the origins of these conditions and propose measures to re-engage citizens and Congress on decisions to employ the U.S. military – measures which should allow the country to better balance the use of all instruments of national power and decrease its unhealthy dependence on the military.

Origins of the Citizen-Soldier Concept

America's Founding Fathers possessed profound beliefs on the form and function of the nation's military, shaped in large part by their experiences with British occupation. Several Framers including Sam Adams expressed intense aversion to maintaining a standing army which he deemed would be "dangerous to the Liberties of

the People.”⁴ Despite these fears, they acknowledged the fledgling nation’s need for a capability to defend itself and agreed to grant Congress the exclusive right to maintain and raise an army.⁵ However, the Framers decided to limit Congress’s ability to fund an army for a period of only two years. As such, the nation’s mechanism for defending the country in times of crisis would be wartime mobilization of the states’ militias in lieu of a standing army.⁶

Despite authorizing an adequate defense capability against both internal and external threats, the Founders remained adamant that systems of governance must guard against any one individual or group waging war. As James Wilson stated to the Pennsylvania ratifying convention in 1787, “this system [of government] will not hurry us into war, it is calculated against it. . . and will not be in the power of a single man, or a single body of men.” Ultimately, the Constitution became the Framers’ mechanism to protect the nation from waging war frivolously. The Founders sought to make armed conflict difficult by granting Congress the power to declare war and by ensuring the public’s sacrifice through the use of an army comprised of citizen-soldiers. Over two and a half centuries removed from these historic decisions that shaped America, many of the safeguards the Framers instituted to prevent the nation from engaging in frequent conflicts have been circumvented, removed, or degraded to such a degree that waging war has become relatively easy.

The Widening Civil-Military Gap

In 1945, over 9 million citizens served in the U.S. military, which represented over 9-percent of the total population. At the height of the Vietnam war, the U.S. military was a 2.7-million-person conscripted force, with over 4-percent of the nation’s eligible population having served in that conflict.⁷ Today, less than one-half of one-percent of

Americans serve in the armed forces. This trend indicates an unprecedented gap between Americans and the military. It is important to note that a continual widening of the civil-military gap is inevitable as the population rises and the military end strength remains relatively stable. However, aside from decreasing proportions of American veterans in the citizenry, several additional factors emerged over the past decades that expanded the civil-military divide and placed the connection between American citizens and its military in even greater jeopardy.

Exacerbating the Gap

Over the past 25 years, the Department of Defense (DoD) closed more than 350 military installations according to the Base Closure and Realignment Committee's (BRAC) recommendations.⁸ As a result, DoD consolidated personnel from the losing installations to several of the military's larger bases, creating a less geographically dispersed military force. The Army installation at Fort Bliss, Texas is emblematic of the military's geographic consolidation that resulted from BRAC. Its military population grew from 10,000 soldiers in 2005 to over 33,500 soldiers in 2014. Similar consolidations took place at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Carson, Colorado. The by-product of base reductions and the formation of mega-bases created a more regional military (see figure 1). In fact, in 2015, over forty-nine percent of the U.S. military served in five states: California, Virginia, Texas, North Carolina, and Georgia.⁹

As the nation's military progressively moved South and West, recruiting efforts and trends followed.¹⁰ Military recruiters shifted their focus to states with larger military populations to capitalize on the existing military exposure and traditionally high recruiting rates in those states. In fact, a 2014 Department of Defense report indicated that over the past 35 years, military recruits from the South and West were over-

represented. Military recruits from the Northeast and Midwest, however, were under-represented.¹¹ The shift in military populations to the South and West further cements a regionalized military that has progressively become less connected to American society.

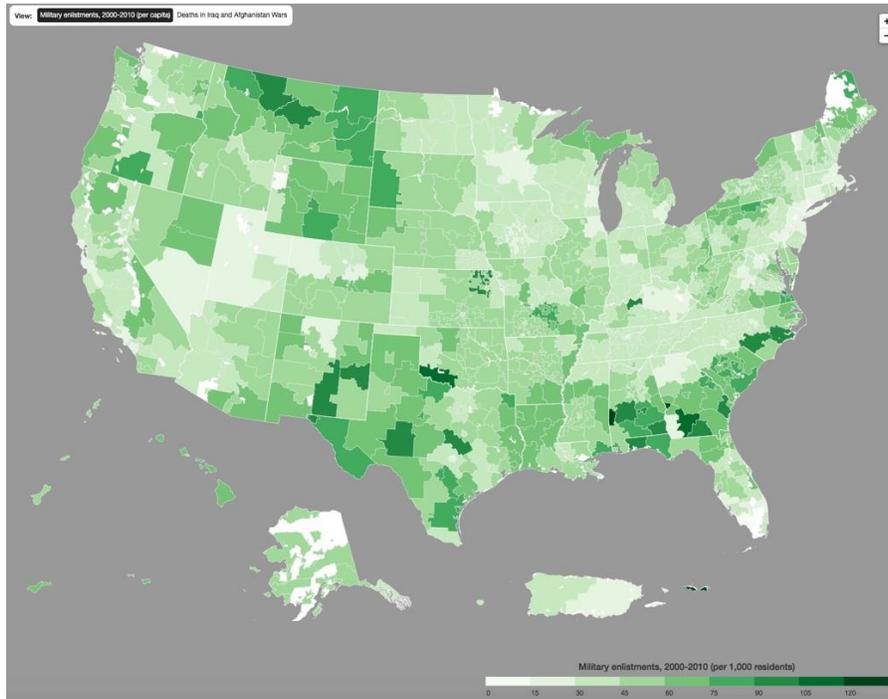


Figure 1. Per-capita Military Enlistments from 2000 to 2010, Grouped by 3-digit Zip Code.¹²

Another aspect that deepened the civil-military gap is the reduction and increasing regionalization of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs at the nation's universities. The National Defense Act of 1916 initiated ROTC to prepare the country for participation in World War I. Since then, ROTC has been the primary commissioning source of American officers.¹³

ROTC programs have also served as a hedge against a civil-military divide, providing a vital link between the military and society through institutions of higher learning. Over the past 25 years, that vital link has been compromised as the number of ROTC programs decreased significantly. In the 1980s, the U.S. Army maintained 420

ROTC programs. By 2016, only 275 programs remained.¹⁴ During recent decades, economic and societal pressures forced universities and the military to reduce ROTC representation nationwide and to focus programs in the South and West. This resulted in greater regionalization of this vital commissioning source and severed a vital link between some of the nation's most prestigious universities and the U.S. military.

The unpopular Vietnam War and the military's controversial but now defunct Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy served as two social catalysts for change, causing a significant backlash against universities with ROTC programs and forcing a number to close. Most notably, the Department of Defense shut down ROTC departments at some of the nation's most prestigious universities including Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Columbia. These schools have only recently re-established ROTC departments to varying degrees.

In 2011, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Philadelphia had a combined population of 16 million, approximately the total combined populations of Virginia, Alabama, and Mississippi.¹⁵ However, ROTC programs in those four cities numbered 14, while VA, AL, and MS hosted 35 programs.¹⁶ The reduction of ROTC programs in the nation's largest cities has removed a vital link between the nation and its citizens, further increasing the civil-military divide.

The last factor contributing to the civil-military divide is the growing trend of multi-generational soldiers. In 2011, a Pew Research Center survey of veterans and the general public indicated that 77-percent of adults over the age of 50 had an immediate family member who served in the U.S. military compared to only 57-percent of those between the age of 30 to 49. The number decreases to 33-percent for those under the

age of 30.¹⁷ The same survey reports that close to 80-percent of veterans have a parent or sibling who served in the military, and these same veterans are “twice as likely as members of the general public to have a son or daughter who has served.”¹⁸

In 2008, nearly 60-percent of the military’s general officers had children serving in the armed forces.¹⁹ Additionally, as of 2011, nearly 100,000 military members were married to another service member.²⁰ The Pew survey paints younger generations as having fewer interactions with and less understanding of the military while also describing an increasingly insular, multigenerational military. Both of these outcomes are cause for alarm as they further separate the citizenry from the military and exacerbate the civil-military gap.

While today’s smaller, more regionalized, and increasingly multi-generational military has resulted in a wider divide between U.S. service members and citizens, it is important to comprehend how this separation manifests itself in American society. The 2011 Pew survey highlighted a number of discouraging revelations. The study revealed that 84-percent of surveyed post-9/11 veterans believed that the public did not understand the problems that they or their families experience.²¹ Conversely, 71-percent of non-military survey respondents admitted that they did not understand the problems faced by the military or their families.²²

More alarmingly, roughly 50-percent of the surveyed public did not believe that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were worth the cost. Additionally, only 25-percent of respondents admitted that they followed these wars closely, confessing that the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq had little impact on their lives.²³ Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the survey was the public’s acknowledgment of a significant burden-sharing

gap between the U.S. military and civilians over the past 15 years of conflict. While 83-percent of surveyed adults stated that military personnel and their families have made significant sacrifices since 9/11, 43-percent believed that the American people have also made substantial sacrifices.²⁴ Strikingly, only 26-percent of those surveyed felt as if the sacrifices made by military personnel were unfair and 70-percent considered it a natural result of serving in the military.²⁵

The Pew survey highlights significant cause for concern as it describes an admittedly ill-informed American public who are disinterested in the U.S. military and how it is employed around the world. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen outlined his concerns on the widening civil-military gap in his address to the West Point Class of 2011:

This great republic of ours was founded on some pretty simple ideas – simple but enduring. And one of them is that the people. . . will determine the course the military steers, the skills we perfect, the wars we fight. But I fear they do not know us. I fear they do not comprehend the full weight of the burden we carry or the price we pay when we return from battle. This is important because a people uninformed about what they are asking the military to endure is a people inevitably unable to fully grasp the scope of the responsibilities our Constitution levies upon them.²⁶

Admiral Mullen's concerns are still valid today. As the connection between the American people and its military continues to fray, so too has the public's influence over the role of the military.

Perhaps even more disturbing is the public's acknowledgment and willing acceptance of the large disparity between the sacrifices made by military service-members in support of the nation's wars as compared to the public at large. These conditions strongly diverge from the beliefs of the Founding Fathers who sought to ensure "a vigorous political debate" over the use of the military subject. They also

wanted the citizenry to “feel [war] uncomfortably – every second” the nation is engaged in war.²⁷

In fact, as Rachel Maddow attests, with servicemen and women deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan for over 15 years since 9/11, the nation has never “been further from . . . the idea that America would find it impossible to go to war without disrupting domestic life.”²⁸ Congress and the Executive branch, armed with a professional All-Volunteer Force (AVF) that does not require Americans to sacrifice to support the nation’s conflicts, have shifted the burden for the common defense to the nation’s military.²⁹ These conditions have enabled the Executive branch to disproportionately rely on and wield military power to address security challenges and pursue national interests.

Authorizing the Use of Force

While the American public and its military have gradually drifted apart, the civil-military gap in Congress has also grown. For much of America’s history, military service was practically a prerequisite for membership in Congress. Today, fewer veterans serve as representatives than at any time in the nation’s recent past. The 95th Congress (1977-1978) proved to be the high-water mark for veteran representation with 77-percent of the Congress having served.³⁰ In 2016, the total number of veterans fell to less than 19-percent of Congress.³¹ What impact does the growing civil-military gap in Congress have on its decisions to use force to pursue U.S. foreign policy?

Congress maintains the exclusive authority to declare war on behalf of the nation. This power was vested in its hands to ensure George Washington’s vision; that the nation’s representatives would vigorously debate and formally authorize force before any military expeditions. In 1806, in the *United States v. Smith*, the Supreme Court solidified this responsibility by ruling that decisions regarding whether the nation was at

peace or at war was “the exclusive province of Congress to determine.”³² Throughout recent history, a number of presidents have balked at the requirement to involve Congress when employing military forces overseas. As a result, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution in 1973 over the objections and veto of President Richard Nixon to strengthen its war-making authorities. This act exemplified the real struggle between the executive and legislative branches on the authority to use military force.

The War Powers Resolution represented Congress’s effort to clarify and reinforce constitutional statutes and responsibilities on the use of force, and to “ensure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President [applied] to the introduction of United States Armed Forces into hostilities.”³³ This resolution mandated reporting requirements for the executive branch to Congress. Additionally, the resolution established a 60-day limit for the deployment of military forces without congressional approval, which only Congress could extend.³⁴ However, despite its inherent constitutional authority and the additional powers granted by the War Powers Resolution, Congress has repeatedly failed in its duty to deliberate and authorize U.S. military interventions abroad.³⁵

Since the advent of the All-Volunteer Force, the United States has increasingly deployed its military to conflict zones, a number of which involved combat to include operations in Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.³⁶ None of these were approved by a declaration of war. In fact, Congress last sanctioned a formal declaration of war in June 1942 against Romania during World War II.³⁷ Of the numerous military operations conducted since the creation of the AVF, only three were

officially sanctioned by Congress when it authorized the use of military force against Iraq in 1991 and 2002, as well as in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The past two presidents have used Congress's 9/11 authorization to wage a global war on terrorism, far beyond the scope of the Joint Resolution. Despite surging military operations and the tendency of recent presidents to liberally apply the 9/11 authorization to expand their war-making abilities, Congress has demonstrated ambivalence in fulfilling its role to approve military actions. This phenomenon begs the question as to why Congress is seemingly unwilling to exert its institutional prerogative. While answers to this important question are beyond the scope of this paper, they are relevant to the discussion.

Two explanations to this question appear plausible. The first reasonable justification centers on the American public's relative disinterest in engaging its representatives on the issue of using military force. Absent pressure from constituencies, U.S. representatives may choose a politically safe approach and avoid deliberating military operations so as to not be held accountable for military failures.

The second and more troubling explanation involves the relationship between U.S. military interventions abroad and the American military industrial complex. America's wars and increasingly frequent military deployments tend to support the military industrial complex. In fact, since the height of the Vietnam war, shares of the main U.S. arms manufacturers have risen over four times the rate of the overall market.³⁸ The post 9/11 wars have been good business for many American corporations, providing thousands of jobs and supporting local economies. Additionally, the defense industry spends millions of dollars annually in lobbying efforts to garner

congressional support for its military programs. These programs are, in turn, aided by the increased military operations pursued by recent presidents. The military industrial complex has also been a prime player in the campaign contribution business. In fact, in 2016, the top ten defense companies contributed over \$18.5 million to congressional candidates and their respective parties.³⁹ Despite these two logical explanations, the decreasing veteran presence in Congress plays a larger factor to rationalize its inaction for approving military operations.

A 21st century Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS) survey examined the gap between the military and American society. This project aimed to determine whether an individual's familiarity with the military influenced his views on U.S. national security and foreign policy. The examination studied survey results of four distinct populations: Elite Military, Elite Civilians who attended Professional Military Education Courses but had no actual military experience, Elite Civilians with military experience, and Elite Civilians with no military experience.⁴⁰ The TISS study provided a significant conclusion regarding the civil-military gap in Congress and how this gap might influence U.S. foreign policy. In comparison to military elites and civilians with military service, civilian elites with no military experience were more approving of an interventionist approach in terms of the range of issues they supported using military force.⁴¹

Rather remarkably, the TISS study also concluded that as veteran presence in the executive and legislative branches increased, the probability that the U.S. would use military force to settle disputes decreased by 90-percent.⁴² The study postulated that as veteran presence in the executive and legislative branches continued to decline, the

United States would increasingly use military force as the principal instrument of national power to address foreign policy aims.

The TISS survey and its findings are over a decade old. While no subsequent studies exist that confirm or refute its propositions, Congress's decreasing veteran presence and America's increasingly interventionist posture appear to lend credence to the study's findings. Whether Congress's rising tendency to support military interventions is a function of its members' fundamental beliefs on the use of military force or due to its acquiescence on military matters in general, neither is positive. The result is a country whose foreign policy fails to balance the use of all instruments of national power.

The byproduct of Congress's egregious failure to execute its constitutional responsibilities has been the unprecedented strengthening of the Executive's ability to commit the nation's military. Congress, as Thomas Friedman describes, "either meekly bows to the wishes of the executive or provides the sort of broad authorization that amounts in effect to an abrogation of direct responsibility."⁴³ The result is arguably a nation where the only real struggle for waging war is between the White House and the Pentagon, where war has become an almost natural condition of the American state.⁴⁴

Paying for War

A third phenomenon that has enabled the country to drift frequently towards conflict is the government's recent departure from levying taxes on current generations to pay for war. America has a profound legacy of contesting taxes, particularly in its early years as exemplified by the Revolutionary War. However, over the course of its history, the country has accepted taxation as a means to fund conflicts and to share the sacrificial burden of war with its citizens. In fact, the government used taxation to fund

the first three major conflicts in its history: the War of 1812, the Civil War, and World War I.

The most poignant example of American wartime financial sacrifice took place during World War II. Facing the inexorable prospect of entering the struggle in Europe, the U.S. government committed to a dramatic overhaul of the nation's tax system to support the anticipated financial burdens of the looming conflict.⁴⁵ Less than one year following U.S. entry into World War II, Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1942, effectively expanding the federal income tax from a "class tax" to a "mass tax," a system that resembles today's tax structure.⁴⁶ The establishment of this fiscal sacrifice served as a profound departure from a long-standing aversion to government taxation of its citizens. Remarkably, however, approximately 90-percent of Americans surveyed deemed that the monetary sacrifice was fair.⁴⁷ Americans supported the nation's entry into World War II and did not shy away from personal sacrifice on behalf of the country.

America sustained the tradition of fiscal sacrifice during the Korean War. However, this trend cooled notably during the Vietnam conflict, as then President Johnson first balked and then reluctantly accepted an income tax surcharge to support the growing war costs. Three decades later and months prior to the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush brought a sharp divergence from taxation to fund war when he enacted significant tax cuts despite initiating what would be the longest war in American history.

It seems remarkable that in the months that followed, despite entering what appeared to be a lengthy conflict in Afghanistan and with a war in Iraq looming, neither the administration nor Congress made any significant pleas for tax increases. What

proved even more astonishing and unprecedented were the subsequent tax cuts enacted in March 2003, just days after the U.S. military initiated the ground invasion of Iraq. In 2011, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the cost of the Bush tax cuts totaled roughly \$1.3 trillion in reduced government revenue, ironically almost the same cumulative cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2011.⁴⁸

During the subsequent Obama administration, taxes remained low and, at times, decreased further. In fact, the average effective tax rate for all U.S. taxpayers ranged between 16.8 and 17.2-percent throughout the Bush and Obama administrations, with no increase in taxes to fund the post 9/11 wars.⁴⁹ In stark contrast, average tax rates during World War II and the Korean War rose sharply to fund the nation's conflicts. Remarkably, the effective tax rate for a typical American rose from a 1.5-percent in 1940 to 15.1-percent at the end of World War II, increasing federal revenues three-fold.⁵⁰ With decreased revenues from lower taxes, both the Bush and Obama administrations turned extensively to unparalleled financial borrowing from foreign nations to fund military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁵¹

Instead of levying the responsibility to pay for the nation's wars on current generations, the Bush and Obama Administrations charted a dangerous course with two distinct and damaging outcomes. First, they effectively transferred the immense costs of the post-9/11 wars to future generations who cannot influence the current political process. In doing so, they removed the burden of paying for our nation's wars from the American citizen. Second, by pursuing war funding via Continuing Resolution, the Executive branch practically circumvented the responsibility of budgetary oversight from Congress. In essence, Continuing Resolutions establish permanent appropriations that

do not navigate traditional congressional appropriations processes, creating disincentives for Congress to provide effective oversight.⁵² As a result, the government further encouraged an already uninterested public to remain unengaged in U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, with a diminished interest to oversee military spending, Congress further disengaged from decisions to authorize force, effectively deferring military matters to the Executive branch.

Future Implications

As the nation progresses through the 21st century, several phenomena may strengthen its tendency to rely on the military to achieve foreign policy aims. First, the volatile and unpredictable security environment is made increasingly complicated by the rapid rise of non-state actors. These entities do not respond in traditional manners to diplomatic, economic, or informational instruments of national power, fostering the likelihood of increased U.S. military interventions.

Additionally, rising powers such as Russia and China are progressively contesting U.S. hegemony and the current state of global affairs. U.S. reactions may intensify the potential for conflict due to the chance of misperceptions and miscalculations, particularly if the country continues to rely on the military at the expense of other instruments of national power.

The second factor that enables America's over-reliance on its military is the high regard that the public places in the armed forces. The U.S. military is arguably the best trained, educated, disciplined, and well-equipped force since the advent of the AVF. Naturally, Americans expect a high return on their investment. These high expectations, however, are further exacerbated by the increasing divide between citizens and the military. This dynamic can be seen in the nation's legislature as well where a Congress

who does not possess the same appreciation for the military institution or its culture, is disinterested in conducting insightful or firm scrutiny over military matters.⁵³ The obvious concern with the American public and Congress maintaining an unhealthy regard for the U.S. military is that they will not effectively scrutinize future military operations, further aggravating an over-reliance on American military might.

The final element that supports increased American military interventions is the rapid pace of technological advancements. Constant technological improvements over recent decades have reinforced increased military operations and also intensified Americans' expectations for military success. Unmanned platforms, precision weapons, and the prospects of autonomous weapons and "super soldiers" expand U.S. military capabilities and promote a change to the character of war, where casualties and overall risk to U.S. military forces will be lower.

The promise of more swift and sterile conflicts will undoubtedly raise the public's expectations for military success and further reinforce a belief that the "horrors of combat are things of the past."⁵⁴ As a result, Americans may not comprehend the difficulties associated with future wars and acquiesce without significant debate to the U.S. military engaging in perilous operations. These conditions increase the nation's vulnerability due to what prominent political journalist and author William Greider describes as "presumptions of unconquerable superiority," that will "lead [the country] deeper and deeper into unwinnable conflicts."⁵⁵

National Service

While the conditions that have allowed for an increasingly military-dominated American foreign policy may appear bleak, they can be remedied. The first step the country must take to better balance its use of the military is to instill in its citizens a

greater sense of service and commitment to the nation. Influential figures to include GEN (Ret) Stanley McChrystal and U.S. Representative Charles Rangel have advocated to re-institute a military draft to reinvigorate a service culture in American society and to extend the sacrificial burden to a greater percentage of Americans.⁵⁶ However, there are many who debate whether the cost of losing the professionalism and unparalleled efficacy of the All-Volunteer Force would outweigh the benefits of increased national service and sacrifice. In addition to promoting a return of the military draft, Representative Rangel also encouraged national service programs as a method of sharing the costs and benefits of American freedom to all.⁵⁷

Rangel's Universal National Service Act proposed mandatory registration for selective service and two years of compulsory service for all citizens between the ages of 18 to 25.⁵⁸ Men and women could complete their obligation in any number of occupations such as schools, hospitals, airports, or the military. Rangel's proposal sought to ensure that "all Americans are involved in our defense [and that] every family will fully engage in any decision to use force."⁵⁹

Several other notable figures such as Hillary Clinton and Senator John McCain have proposed similar mandatory service programs, although none of these recommendations have gained significant traction in Congress. Incentivizing, rather than mandating national service may be a more feasible approach to garner increased sacrifice from Americans. General McChrystal recently called for such incentive programs, proposing that the nation encourage colleges and corporations to promote national service. His idea envisions that the government incentivize "schools [to] adjust their acceptance policies and employers their hiring practices to benefit those who have

served.”⁶⁰ Ultimately, any measure the nation adopts to inculcate a greater sense of service should strengthen Americans’ participation in the political process and intensify national debate on the appropriate use of military force.

Narrowing the Civil-Military Gap

The civil-military gap will continue to widen as the U.S. population grows. The nation must, however, undertake meaningful efforts to gain improved military representation from across the nation to reconnect society with its military. The U.S. can first begin by rebalancing ROTC programs across the nation, particularly in the Northeast and in the largest urban areas. Fortunately, the military has already begun efforts to address this issue. In 2013, U.S. Army Cadet Command announced that it would be closing 13 ROTC programs to shift financial resources to 56 different markets, to include Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago.⁶¹

Additionally, Cadet Command expanded scholarship opportunities to recruit students from inner-cities, announcing an urban scholarship initiative to better reflect the “geographic and demographic diversity of the country.”⁶² While ongoing movements to rebalance officer recruitment from across the nation are essential, the military must also gain better geographic representation for its enlisted population. To accomplish this, the military must expand recruitment efforts beyond the historically strong South and West regions. Creating a more geographically representative force is a vital step to more effectively bind the public to the military, and to ensure for expanded public engagement and debate on future decisions to use force.

Reform the War Powers Resolution

The Constitution clearly states that Congress has the prerogative to authorize a non-defensive war, a power that it has increasingly failed to assert. Although Congress

passed the 1973 War Powers Resolution to affirm its control over war-making decisions, in practice, this law has failed to curb the Executive. In fact, no president has recognized the constitutionality of the War Powers Act and recent presidents have blatantly ignored Congress's role in authorizing force. To complicate matters further, the resolution's 60-day limit on committing military force for hostilities without congressional approval has proven to be a critical flaw.⁶³ This stipulation, in effect, recognizes the president's ability to unilaterally engage in war-making. Furthermore, the 60-day limit strongly ties the hands of the Legislative branch as options to recall forces once deployed are often severely limited by political pressures.

There have been recent efforts in both the House and the Senate to reform the War Powers Resolution. U.S. Representative Chris Gibson recommended a 48-hour requirement for the President to report to Congress following any introduction of armed forces into hostilities, repealing the existing 60 and 90-day timelines.⁶⁴ Senators John McCain and Tim Kaine proposed reducing the period where the President could commit military forces to seven days before both houses of Congress would vote to authorize continued military operations.⁶⁵

However, neither of these recommended amendments is sufficient. The previous two administrations liberally applied the 2001 Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force in Response to the 9/11 attacks to justify military actions world-wide, far beyond the scope of the original authorization. Moreover, Congress has repeatedly demonstrated an unwillingness to countermand the Executive once military forces are employed. The War Powers Resolution must be amended to require congressional approval prior to the deployment of the military short of the immediate defense of the

nation, as the Founding Fathers envisioned.⁶⁶ Furthermore, due to the increased role of non-state actors and frequent U.S. counter-terrorism campaigns, any amendment to the War Powers Resolution must insist upon a very strict definition of war to prevent the Executive from taking advantage of ambiguous situations where conflict may result.⁶⁷

Funding Future Military Actions

The aforementioned proposals are meaningful remedies that can help the country re-balance its use of the military with the other instruments of national power. However, the most effective measure the nation must take is to change the manner in which it pays for war. Taking action to ensure that American citizens share in the burdens of war would force a much needed and long-overdue debate concerning when and where America's military should be employed. The current practice of transferring the costs of war onto future generations who cannot yet vote is a troubling development.⁶⁸ Increasing taxes or reducing government benefits or consumption are all practical approaches to more appropriately fund the nation's wars. However, to solidify this remedy and to fundamentally change how America funds its wars, Congress must pursue legislation that prohibits military deployments to conflicts without an established and approved funding source.

Representative Gibson's offered House Resolution 560 lays out a feasible course for paying for future wars. His proposal prohibits funds "from being obligated or expended for introducing the Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated, in the absence of (1) a declaration of war; (2) specific statutory authorization; or (3) a national emergency created by an attack or imminent threat of attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or the Armed Forces."⁶⁹

Some argue that the unwillingness of the Bush and Obama administrations to raise taxes to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was linked to fading public support. Admittedly, raising taxes or reducing government spending is a controversial activity in Washington. However, if America is to re-balance its use of the military with other instruments of national power, it must be willing to re-examine how it funds military actions. By tethering future military actions to approved funding, the nation would force its citizenry and Congress to re-engage in the political process and decide whether the stakes of proposed military actions are worth the cost.⁷⁰ America would be wise to follow John F. Kennedy's advice and be prepared to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship" to wage war or endeavor to find another solution.⁷¹

Conclusion

America finds itself far removed from the nation that reluctantly entered, yet strongly supported World Wars I and II, where the country largely mobilized, maintained tight connections between the citizenry and the military, and exercised sustained sacrifice. As the civil-military divide has grown over the past decades, both the public and Congress have largely abdicated their roles in the political process for determining the role of the U.S. military. Additionally, both the Legislative and Executive branches have progressively failed to ensure citizen sacrifice to support the nation's wars. The consequence of these failures is an empowered Executive branch that frequently employs the armed forces as the primary instrument of national power to protect the country's interests.

Despite these alarming trends, America can return to conditions in closer alignment with the original views of the Framers. Pursuing national service programs and developing a more geographically representative military will decrease the civil-

military gap and better connect Americans with their military. Generating greater constituent participation should result in improved congressional oversight on military activities, reinforced by a strengthened War Powers Resolution. Furthermore, ensuring that Americans sacrifice financially via war taxes or reduced government spending or consumption will further solidify their participation in the political process.

U.S. military operations remain vital to preserving national security or fighting tyranny. However, America must reinvigorate deliberative processes to decide when and where to use military force, and in doing so, ensure that both its citizens and Congress are active participants. These aforementioned proposed measures should assist the nation better implement all instruments of national power in its foreign policy pursuits, and ultimately return America to a state in closer alignment with the beliefs of the Founding Fathers.

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