

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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MANDATORY PUBLIC SERVICE

BY

HALLIE J. BUNK

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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For 25 years the Armed Forces have enjoyed an All-Recruited Force. The number of recruits is rapidly declining, and the Armed Forces are not meeting their personnel requirements. This shortfall degrades the military's ability to meet all its missions worldwide. The problem is so serious that the time has come to actively debate a mandatory public service policy. Institution of this type of policy would require all young Americans to serve in a public agency for a minimum of two years. The concept of a mandatory public service policy has benefits beyond the military. From a strategic perspective, as the United States continues to maintain its dominance around the globe other public agencies are also becoming resource constrained. All evidence suggests the time is now to begin an aggressive public debate for the establishment of a mandatory public service policy.

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THE ISSUE AT HAND

For 25 years the Armed Services have enjoyed the benefits of an All-Volunteer force, but in reality it has been an All-Recruited Force. The number of recruits is rapidly declining, and the Armed Forces have not met their personnel requirements which seriously jeopardizes military readiness. As some Congressional leaders believe, the time has come to publicly debate a mandatory public service policy. "While no one has offered a specific plan, several lawmakers suggest that a draft would give the military a stable supply of young people while spreading the burden of service throughout the society."¹

This paper offers a specific plan that would require all young Americans to serve in a public agency, to include the Armed Forces if they are qualified, for a minimum of two years. The concept of a mandatory public service policy has benefits beyond the military. From a strategic perspective, as the United States continues to maintain its dominance around the globe, other public agencies are also becoming resource constrained. The institution of a mandatory public service policy may well be the tool required for ensuring continued U.S. global leadership and prosperity into the 21st century.

A primary goal of all the Military Departments as we approach the millennium is to maintain a quality force. The United States, as well as the individual Services, takes great pride in the fact

that "quality" soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are the backbone of the military institution. The 1997 National Military Strategy embraces this concept during its discussion of Strategic Enablers when it states: "While modern technology enables our forces to perform their missions more effectively, it cannot substitute for high quality people."²

In this context the Services recognize that quality forces are imperative for a successful future. The tradition of the Army and of the other Services is that the quality force will be developed within the boundaries of each military institution. As one author describes, this trend is expected to continue, "In the next century, despite the increases of technology, despite the projection of educational attainment of the workforce, the Army must stand by that age-old comment, 'Bring me a person, and I will make that person an excellent soldier.'"³ In this regard an argument can be made that the terms "quality" and "quantity" are not mutually exclusive.

Admittedly, across all Services there is an equal concern with retention of skilled personnel. The same issues causing servicemen to leave such as time away from families, substantial pay and retirement differences, a breakdown in institutional loyalty, and patriotism all have the same affect on recruiting. If the Services fail to recruit the numbers of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines they need, then retention becomes secondary.

Accordingly, the remaining discussion will focus on the issue of solving the serious recruitment shortfall by instituting a mandatory public service requirement. A mandatory public service policy would provide the Services with sufficient "quantities" of young people required to successfully lead the country to the 21st century.

There are numerous ways to implement a mandatory public service policy, and the option selected must be clearly defined and judged on both its potential success and its limitations. Additionally, the second and third level implications both publicly and militarily of adopting such a policy must be evaluated and weighed against the benefits and risks.

This paper will provide the analysis, supporting documentation, and an implementation strategy all suggesting that the time is now to publicly debate a mandatory public service. All evidence suggests that this type of policy will be required to meet the military's current and future personnel requirements.

TRENDS

Demographic trends indicate that the population of America's youth is declining and becoming increasingly less interested in joining the military. These demographic characteristics, coupled with a strong economy, have led to a downward trend in recruiting, leaving the military departments short of personnel.

As one Washington author suggests, "Unless the Pentagon makes up a shortage of about 35,000 people it will be increasingly unable to carry out all its assigned missions."⁴

The number of recruits is on the decline as evidenced by a recent Army Times article which stated: "The increased enlistment incentives come just weeks after the end of a lackluster fiscal year in which the service missed its recruiting goals for both the Regular Army and the Army Reserve."⁵ There are "about 9000 soldiers missing in the Army's active duty ranks."⁶ Projections indicate that unless significant changes are made the Army may miss its recruiting goal again in FY99. Other Services have recruiting and personnel shortfalls with the Navy failing to meet its FY98 recruiting goal by 7,000 and the Air Force currently is missing 700 pilots and 3000 skilled technicians.⁷ In summary, recruiting shortfalls are clearly becoming a wide spread problem throughout all the Services, and we will now examine one key element causing this trend; youth population demographics.

POPULATION AND PROPENSITY TRENDS

The actual numbers of young Americans available for recruitment have been on a steady decline. Studies suggest that this trend will continue into the next century as evidenced in the following statements: "A major theme in the workplace 2000 literature is that there has been a steady decline in the fertility rate of women in the United States."⁸ "This means the

number of people reaching age eighteen will decline as we move into workforce 2000."⁹ The disturbing fact is that, not only is the military eligible population declining, but this trend is augmented by an increasing lack of interest of young people in serving in the military.

This second demographic characteristic captures the measured propensity or interest among young Americans to join the military. The Youth Attitude Tracking Study is a yearly survey, which captures the interest levels of American youths toward the military. The following excerpt supports the claim of a continued decrease in the numbers of young Americans willing to serve:

Military recruiting is more and more difficult. For the past five years, youth interest in military service has declined. Data from the annual Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) show a decrease in propensity to enlist among young men (16- to 21-year-olds) from a peak of 34 percent in 1991 to a low of 26 percent in 1994 to 27 percent in 1996.¹⁰

The following additional theories are believed to have contributed to a decline in recruiting and are worthy of identification:

Some analysts believed that press coverage of the force drawdown and the military's efforts to reduce it's rolls, combined with the curtailment of advertising, was especially harmful- giving the impression that the services were more interested in firing than hiring. Moreover, the defense drawdown was seen to carry a message: The military is no longer as important as it once was, and those who join face a host of new uncertainties.¹¹

Each situation described may not have singularly caused a downward trend in recruiting, but together they may have contributed to the decline in interest. Competing forces, such as a strong economy, amplify the problems of a declining population and willingness to enlist.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The two target markets the Services have traditionally identified for recruitment are those who want an education and those looking for a skill. As the economy prospers, those who would normally pursue the military to cover educational expenses are pursuing other alternatives to pay for college. "Unlike decades past, today's teenagers have so many options for paying for college - loans, grants, junior colleges - that military service often is too steep a price."¹² In the second instance, there is a direct correlation between unemployment and recruiting. If the economy is good, there are more jobs, which has a negative effect on the ability to recruit. The opportunity lost in this case is those young people who may have joined the military to learn a skill. Additionally, as one author suggests, "Civilian jobs pay 15 percent more on average."¹³ It is clear that the Services will face challenges in recruiting in the current economic conditions. During recent testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on readiness issues General Shelton reinforced this notion:

Finally, the "good news" regarding our nation's continuing strong economy has been "bad news" for our recruiting and retention. We have struggled to recruit bright young people and to keep them from opting for higher paying jobs in the private sector after completing their enlistment.¹⁴

Army Chief of Staff General Reimer echoed these same concerns during his portion of this same Congressional hearing when he stated: "The continued strength of the economy, the growing concerns of our soldiers about military pay and benefits has the potential to undercut recruiting and retaining quality soldiers."¹⁵

During the September 1998 hearing, General Shelton used an increasing decline in pay and benefits as the backdrop to discuss the All-Recruited Force. In the following excerpt, General Shelton introduced the notion to Congress that the All-Recruited Force maybe in jeopardy by stating: "If we fail to address these critical personnel issues, we will put at risk one of our greatest achievements of the last century: the All-Volunteer Force."¹⁶ The inference by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the current All-Recruited Force policy is in danger, clearly justifies alarm.

Declining pools of American youths that are less interested in serving their country, coupled with a booming economy, impose a serious risk to the All-Recruited Force. Mandatory public service is a credible option to meet the military's personnel

requirements. The national debate has begun and needs to continue with vigor. During a recent discussion on conscription, Congressman Buyer stated: "It's worthy of discussion even though people in America are afraid of it."¹⁷ The mandatory public service that will now be reviewed is a form of conscription that, if properly instituted, has the potential to meet the nation's military personnel requirements as we move to the next century.

MANDATORY PUBLIC SERVICE

There are numerous ways to implement mandatory public service for the concept is not new. This paper will first clearly define a specific mandatory public service policy that builds upon the considerable work of others. It will then judge, that policy's potential success, and acknowledge its limitations, from both an overall national viewpoint and legislative perspective.

In a study addressing domestic trends to the year 2015, which was conducted for the Army 21 project, a universal draft proposal was provided. The proposal defines the specific requirements of mandatory public service and offers an excellent approach to the reinstatement of a draft system. The following excerpt, which the author endorses, describes the process:

...it may be necessary to reinstitute a draft system. A universal draft, possibly registering women as well as men, would not be seen as fair, however, for the large size of age cohorts in this country, most young people would not be inducted into the military service. For these reasons, it might prove useful to establish a new form of

*national service, one with both military and civilian counterparts. Young people could be called up for two years and be allowed to decide where they would serve. Social work, rehabilitation of the environment, or service in a small armed forces could be among the options... The term of service could be inexpensive, would provide the country with a directed work force to deal with problems of all varieties, would mix young people of all classes and races, help inculcate common values, and would tap the wells of idealism typically a characteristic of youth.*¹⁸

The benefits of the type of mandatory public service (or national service) as described above have three over arching positive characteristics. First, understanding that all youths may not retain the physical and mental capabilities necessary to serve in the military, all young people must serve the country in some capacity. This notion ensures fair and equitable service from all young Americans. Second, a two-year term would provide the country with a stable workforce in specific areas of need to the country itself. These areas, as the author suggests, could include options such as the environment, social work, or be expanded to include service to the Red Cross, the Peace Corps, or perhaps locally in a Police or Fire Department. Last, and of possibly the greatest benefit, would be the contribution such a policy would have in improving civil-military relations. Each of these three positive characteristics is worthy of further discussion and will now be addressed sequentially.

FAIR SERVICE

A nation is so strengthened when its citizens are directly involved in enabling the country to meet a recognized common need, whether that be in helping the poor, protecting the innocent, or serving in the military. An overriding concern is that people view the selection for public service as being fair. Research has shown that the lack of perceived fairness in the conscription process has been abundant.

During the Vietnam Era, this lack of perceived fairness in the conscription process, as evidenced in the following quote, contributed to its ultimate demise. "This concern for fairness was one of the major reasons the draft of the Vietnam War years became unacceptable, and military manpower experts have come to a definite consensus that equity of service - or at least the appearance of equity - remains an essential ingredient for restoring the draft."¹⁹ It is inherent in the United States culture to expect fairness, and the institution of a mandatory public service policy must clearly achieve this objective.

During the Vietnam Era there were predominately two types of exceptions which excused people from serving. These two exceptions from the draft were family hardship or conscientious objection. In the case of the proposed mandatory public service, family hardship may apply but conscientious objection would not. A family hardship deferment might be granted to a person

providing care for a family member that could not be done by someone else. The family hardship exemption would be very clearly defined and so limited that only true hardship cases would be exempted. That is; when a local service option such as community service, local police or fire departments would not suffice. Conscientious objection would not be applicable, because the youth could select a public service tour other than military.

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The second benefit to the institution of a mandatory public service is that it would provide a workforce geared to promoting U.S. leadership around the globe. Global "shaping" has been one of the enduring national security strategies in the late 90's and will continue as the millennium arrives. In an attempt to shape the environment by promoting U.S. interests and values around the globe, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian efforts have become major missions for the United States. The problem is, that like the military, the civilian sector responsible for providing support to these efforts is also under staffed. The following two quotations substantiate this claim: (1) "Civilian agencies have frequently been unable to make good on their commitments in interagency humanitarian and nation-assistance efforts."²⁰ (2) "Most of the civilian agencies simply do not have enough personnel to fulfill both their daily functions and the requirements of MOOTW expeditions."²¹ The initiation of a

mandatory public service policy could relieve some of this strain by requiring young people, not interested in or physically qualified for the military, to serve in these agencies.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The third benefit of mandatory service is an obvious and needed improvement in civil-military relations. Civil-military relations can be viewed in two ways; the relationship between the military and the general public, and second, between the military and Congress. Both relationships are important to the success of instituting a mandatory service policy and will be discussed separately.

Military vs Public

At the end of the draft in 1973, there was a general thought that there would be an improvement in relations between the public and military. This proved not to be the case as supported by the following claim:

Initially, many military men found at the end of the draft a welcome removal of an irritant to benign civil-military relations. Calculating as they did, that the disapprobation of the American public stemmed from the existence of the draft, they were willing to see it disappear. In the longer term, however, they found themselves deprived of a link to society. Ten years after abolition of the draft, the leaders of the military were no longer so certain that an absence of a draft would guarantee public support.²²

Initiating mandatory public service will enhance the civil-military relationship through obligated participation of a larger cross section of America's youth. As one author suggests:

*...a positive military experience promotes social integration, individual discipline and citizenship. Mass participation in the armed forces would undoubtedly help reduce what many wise commentators see as a dangerous and growing cultural gulf between the military and society at large.*²³

The perception is that after 25 years of the All-Recruited Force young people have evaded their duty as United States citizens. After a House Subcommittee Hearing on Readiness, Representative Stephen Buyer was quoted as saying: "A lot of young people are escaping their civic responsibilities. There are benefits to the draft."²⁴ Keeping in mind that all young people will not choose a military tour, they will still know friends who did. This in itself will provide a means for improving the relationship between the military and the general public.

Military vs Congress

The second concern with civil-military relations is the relationship of the military and Congress. In a country where civilian control of the military is the policy, the gap between the military and Congress is widening. This perceived gap is related to Congress not possessing the fundamental knowledge of the military, its missions, and its requirements. As Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. reported to the Buffalo News:

*We are raising a generation of not only leaders of middle-income Americans who have never served their country. I worry about a greater estrangement, a greater distancing between the Congress, traditional protectors of the military, and the military itself.*²⁵

Additionally, the latest trends in Congress indicate that there are now more members who did not serve in the military than those who did. For example, "In the House, the proportion of members who wore a uniform has declined from 40 percent five years ago to 30 percent. In the Senate, the numbers went down from 61 to 48 percent."²⁶

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

To establish a public service policy that achieves fairness, enhances global leadership, and improves civil-military relations we need to carefully examine selective service legislation. Changes to the current selective service legislation, which dictates how a military conscription system would operate, would have to occur. With minor modification this legislation, which is shown below, would provide an excellent template for adopting a public service strategy.

This permanent Legislation until revoked or replaced, governs the terms of any resumed conscription. Among other things, it (1) requires the registration of all males between the ages of 18 and 26, (2) permits, but does not require, selections for induction to be made randomly, (3) provides for active-duty military service of not more than 24 consecutive months, (4) explicitly defers or exempts conscientious objectors, divinity students, ministers, surviving sons and brothers, certain government officials, and reservists, and (5)

*authorizes but does not require, deferment of students, parents, hardship cases, and persons in occupations or research thought valuable to the national health, safety or interest.*²⁷

With minor alteration to include men and women, and limit exemptions as service is expanded to other public agencies, this language could be utilized to articulate the legislative requirements of a mandatory public service. This language, coupled with a logical implementation strategy, will provide the nation with a fair system and a stable global workforce, all while enhancing civil-military relations. The audience and benefactor of such a policy change is the general public. It will be their buy-in to the concept that will drive the policy outcome.

PUBLIC OPINION

The first, and most important audience, that must be sold on the concept of mandatory public service is the public itself. Public opinion is driven by the public's perception of both the internal and external environment. Traditionally, as the economy blossoms at home, the general public is less interested in external affairs. Predominately, it has been the military who answers the needs of the United States overseas. As one author suggests, this trend requires general public behavior modification. "We believe it is urgent that the American people as a whole gain a fuller understanding of their military

establishment and its role in deterring war and protecting their vital interests."²⁸

As the world becomes increasingly more interdependent, the population will have no choice than to become more involved in the United States interests globally. If those interests are threatened either economically or militarily, as in the past, the American public will follow suit. As suggested in the book titled "Towards Consensus on Military Service" and shown below, it is the tradition of our society to protect our country's honor.

*We believe most Americans, including most young Americans, like their predecessors back to colonial times, do appreciate what is at stake and are willing to do what may be necessary to protect the national interest-on two perfectly reasonable conditions: first, that the threat be real; second, that the burdens of deterrence and defense be fairly shared.*²⁹

As this passage suggests, most Americans will do their duty when called upon, if they believe their involvement is essential to the success of the nation.

As the world continues to prosper with the United States in the leadership role, the American public must recognize and support the associated sacrifice. Ultimately, as one writer suggests, the determination on how the country proceeds and progresses is in the hands of the American public. "In American democracy, political acceptance of the volunteer force or return

to the draft is critical; neither could exist or function without the approval of a solid majority of the voters and taxpayers."³⁰ The debate continues, and it will ultimately be the politicians that need to lead the general public debate on this issue. In a recent article that discussed filling the ranks with more money or reviving the draft, the author concluded with the following statement: "Increasingly, though, lawmakers suggest a drastic alternative - reviving the draft."³¹

MILITARY IMPLICATIONS

The second audience that must be sold on the concept of mandatory public service is the military institution. The difficulty of implementing a mandatory public service requirement militarily is the acceptance by the institution itself. The Services have enjoyed the All-Recruited Force for 25 years and have migrated into a form of military isolationism or better phrased a class of "elite". As Thomas Lippman stated in a Washington Post article: "Some analysts believe the military - especially the Officer Corps - is becoming more politically conservative and more attuned to the religious right as the armed forces become less a reflection of the nation as a whole."³² The inherent difficulty in accepting a change in the All-Recruited Force is captured in the following quotation: "Change has never come easily for the military, which is firmly rooted in the past."³³ Adapting from a force comprised of those who want to be

there to those who may not would require a fundamental change in attitude and some changes in training requirements.

Entrance level educational standards for military service do not necessarily have to change under a mandatory public service concept. The mandatory public service policy that should be established would give the military the only right of denial if the person is unqualified. The military would continue to demand the same level of performance testing prior to acceptance into a particular service. This would ensure that the quality of the military force of the United States would not be adversely impacted. As military personnel adapt to a cultural change in the traditional All-Recruited Force system, training requirements must also be reviewed.

The tradition of the military has been and will continue to be that of educating within the bounds of the institution. The notion of a choice to serve for only two years leads to the following premise that additional training will be required. "Because conscripts put in shorter periods of time in the armed forces than volunteers, conscripts must be replaced often. Consequently, training a drafted force costs more than training a volunteer force."³⁴ While it may cost more to train a drafted force where entry-level personnel only stay half as long as today's recruits, careful management of entry standards combined with reduced costs in other areas makes this proposal feasible.

For example in 1998, the military departments spent \$1.4 billion dollars on recruiting which averaged approximately \$7000 per recruit.³⁵ Under a mandatory public service policy, these dollars could be utilized to off-set training expenses. Secondly, jobs that require more technical training can be reserved for longer term enlistees.

The majority of military officers have not experienced service in other than an All-Recruitment status force. An implementation strategy that ensures no degradation in personnel and training will ultimately gain support from all Services.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The call to service, or implementing theme, to promote a mandatory public service policy will be critical. Prior research offers three somewhat overlapping perspectives on the approach. They are:

(1) national service as an expression of interest in the social and psychological development of young people; (2) national service which views young people as an important national resource; and (3) national service as a way of addressing disturbing social trends.³⁶

All three views are important, capture the need, and articulate the benefits of the implementation of a mandatory public service policy. The underlining theme or "overlapping perspective" in each of these three approaches is education. An extension, beyond

grade 12, to the current educational system would be the best solution to implementation. One author describes this career exploration as "An interval would be provided for responsible work experience that precedes further educational and vocational choices."³⁷ A second author complements this theory in the following discussion:

There are service stirrings in high schools and college campuses, a development that corresponds with an ascendant pedagogical viewpoint that formal education needs to be complemented by an experiential civic activity. All in all, omens are that national service and education will increasingly overlap.³⁸

As an extension to the existing educational system the implementing organization of a public service program should be the Department of Education. The current visibility and push that the Clinton Administration have placed on education, puts the Department of Education as the best solution for an implementing organization. The initial thought of executing this policy would more than likely appear burdensome, costly, and bureaucratic at best. However, with the technology available today the program could be adopted rather easily and at marginal expense.

The specific organization within the Department of Education that should take the lead is the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). This organization sponsors and funds an Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). ERIC is "...a nationwide information network that acquires, catalogs,

summarizes, and provides access to educational information from all sources."³⁹ The Department of Education would have to expand this system by adding two databases. The first, would list public service alternatives and the second, collect and track the associated commitments made. Expansion of the existing system should minimize start-up cost. A suggested method of execution would be registration and commitment through high school guidance counselors.

High School guidance counselors have been available to assist students with future plans for years. Internet access and guidance counselor oversight would be the only requirement for execution. A suggested implementing procedure might include the following three activities. First, each high school junior would register with their guidance counselor prior to the completion of their junior year. Second, the students working with their guidance counselor or on their own search for possible opportunities to serve. The final mandatory requirement of the process is the selection or commitment made by the student. This entire process would become part of the U.S. Educational System with the underlining theme - development for our future citizens.

CONCLUSION

The national debate has begun, and in short order the nation will be forced to make a decision on the institution of a mandatory public service policy. Demographic trends of young

Americans indicate a decline in population as well as a lack of interest to serve the military. These trends, supplemented by a strong economy, put military recruiting and ultimately military readiness at risk.

It is imperative that all Americans support a mandatory public service policy to principally ensure the United States military remains robust. The institution of a mandatory public service will also add reinforcements to the nations public agencies to enable them to meet their international missions. Properly manning the military and other public agencies will help ensure the United States provides global leadership to successfully influence world events.

The American public needs to understand that our world supremacy rests solely on our ability to participate. The country can no longer rely on the military alone. Every citizen has a civic responsibility to get involved. Institution of a fair public service system will immediately improve civil military relations and, as the system is executed, public support will continue to grow as benefits are realized. Military acceptance of the concept rests in the realization that the All-Recruited Force will no longer meet their personnel requirements and that they will continue to receive quality recruits.

Accompanied by both public and military acceptance of a mandatory public service policy, the Administration should

propose legislation that implements the concept fairly across American society. The Department of Education should take the lead in the implementation of a mandatory public service system. The program can be administered locally through High School Guidance Counselors.

The Congress should continue the expansion of the current debate concerning the reinstatement of some type of draft or conscription process. The concept of a mandatory public service for all Americans to serve the nation in a needed capacity for a period of two years should be the front runner concept and be vigorously debated in our country. It is the essence of responsible citizenship, and the American way, that will lead the country and its citizens to do the right thing at the right time. That time is now!

WORD COUNT = 5807.

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