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PROSTOVOLJNO POPOLNJEVANJE V ZDA: NOVE (IN POGOSTO NEPREDVIDENE) TEŽAVE S PRIDOBIVANJEM IN ZADRŽEVANJEM KADRA TER NJEGOVO PRIPRAVLJENOSTJO

THE UNITED STATES ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE: EMERGING (AND OFTEN UNANTICIPATED) ISSUES OF RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND READINESS

Povzetek Po drugi svetovni vojni so se oborožene sile ZDA popolnjevale z vpoklicem ali obveznim služenjem vojaškega roka za fante. Ta praksa se je končala leta 1973 z uvedbo prostovoljnega popolnjevanja (All-Volunteer Force – AVF). Uvedba AVF pa je prinesla več novih izzivov, vključno z ustreznim pridobivanjem in zadrževanjem vojaškega kadra. Sčasoma je bilo treba sprejeti več prosilcev, saj se je pridobivanje kadra zmanjšalo. Bilo je manj zainteresiranih in ustreznih prosilcev, od teh pa še manj tistih, ki so ustrezali standardom. Ob uvedbi sprememb v nacionalni obrambni politiki in zaradi sodelovanja ZDA v nedavnih bojnih operacijah večjega obsega je prišlo do pomanjkanja pripravljenosti na področju pridobivanja in zadrževanja kadra. Nezadovoljiva pripravljenost se je najbolj kazala v rezervni sestavi, na kar se v tem članku tudi osredotočamo. S pomočjo opisa teh dogodkov prikazujemo medsebojno povezanost med pridobivanjem in zadrževanjem kadra ter pripravljenostjo, pri čemer kažemo na potrebo po bolj preudarnem razmisleku o tem, kako se vsak izmed njih izvaja, še zlasti v okviru AVF. Teorija identitete ponuja načine za razumevanje in razvijanje takih vrst vojaškega kadra, ki je potreben za lažje pridobivanje, zadrževanje in pripravo kadra.

Ključne besede *Vpoklic, obvezno služenje vojaškega roka, prostovoljno popolnjevanje, All-Volunteer Force – AVF, pridobivanje kadra, zadrževanje kadra, pripravljenost.*

Abstract After World War II “the draft”, or compulsory military service of young men, staffed U.S. forces. This practice ended in 1973 with the introduction of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). However, staffing the AVF introduced several new challenges, including the adequate recruitment and retention of military personnel. Over time, more applicants had to be taken, as recruitment fell short. There were fewer interested and eligible applicants, and of these, even fewer who met the standards. A lack of readiness

relating to both recruitment and retention became apparent as changes occurred in the national defense policy and the U.S.'s participation in recent large-scale combat operations. Inadequacies in readiness were most evident among the reserve forces – the focus of this paper. Through the description of these events, the inter-relationships between recruitment, retention, and readiness are demonstrated, pointing to the need for more deliberate thought with regard to how each is implemented, especially in the context of the AVF. Identity theory offers ways to understand and to develop the kinds of military personnel needed to better recruit, retain, and ready personnel.

Key words *Draft, compulsory military service, All-Volunteer Force, recruitment, retention, readiness*

Introduction This article discusses the topics of recruitment, retention, and readiness relative to the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), largely in the U.S. Army reserves.

DEFINITION OF PERSONNEL TOPICS

Before the main presentation, it is important to define the terms used. *Recruitment* is the process of “analyzing the requirements of a job, *attracting employees to that job, screening and selecting applicants, hiring, and integrating the new employee into the organization ... in a timely and cost effective manner*” (definitions taken from the *Business Dictionary*, 2017). In the U.S. military, personnel are organized into units depending on the unit's missions. Personnel have varied skill requirements determined by what they are to do, called military occupational specialties (MOS). Recruits undergo training of various lengths depending on the complexities of job skills specific to each MOS. *Retention* is the effort put forth by an organization “to maintain a working environment which supports the *current staff to remain with the company*. Many employee retention policies are aimed at addressing the various needs of employees to enhance their job satisfaction and reduce the substantial costs involved in hiring and training new staff.” *Readiness* is the extent to which the recruited and trained individuals are prepared to successfully perform their assigned duties and tasks, both individually and cooperatively. The U.S. Army defines readiness largely in terms of units – company-sized and battalion-sized – as “the ability of a unit to perform as designed” (Dabbieri, 1991). Thus, readiness is the extent to which the combined personnel can perform the missions required of their unit. Doctrinally, readiness is indicated by how well the unit measures up in four areas: personnel, equipment on hand, equipment serviceability, and training to meet mission-essential tasks (METL; Department of the Army, 2003).

The topics of recruitment, retention, and readiness, while ever-present for military forces, are most salient in a volunteer force. There are no longer a multitude of “eligibles” from which to select (e.g. the U.S. drafted 20 million youth during the Vietnam War and a mere 2% were taken). Rather, youth must now show an interest

in joining and meet physical and mental requirements. At present in the U.S., that numbers only about 400,000 per year, from whom about half are selected.

BACKGROUND

In 1973, the U.S. military shifted from compulsory service to voluntary service. The personnel implications of this change were not fully understood until combat operations in the First Gulf War and the more recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The most striking implications were evident in recruitment, retention, and readiness, which have become inseparably linked. One cannot speak about recruitment without including retention, and in turn, readiness. For example, high attrition among young soldiers means recruitment efforts must increase, and in the absence of qualified volunteer recruits, the military may take youth who become less than adequate personnel or less ready.

The purpose of this paper is, first, to make distinctions among these three topics, and second, to illustrate their inter-relationships through examples during the U.S. military's shift from the draft to the AVF. The discussion focuses on the Army reserves, where the implications of this shift in recruitment, retention, and readiness have been most noticeable. Of the reserves, the largest is the Army reserve – consisting of the Army Reserve (USAR) and the Army National Guard (ARNG). In 2017, the USAR is nationally organized and numbers about 200,000, and the ARNG consists of the States' militias and numbers about 350,000 uniformed personnel.

1 ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE AND NEW CHALLENGES

1.1 Recruitment

From World War II through the ending stages of the Vietnam War, the U.S. obtained its personnel largely through “the draft,” or compulsory service (usually 2 years) for all males aged 18 years through 26 (Hershey, 1960). Some youth deferred the draft by attending college, by having an exclusionary medical condition, or by having particularly needed civilian occupational skills. African-Americans were disproportionately among the poor and were unable to attend college, and thus were nearly always subject to the draft. During the Vietnam War, African-Americans became over-represented among draftees, and this imbalance meant African-Americans had higher casualty rates. In 1965, nearly one out of every four combat deaths were African-American (Westheider, 1997). Lacking recruits during the later stages of the Vietnam War, Project 100,000 was implemented, lowering draft standards so that poor youth could acquire job skill training in the military (Appy, 2003). African-Americans, being disproportionately among those lacking employment and job skills, were again represented disproportionately highly. From 1966 through 1969, a quarter of a million personnel were recruited and many were African-American – 41%, compared to 11% of the population of the U.S. (Maycock,

2001). These facts added to the growing unpopularity of the war, by pointing out the inequities between those who served and those who did not (Armor, 1996; Mershon & Schlossman, 1998).

The Vietnam War was costly in human lives. In the end the war resulted in about 58,000 fatalities, with another 300,600 wounded (Global Security Organization, 2017; National Archives, 2017). Numerous domestic protests and uprisings occurred. Nixon, the elected President in 1968, promised to end the Vietnam War. To reduce the gross inequities regarding who was drafted and who was not, in 1972 the Nixon administration proposed a lottery for the draft. One year later, the draft ended. Thereafter, the U.S. military had to staff its force through volunteers. The immediate challenges in the AVF expected by policymakers did not occur. Many predicted a force of mercenaries, comprised of the poor, African-American, and uneducated (Rostker, 2006).

Clearly, a major concern was whether enough youth would join military service each year to achieve the quotas necessary to staff units. Generally, the U.S. military has successfully recruited youth for military service by offering several incentives. Among the stronger incentives attracting youth have been: receiving money; going through experiences associated with self-development (e.g. becoming more mature, responsible, or disciplined); and gaining job skills transferable to civilian jobs. The success of these incentives in part resulted from a systematic study of the likelihood of youth joining and their stated reasons. In the 1980s, the Army commenced a research program, the Army Communications Objectives Measurement Study (ACOMS), which spanned several years. The study involved large-scale periodic samples of young adults, asking the likelihood of their joining (called propensity) and reasons for joining. The findings informed content for advertisements and recruitment incentive programs.

1.1.1 Fewer applicants

Despite these successes, the U.S. military has had problems in recruiting sufficient numbers of personnel, during the past decade in particular (Balli, 2016). The difficulty, in part, was due to fewer and fewer youth being eligible for military service, and specifically, the growing problem of obesity. At present, approximately one in five youth are overweight (Feldman, 2018, p. 273). Difficulties in recruitment were especially evident during the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The more combat operations could be seen as necessary and serving the broad interests of the U.S., the more youth explored military service. After 9/11, many initially volunteered. But, as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continued with accumulating casualties, fewer were interested in serving. In fact, several services have had difficulties meeting their annual quotas for enlistments. To meet shortfalls, several methods have been used, such as “stop-loss”, where personnel had to remain in military service beyond their obligations, increased bonus money for enlisting or re-enlisting, and lowering entry standards. Armor and Gilroy (2010) reported that beginning in 2005 there was a slight increase in Category IV recruits (derived from the Armed Services Vocational

Aptitude Battery, ASVAB¹), and an even larger increase in Category IIIB recruits in the Army. The increases in both categories are most probably explained by the need for military personnel during the Iraq War.

1.1.2 More unfit applicants

During 2004-2006, applicants with misdemeanors, behavioral health conditions, weight issues, and so on were allowed to join so that the size of the U.S. Army increased (Lipscomb, 2015). Gallaway et al. (2013) examined Army soldiers who had been granted enlistment waivers from 2003 to 2008. Most waivers were either medical or misconduct waivers. The percentage of soldiers who were granted medical and conduct waivers increased significantly from 2003 (12%) to 2008 (20%), with the largest increase occurring in the percentage of moral conduct waivers. Similar trends were observed in the ARNG (ARNG, 2015). Griffith and Bryan (2016) proposed that these trends, in part, explain the increased vulnerability of recruits to suicide. Clearly, taking on such youth has implications for readiness, discussed at a later point in this paper.

1.1.3 Fewer veterans

During World War II, about 9% of the U.S. population served in the military. This dropped to 2% during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. In 1970, 13.8% of the U.S. population were veterans, dropping to 7% in 2010 (NPR, 2011). During the First Gulf War less than 1% served, and now after the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, less than 0.5% of the U.S. population has served in the military (Liebert & Golby, 2017). These declines are, in part, the result of a smaller military force. In 2010, the U.S. armed forces numbered about 1,500,000, dropping more than by a half since the height of the Vietnam War, i.e. 3,500,000 in 1967 (National Public Radio, 2011).

Having fewer veterans in the general population does not bode well for enlistment. Veterans often served as sources of information and referral for those youth who were interested in military service. Young people's contact with veterans diminished, having negative effects on recruitment. Youth interested in military service are far more likely to join (twice as likely) if they have a relative who served (cited in Liebert & Golby, 2017). Also, inadequate numbers of youth being interested in military service likely has to do with misconceptions (Vander Brook, 2017a). Few know the differences among the various military services – Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines – and the demands of each. Additionally, youth believe most that join will fight in combat, even when the ratio of support to combat personnel is about 10 to 1.

In the last few years, the Army has barely met its annual recruitment goals (Balli, 2016); goals were met only allowing for waivers and changes in admittance criteria. The Army is implementing a new 5-part physical fitness test, called the occupational physical assessment, which considers standards for less physically demanding military jobs (Vander Brook, 2017a). Waivers have also been increasingly allowed. Past mental health conditions which were previously disqualifying (such as self-harm,

bipolar disorder, depression, and drug and alcohol abuse) are no longer disqualifying (Vander Brook, 2017b). Military mental health professionals, however, have expressed some concerns about such waivers (Vander Brook, 2017b). Additionally, proportionally more applicants are allowed to score lower on the ASVAB¹ – going from 0.6% of applicants recruited in 2016 falling in the second to lowest mental category (Category IV) to 1.9% in 2017. In 2017, the standard was relaxed to 4% of all recruits (Vander Brook, 2017b).

1.1.4 Representativeness

A final concern was whether the AVF could recruit a force from “all walks of life.” Policymakers aspired to achieve a force that proportionally represented race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Military sociologists and others argued that representation was critical to the legitimacy and credibility of the military within American democracy (Janowitz, 1998). At the start of the AVF, many thought few African-Americans would volunteer, due to the inequities of the draft and the fact that African-Americans were over-represented in the casualties of the Vietnam War. Another concern was that the U.S. military would become a mercenary force, comprised of the poor, African-Americans, and the uneducated (Rostker, 2006). Studies of “social representation” were instituted, which monitored percentages of various racial/ethnic groups who served in the U.S. military (see Congressional Budget Office, 1989).

Early on, African-Americans volunteered for military service more than expected (Levy, 1998). In 1972, African-American representation in the U.S. military had increased from 11% in 1972, proportional to their occurrence in the general population, to 30% by the mid-1980s. In the early 1980s, the percentage of African-Americans among non-prior service enlistees was about 20%, and remained so until about 2000. During the First Gulf War, African-Americans comprised a large proportion of the U.S. military – upwards of 20% (Buckley, 2001). However, after 1991, African-American enlistments declined. Since 2000, among non-prior service entrants, rates for African-Americans have declined, from 24% in 2000 to 14% in 2005. A sharp drop also occurred in 2002 and continued up to 2006, when African-American non-prior service enlistments fell to their lowest level since the AVF started (Armor & Gilroy, 2010; Segal & Segal, 2005). Slight increases in African-American enlistments occurred in 2007 and 2008 (Armor & Gilroy, 2010).

A recent Department of Army report reported further declines in African-Americans. Fewer African-Americans and more white Americans have entered military service, in particular in the Army. From 1995 to 2009, the percentage of African-American enlisted soldiers has decreased from 27% to 20% in the active component Army, and from 16% to 13% in the ARNG. Conversely, the percentage of white enlisted soldiers has increased from 62% to 63% (Department of the Army, 2006). Over the last decade, government-sponsored reports of “social representation” of the U.S. military have been scarce. Other analyses have shown additional trends. The bulk of recruits come from the South-Eastern U.S., followed by the West South Central

U.S. and East South Central U.S. (Bender, Kiersz, & Rosen, 2014) In 2013, 44% of military recruits came from the South-Eastern U.S., compared to 36% of the U.S.'s 18 to 24 year-old civilian population. These regional differences in enlistment are largely associated with socio-demographic differences (Maley & Hawkins, 2017). Relative to the rest of the U.S., Liebert and Golby (2017) reported that there are fewer college graduates and a prominent presence of Evangelical Christians in the South-Eastern U.S. and South Central U.S. They speculated that the regionalization of recruits would continue and likely increase in the future.

1.2 Retention

Personnel loss during the military service obligation period (often called attrition) is expected. Too, after the obligatory service period personnel loss is expected, while some personnel to stay (often called retention) is expected. Great losses by way of attrition or retention weigh heavily on both a compulsory force and a volunteer force. When personnel losses are high (as in the cases cited below), the burden is having to recruit many more volunteers to serve. A draft force can recruit from its youth population, but a volunteer force must recoup excessive losses in recruitment of volunteers, especially among more junior-ranking service members. The pyramid structure of personnel seniority means that many personnel could leave, but some had to stay, in particular, those who would advance and become tomorrow's leaders –sergeants and company-grade and field officers. Factors often associated with attrition and retention relate directly to individual and unit functioning. For example, some leave feeling inadequately equipped or prepared to perform their military duties. Thus, the topic of attrition and retention is important for readiness both in a compulsory force and a volunteer force. The topic of readiness is discussed in a later section.

1.2.1 USAR junior-ranking enlisted

In the AVF, there were a few occasions where the retention of personnel became critical. The first was in the late 1980s, when recently trained enlisted USAR and ARNG soldiers stopped coming to monthly drill assemblies. Once a month over a weekend, soldiers were obligated to perform military service. On that weekend, each weekend day comprised 2 drill assemblies (a total of four "drill assemblies"). When a soldier missed 9 consecutive assemblies, the soldier was dropped from the personnel list, called an "unsatisfactory participant." In 1989, the USAR reported about 43,000 such losses. This represented an 18% to 20% loss of the total USAR drilling population. The losses were by and large first-term lower-ranking enlisted personnel, who stopped attending assemblies before the end of their military service obligation – usually 4 years. At that time, the cost of recruiting and training a soldier was \$40,000 in 1990 dollars (or \$75,000 in current dollars), and this represented approximately \$1.71 billion in 1989. Aside from the financial costs, having such losses and high personnel turnover meant that the reserve force was less ready. This was especially troublesome since the Army reserve component became a crucial element of the Total Force policy (Carafano, 2005). This policy downsized the active

component of the Army and shifted many support and service functions to the Army reserve. The policy also meant that in times of large-scale combat operations the ARNG complemented the active force's combat arms units. A series of studies were commissioned to better understand the losses of the USAR (e.g. Perry, Griffith, & White, 1991).

Policymakers and military leaders believed the losses were due to external demands placed on soldiers, which competed with their military service. These included civilian employment and family obligations. Studies showed, however, that those who left were generally first-term enlistees who were young, unmarried, and not in full-time employment (Perry et al., 1991). The soldiers' stated reasons for leaving centered on not having worthwhile and meaningful work. Lacking funds, there were shortages in individual and unit equipment, training, and field exercises. The soldiers also reported little supervision during weekend drills, little recognition, and unit leaders who did not look out for their interests, etc. These issues were evident when the reserves were mobilized for the First Gulf War, which was the first real test of the Total Force (discussed below under the topic of readiness).

1.2.2 Army mid-level officers

Starting in the early 2000s, junior officers began to leave military service at a high rate (Coates, Silvernail, Fulton, & Ivanitskava, 2011). To illustrate, about 72% of the 1999 class of West Point military academy remained in military service 5 years later; the previous year it had been 78%. In the class of 2000, retention rates fell to about 66% after the 5-year initial commitment. Declining retention rates have also occurred among those junior officers receiving commissions elsewhere (Barno & Bensahel, 2015). A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report (GAO, 2007) described the Army's need for a strategic plan to address its emerging officer personnel challenges. The report projected that the Army would most probably need to have about 3,000 or new officers each year from 2008 to 2011. Retention of early career officers was also lowest for the Army, particularly junior officers who graduated from the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) or received Reserve Officer Training Candidate (ROTC) scholarships. At the same time, the Army has had a shortfall of mid-level officers (GAO, 2007).

One of the major reasons for leaving cited by officers was the burden of administrative requirements, at times taking more time than training itself (Matthews, 2015). Also, the training required by regulations often had little relationship to wartime missions. Junior officers were frustrated by the lack of quality of their peers and superiors. Other officers named the lack of quality of life due to repeated deployments, and still others wanted to return to graduate education (Shanker, 2006). Evaluating the Army Captain Retention Program, Coates et al. (2011) found that monetary incentives or cash were the most relevant factor in keeping Captains from leaving. Earlier officer groups (1999-2003) were more likely than later officer groups (2004-2005) to accept monetary incentives. Coates et al. observed, however, that such incentives retained the less qualified rather than the more qualified candidates. Others have proposed

less committed, “occupational” officers take such incentives (Heinecken, 2009) and this likely has implications for readiness (discussed below).

In summary, the examples here show that personnel losses, either by attrition or retention, is an issue for militaries relying on either compulsory service or voluntary service. To a large extent, the factors associated with leaving military service have to do not only with monetary incentives, but equally if not more importantly, having military experiences that meet personnel’s expectations for military service. Unexpected personnel losses of junior-ranking enlisted and junior officers (as described above) illustrated that retaining personnel was associated with unit activities that provide military experiences, particularly those that prepare personnel for mobilization, deployment, and potentially hostile environments (Vaughan & Schum, 2002). Staying for military experiences and reports of quality unit experiences were associated most with intentions to re-enlist in a sample of the ARNG (Griffith, 1995). Unit activities – such as quality training and unit leadership; skilled soldiers; camaraderie between soldiers; and confidence in the combat performance of soldiers, leaders, and equipment – have been previously associated with retention, preparedness for mobilization and deployment, and combat readiness (Harris et al., 1992).

1.3 Readiness

According to Army doctrine, the U.S. Army determines the readiness of company-sized and battalion-sized units by assessing four areas: personnel, equipment on hand, equipment serviceability, and training to meet the METL (mission-essential task list) (U.S. Department of Army, 2003). *Personnel readiness* is the extent to which approved positions in the unit (called authorized positions) are actually occupied by trained and qualified personnel. Personnel readiness is also indicated by the percentage of senior-ranking soldiers available for deployment under wartime requirements. *Equipment on hand* shows the extent to which the equipment described on the unit’s manifest (called the Table of Organization and Equipment or TO&E) is available to perform the unit’s wartime mission. *Equipment readiness* describes the extent to which the equipment in the unit (i.e. the equipment on hand) is likely to be functional and continues to be operational (called operationally sustained), and relies on the unit records of equipment serviceability. *Training readiness* indicates how the soldiers individually and the unit collectively are prepared to execute the assigned tasks and missions described in the unit’s METL.

Because the topics of recruitment and retention involve personnel, emphasis is here placed on personnel readiness. Having enough personnel, either newly acquired or those who continue military service beyond the initial obligation, relates directly to readiness. Lacking personnel has serious consequences. For example, in the ARNG, when the overall readiness rating is high, the unit is placed on the list of ready and available units for missions, receiving funds for training. If the unit cannot maintain its personnel strength from year to year, eventually the unit becomes a candidate for transfer to another status, or for elimination.

1.3.1. Readiness and recruitment

Recent difficulties in recruitment during wartime (as noted above) often resulted in taking less qualified recruits (Gallaway et al., 2013; Lipscomb, 2015). While many of these individuals performed adequately, there has been some debate about their relationship to readiness. The U.S. military has seen a marked increase in the number of suicides among personnel; in particular, the Army active duty and reserves, starting around the beginnings of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The suicide rate rose from 10.3 suicides per 100,000 service members in 2001, to 15.8 suicides per 100,000 service members in 2008. At the same time, over several years, the percentage of new recruits who had medical and moral waivers had increased (e.g. see ARNG, 2015). This fact, in combination with others, led some to believe that soldiers were increasingly more vulnerable to health problems, including suicides. Griffith and Bryan (2016) proposed a vulnerability to psychological problems among Millennials, although its consequences are more likely to be evident in the military due to the characteristics of its changing recruit population. There are fewer volunteers, and of these, one half are taken. Studies that suggest increased moral and medical waivers have been presented previously (VanderBrook, 2017a, 2017b). Evidence also suggests that more recruits come from non-traditional family structures, which are often associated with reduced social integration and higher suicide risk. According to Griffith and Bryan (2016), these factors make increased vulnerability more evident among U.S. military service members than among the general population.

1.3.2. Integral to national defense: Reserves

With the Total Force policy (1980), the Army reserve became integral to any major combat operation conducted by the U.S. Before that time, the Army reserve had served as a “strategic” force. The reserves represented a deterrent against the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China. Reserves generally were never expected to be mobilized, short of major conflicts and a precursor to nuclear exchange. The preparation of reserves was conceived as a protracted period and in itself signified escalation to meet Soviet and Chinese threats. This situation characterized much of the time period from World War II to the First Gulf War in 1990. Reserve forces served to complement the active duty forces when needed, and there were several occasions when this was the case, for example, during the Korean War (1950-1953). When the war ended, the reserve services were generally not called to active duty, but were largely used as a strategic deterrent for Soviet and Chinese threats. This was the case in the Vietnam War; very few personnel were activated from the reserve. President Johnson did this purposefully, to avoid domestic resistance against the war. Reserve units were comprised of personnel who came from nearby communities where they lived. Mobilizing a unit meant that many individuals from the same geographical area would be affected. These events resulted in continually using the reserve force primarily as a “strategic defense.” That is to say, reserve forces existed not to necessarily participate in smaller police actions, but to be present for mobilization for general warfare against the Soviet Union or the People’s Republic

of China. A mobilization of the reserves would serve as an initial signal of global war and the possibility of nuclear war. Accordingly, reserves were rarely called up.

1.3.3. Total Force test: Observations of (non) readiness

Policymakers and military leaders alike knew that the Total Force concept developed sometime during the 1980s. But the concept was not tested practically until 1990, during the First Gulf War. Approximately 230,000 Guard and Army Reserve personnel were mobilized for active duty military service. More than 100,000 of these part-time soldiers were sent to the Persian Gulf, and the remainder served stateside to replace departing regular forces (Nelson et al., 2001). Numerous shortcomings in the reserves as a complementary force readily became apparent, and they could not be mobilized in a timely manner (Kirby & Buddin, 1996; Orvis et al., 1996). Firstly, many units were not properly staffed. To keep units intact, personnel who had stopped attending weekend drills (“unsatisfactory participants”) were still listed on the personnel rolls (often called “ghosts”). This practice gave the appearance of meeting end-strength requirements and avoided losing federal funding and unit allocations.

Secondly, those personnel present in units had yet to be trained (e.g. to attend basic training or advanced military occupational specialty training) or had not met physical fitness and medical requirements (e.g. they were overweight, unable to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test, had dental problems, etc.). These and other inadequacies were subsequently documented, including shortcomings in individual job skills and combat preparation, utilization during weekend drills (having received task assignments), non-commissioned officer (NCO) and officer leadership, and collective training (Allen, 1992; General Accounting Office, 1992; Griffith, 1995). Thirdly, there were serious problems in leadership at the lowest levels. A GAO report (GAO, 1992) recorded inadequacies in NCO leadership skills, tactical and technical competencies, and the ability to train their squads and platoons. The report concluded that shortcomings in unit leadership were among the most serious problems, rendering the unit ineffective. Griffith (1995) examined junior-ranking soldier responses before and after the Gulf War. Enlisted soldiers perceived inadequacies in both NCO and officer leaders. Officers were not trusted, did not have the soldiers’ confidence, and were not seen as caring about the soldiers. After the war, almost twice as many deployed soldiers than non-deployed soldiers reported these problems in unit leaders.

1.3.4 Remediating readiness shortcomings

Many of these noted shortcomings resulted in several initiatives after the Gulf War to improve individual and unit readiness, including the Reserve Component Training Development Action Plan, aimed at improving individual soldier skills and leader effectiveness; the Leader Development Action Plan (U.S. Department of Army, 1997) to better select, educate, and assess leaders; the “Bold Shift” initiative (Sorter et al., 1994) prescribing policies and procedures for combat maneuvers during peacetime;

and Title XI (Lakhani & Fugita, 1993) to better prepare individual and unit readiness for mobilization and deployment.

Many of the problems of reservists centered on uncertainties about mobilization and deployment, particularly considering that historically the reserves were rarely called to active duty. Reservists – part-time soldiers – became full-time soldiers when mobilized, affecting both civilian employment and family life. Reservists were unaccustomed to being separated from family for long time periods. This separation, when unanticipated and unprepared, caused burdens on reserve soldiers and their families. Castaneda et al. (2009) interviewed Guard and Reserve families of soldiers who had been deployed overseas. Those service members and spouses who had received little notice of deployments were more likely to name household responsibilities, financial and legal concerns, and continuation of civilian employment as problems during deployment.

To address the issues of lack of readiness, the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) established clear stages of preparation, deployment, and reintegration. The stages occurred over a 3 year period, so during major U.S. operations reserve soldiers could be expected to be deployed every 3 years. This gave mobilization and possible deployment more certainty for planning civilian employment and family life during absences, and led to the development of support for reservists, their families, and civilian employers. The ARFORGEN policy (Whitlock, 2006) provides realistic expectations and more predictable time periods for deployments. The policy specifies phases during a 5-year cycle, roughly divided into equal time periods, during which units “reset,” “train and achieve mission readiness,” and are “available for deployment”. Reservists, their families, and their employers then know when unit deployments are most likely to occur and can plan accordingly. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (U.S. Department of Defense, 2008) bolsters both Family Support Groups (FSG) and Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) programs, providing reservists and their families with the necessary support before, during, and after deployment. The program funds activities at 30-day, 60-day, and 90-day intervals after deployment, furnishing information sessions on the stresses associated with separation and deployment, and offering counseling and other support services. Most recently, the Army has developed widespread training to promote the recognition and treatment of personnel who show suicide risk (US Department of Army, 2010).

In the next section, a conceptual framework is presented to tie together the three areas discussed thus far – recruitment, retention, and readiness, leading to several directions concerning these topics.

2 A UNIFYING MECHANISM: IDENTITY THEORY

Connections have been made between recruitment, retention, and readiness in the context of the AVF, with emphasis on the Army reserve components – USAR and

ARNG. These processes are most salient in a volunteer military force, due to fewer eligible applicants (having fewer who are interested and fewer who qualify to apply) which, in turn, affects retention (having to access more recruits when retention is low) and readiness (having to take less than optimal recruits to meet recruitment goals). Lacking, however, is a conceptual framework to tie these processes together, especially the individual to military service. At the individual level, the question is, what underlying mechanisms help clarify the relationship of an individual's behaviors and cognitions to wanting membership in the military? The tentative answer may lie in social identity theory, and through its application, suggesting future directions for recruitment, retention, and readiness.

Social identity theory has been linked to important outcomes, particularly those relevant to the military, such as individual attraction to groups and cohesion among group members (Hogg, 1992), stress adaptation (Haslam et al., 2008), individual and group performance (Beal et al., 2003), and the contextual effects of health problems and recovery (Haslam & Reicher, 2007).

2.1 Social identity theory

Social identity proposes that a person's sense of who they are is based on group memberships. Individuals derive much pride and self-esteem from the groups they are members of, such as social class, profession, work, religion, family, etc. (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1989). The initial process of identification is *self-categorization*, recognizing that one is a member of one group ("us") but not another ("them"). Individuals categorize themselves relative to the group to the extent that they exemplify the attributes of the ideal group member (called a prototype). This process gives meaning to events in relation to oneself through the group.

Identity is closely bound to *self-schema* – an integrated organization of the individual's memories, beliefs, and generalizations about themselves, and when combined, yield a general sense of self (Markus, 1977). This self-schema aids the individual in understanding the world – what to perceive, how to interpret these perceptions, and how to use this knowledge. Self-schema determines what is relevant to the individual; for example, a self-schema of an outdoor person will attend more to field activities than to indoor sedentary activities. Haslam et al. (2005) described how athletes more often recognize and own up to injuries specific to their sport than other physical injuries. Self-schemas have also been associated with increased memory (i.e. storage and retrieval of information) relevant to the self-schema (Rogers et al., 1997). Through social interactions, people also come to know who they are relative to group roles. Groups often define consistent ways of behaving and thinking relative to roles, e.g. in the family – father, husband; at work – coworker, boss; and social life – neighbor, friend, and so forth. Lastly, members of one group compare themselves to members of other groups (called *social comparison*) either more or less favorably, which can lead to enhanced or lowered self-esteem. Through the social processes of categorization, identification, and comparison, the person adopts a sense of self and self-esteem bound to group membership.

2.2 Identities and military service

Social identity can be used as a mechanism to manage – at the individual level – relationships between recruitment, retention, and readiness in the military. Advertised images of military members are of no small importance. Knowing prospective recruits' conceptions and expectations about being in the military can help construct ads to attract recruits. The more these images correspond to an individual's identities, the more likely the individual will see themselves as being a service member. Once serving, the military can construct experiences that fit these expectations to strengthen the relationship between the cognitions of the prototypical soldier and those of the soldier themselves. This would be expected to increase the desire to remain in military service. Additionally, experiences can be constructed to develop prototypical soldiers consistent with military missions and, in turn, enhance soldier and unit readiness.

Many of these events already occur, though largely unnoticed. Griffith (2011) outlined several Army reserve identities spanning a time period from post-World War II to the present day. The “*obliged-conscripted citizen soldier*” (1940 to 1971) serves out of a sense of obligation to the state; serves out of imminent need to defend the state; comes equally from “all walks of life” – representative socioeconomically, racially, ethnically, and religiously; has identity fundamentally as a civilian; and serves in the military temporarily. The “*weekend warrior*” (1954 to 1990s) understands reserve military service as a part-time weekend activity requiring less involvement and commitment, often seen as an alternative to leisure activity. The “*instrumental volunteer*” (1972 to present) gets interested and joins the military largely for material benefits, such as money for college, bonus money, job skill training, and employment. The “*soldier warrior*” (1993 to present) joins to serve and defend the country and wants military training and experience that prepare him for war. The “*conservative ideologue*” (2000 to present) serves to promote nationalistic and conservative values in the military. Each correspond to a particular identity largely due to the national defense strategy (i.e. the reserve as a non-operational force); the geopolitical situation (i.e. threats of the Soviet Union, Iraq, etc.); domestic and economic contexts (e.g. Vietnam protests, depressed economy); how the Army portrayed itself in advertisements (e.g. “Be all you can be,” “Army of one,” etc.); the incentives which are promoted (e.g. bonus money, educational benefits, job skill training, service to country, etc.); and Army experiences (i.e. rewriting the Soldier's Creed from a humanitarian to a warrior).

2.2.1 Identity and readiness

In the AVF, several conditions affect who is recruited, which has implications for readiness. Broader geopolitical context and national defense strategies can impart identities to soldiers which relate to readiness. For example, the reservist who is part of a strategic deterrent and rarely expecting to be called up develops an identity of “weekend warrior” (see Griffith, 2010). A more common identity these days for reservists is the “soldier warrior,” who is expected to be ready for call-up and deployment. As many as 30% of the U.S. ground forces were reservists in the OIF

and OEF. Recruitment campaigns often market to specific segments of American youth. For example, one of the first concerted marketing efforts for the Army Reserve was “money for college,” offering recruits ways to defer costs of college education expenses. Such a strategy often attracts what is called an “instrumental soldier”, who has joined chiefly for material benefits, such as money for college, job training, and extra money (Griffith, 2008). This identity corresponds to Moskos’ (1977) occupationally-oriented soldier versus an institutionally-oriented soldier. Viewing military service as institutional means having values that create and sustain a personal sense of obligation, loyalty, and sense of duty. Viewing military service as occupational means perceiving military service as one would perceive a civilian job. The former is more committed and willing to undergo adversities than the latter.

Some have speculated that these identities relate to recruitment, retention, and readiness. Griffith and Perry (1993) reported fewer college-bound enlisted in the Army reserve after Operation Desert Storm – one of the first large scale mobilizations of reservists. Griffith (2008) has observed that soldiers who joined for material benefits were less likely to intend to re-enlist, and not as combat ready as recruits who joined for patriotic reasons. Griffith (2008) reported that institutionally-motivated soldiers were more likely to plan to remain in military service, would report for duty so they did not let their buddies and family down, and believed in the mission and service to the country. In contrast, materially motivated soldiers were less likely to remain in reserve military service if deployed overseas, and were more likely to report for duty to meet contractual obligations and to avoid disciplinary action, but less likely to report to serve their country.

2.3 Applying identities to recruitment, retention, and readiness

Identity theory has relevance to the changing nature of military service, whether compulsory or volunteer, and the uses of the military and service members. Aspects of the theory can be useful for recruitment, retention, and readiness. Concerning recruitment, the more youth perceive model or ideal members of the military as having desired attributes, the stronger the intent to join. Gathering information on desired attributes is then important, and examining how well they correspond with attributes of ideal members of relevant reference groups, that is, military members. Periodic scientific polling can accomplish this, much like the past Youth Attitude Tracking Surveys and the current Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (ACOMS). Having identified the desired attributes of youth and their correspondence with a prototypical military service member, these attributes can then be used to develop specific identities through multimedia messages. Attributes would be expected to vary by military service; for example, the Marines – “the few, the proud”; the Air Force – “aim high”; and the Army – “Army of one.” The message content could also be crafted so that attributes correspond to the desired types of military identities or personnel. For example, advertising educational benefits, job training, and bonus money portray military service more as a “job,” as found in the civilian sector. Moskos (1977) called this making military service appealing as an occupation. College-bound youth might be more attracted to military occupational specialties that involve civilian-like academic training, such as extended language

training. Such marketing approaches may be suited to a strategic force, having time to prepare for mobilization and deployment, much like the Cold War era, but are likely unsuited to meet the demands of the current operational reserve force.

Multimedia messages could then be evaluated in terms of these intended attributes. Are youth exposed to the messages? Do youth comprehend the intended content of the messages? Do the messages alter the perceived identity of the model military service member? Are altered perceptions related to increased propensity to join or actually joining the reserve military service? Equally important is examining the extent to which young people's perceptions of ideal members of the military diverge from what youth desire as an identity. The greater the disparity, the less likely youth will see the military as a group for possible membership.

Identities also have implications for retention and readiness. The greater the lack of agreement between the desired attributes of the individual and those of the ideal service member, the less likely the individual will be retained. For example, during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, some reservists who initially joined for educational benefits (as an "instrumental volunteer") but who had to leave college for deployments (became a "soldier warrior") disproportionately left the reserve military service (Griffith & Perry, 1993). Alternatively, the greater the connection between the desired attributes of the individual and those of the ideal service member, the greater the likelihood the reservist will be retained. To illustrate, Griffith examined variable sets matching prevailing hypotheses about USAR retention, based on socio-demographic background, incentives, job satisfaction, low role conflict, and combat readiness (Griffith, 2005). The variable set representing the reservists' perceptions of being adequately prepared for deployments (i.e. combat readiness) was most strongly correlated with the intention to remain in reserve military service. This finding likely indicates a shift in reserve identity from the "instrumental volunteer" and "weekend warrior" to the "soldier warrior," and the more the reserve military service matched the attributes of the "soldier warrior" (i.e. being prepared for deployments), the more likely the reservists would remain in service. Identities incongruous with the demands of reserve military service have implications for readiness. For example, reservists' concerns about being inadequately prepared for deployments (lacking "soldier warrior" identity) have been associated with post-deployment post-traumatic stress symptoms (Erbes et al., 2008). Thus, benefits would be achieved by developing identities corresponding to the new and emerging demands and requirements made of reservists, and the more identities complement and support missions, the greater the commitment and enthusiasm of soldiers to carry out the mission.

Summary In this paper, I have described the challenges presented to the U.S. military, having gone from a draft to all-volunteer force. Challenges to recruitment, retention, and readiness are described, largely in the context of the reserve military service – a service in the U.S. military which has, more recently, been relied upon to conduct major military operations.

In the AVF, *recruitment challenges* have involved getting enough interested youth who qualify to join the military. Vietnam experiences discouraged many youth, particularly disproportionately among African-Americans, from being interested in military service. *Retention challenges* pertained to providing service members' with expected military experiences – largely training relevant to missions, meaningful and engaging duties, and quality leadership. Unmet experiences were, in part, due to lack of funds and the traditional strategic, static role of the reserves. *Readiness challenges* included recruiting service members capable of dealing with new and emerging issues and providing service members with training relevant to current and anticipated missions.

The challenges were illustrated by specific examples experienced by the U.S. AVF. Identity theory helps respond to questions relevant to these processes. Who is needed (to be recruited and retained)? What should members of the military experience, and for what purposes (to be ready for what)? Identity theory helps clarify the underlying mechanisms of individual cognition, intentions, and behaviors relative to military service, specifically those pertaining to being recruited, retained, and combat-ready. Accordingly, identities can be used as a mechanism to manage these important military staffing concerns.

Footnote 1. The U.S. military assesses the cognitive ability of applicants by administering the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. Standard scores from subtests (namely, arithmetic reasoning, mathematics knowledge, paragraph comprehension, and word knowledge) are used to derive Armed Forces Qualification Test scores. These scores correspond to eight categories of cognitive ability: from highest to lowest, I, II, IIIA, IIIB, IVA, IVB, IVC, and V. Normally, applicants scoring in Categories I through III qualify for military service. Category IV applicants must be high school graduates and cannot be denied military service in order to meet end strength. Applicants in the remaining categories normally cannot serve in the military, and, if allowed, cannot exceed 20% of all applicants accepted in a fiscal year.

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