

The All-Volunteer Force and Presidential Use of Military Force

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## ABSTRACT

The creation of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973 allowed U.S. presidents to deploy American military power in times and places of their own choosing with fewer concerns that the electorate would turn against their leadership. A reaction to the trauma of the Vietnam War, the AVF did away with conscription and instead relied on volunteers to serve and fight in U.S. military operations. The AVF's ranks were mostly filled with those willing to deploy and fight for their country, without the U.S. having to rely on conscription. When U.S. presidents had to use the AVF to fight in conflicts, they could expect to enjoy a higher degree of public support than those presidents who led the U.S. military during the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Drawing from casualty, financial, and public opinion statistics from 1949 through 2016, this thesis argues that with the adoption of the AVF in 1973 U.S. presidents have been better able to deploy the AVF in combat with less resistance from the American people. It examines the circumstances behind the creation of the AVF, looking second, at the deployment of the AVF from the Gulf War to the Global War on Terror to determine if U.S. presidents enjoyed popular support and were encouraged to rely on military force as the primary option in foreign policy. Finally, the study compares casualties, financial costs, and public support for conflicts relying on conscripted forces to those depending on the AVF to examine if U.S. presidents were better able to involve the U.S. in military conflicts of questionable interest with fewer worries about organized anti-war movements.

The conclusions of my research revealed that my hypothesis was wrong in that the creation of the AVF did not mean the U.S. presidency enjoyed a higher degree of support during conflicts. With the exception of the Gulf War, presidential approval when using the AVF was less than 50% in every conflict by the time military operations ended. The majority of conflicts disclosed that public approval and disapproval was based on casualties, regardless if service members were draftees or volunteers, as well as financial costs. For Korea and Vietnam, high casualties and financial costs resulted in approval levels dropping quickly while Afghanistan and Iraq took longer because casualties and spending did not escalate as quickly. As a result, I discovered that public approval and disapproval levels influenced political change. In the case of Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, it forewarned changes in political leadership while conflicts such as Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo were kept short and inexpensive to prevent political opposition from organizing against the presidency.

# The All-Volunteer Force and Presidential Use of Military Force

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## GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This thesis explores presidential use of military power from 1949 through 2016, examining the impact of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). The research looks at whether the AVF is associated with U.S. presidents having more public support when using military power in various parts of the world. Prior to the AVF, conscription helped meet the personnel needs of the U.S. military; however, this system became problematic when it was used to fight conflicts that became unpopular with the American public. Not only were the loyalty and performance of the conscripts often questionable, the public also frequently placed pressure on presidents to curb U.S. military operations overseas. This thesis examines the emergence of the AVF, how presidents have deployed it, and the differences in American public support, casualties, and financial costs between the use of the conscript force and the AVF under U.S. presidents in major military conflicts from 1949 through 2016.

The findings revealed very little difference in presidential use of military power whether employing the conscript force or the AVF. An examination of the nation's major conflicts since 1949 suggests that public support was based on U.S. lives lost and monies spent, with higher levels of these categories associated with lower presidential approval and higher disapproval ratings. In conclusion, although the AVF was created to end the need for the draft to support national defense, the American public remained concerned about how U.S. presidents used the military overseas especially when engaged in distant open-ended conflicts.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis is the culmination of three years of hard work and study in Virginia Tech's Graduate Program in Political Science where the professors and staff greatly expanded my understanding of government and politics. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity that not only enriched my experience and knowledge as a senior field grade officer in the United States Marine Corps, but more importantly emphasized the point that war is an extension of politics through other means. As an officer in the All-Volunteer Force charged with the responsibility of helping protect our nation, my thesis is part of the debates and discussions being held within today's political, military, and academic circles. Not only does my thesis look at the literature and arguments that are out there, but also tries to provide a dispassionate examination on the presidential use of the military and the role American citizens play in allowing its use in various conflicts.

In researching and writing this thesis, I would not have been successful without the help of so many people supporting, encouraging, and guiding me along the way. First and foremost, I am eternally grateful to Dr. Karen Hult who served as Chair and Advisor for my thesis. Her extraordinary knowledge, patience, and attention to detail went above and beyond the call of duty as she patiently advised and guided me through the drafting and final shaping of my thesis. In addition, Dr. Brandy Faulkner and Dr. Priya Dixit provided their remarkable insights and expertise from their careful review and outstanding suggestions to help improve and sharpen my thesis. They not only pushed me to challenge my arguments and views about the presidency and its use of the military, but also encouraged me to think outside the box and to look more deeply into my research data from several different perspectives. Besides the thesis committee, I would also like to extend my gratitude to Karen Nicholson, Graduate Coordinator for the Department of

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

On February 28, 1991, the Persian Gulf War ended in total victory over Saddam Hussein's army. His military was considered one of the largest, most powerful forces in the world. In 100 hours of combat operations, the U.S. military, known as the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), completely decimated the Iraqi military, inflicting thousands of casualties and destroying hundreds of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery pieces. According to Colonel Richard Swain's assessment of the AVF's leaders and volunteer service members who fought in the Persian Gulf War:

Commanders were conscious that they were responsible for the lives of their soldiers, who were not just cannon fodder but fellow citizens, the sons and daughters of the American people. They were also conscious that, in the volunteer Army built up for fifteen years, losses in men and material were largely irreplaceable. And as veterans of the Vietnam War and witnesses to the U.S. reaction to the losses in smaller incidents...U.S. leaders believed there was little tolerance for casualty reports on the home front, American or even Iraqi ones.<sup>1</sup>

The performance and victory of the AVF was seen as validation for the years of training and recovery from the Vietnam War. The Persian Gulf War was argued by some to not only have exorcised the ghosts of the Vietnam conflict that haunted U.S. foreign and military circles for years, but justified the United States of ever going back to its old conscript military manned by draftees based on the mistaken perception that the American public was more sensitive to draftees who were killed or wounded in combat. However, Colonel Swain was not focused on whether service members were conscripts or volunteers, but instead on the responsibility and

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<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Swain, *"Lucky War" Third Army in Desert Storm* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1994), 291 – 292.

burden of commanding young men and women in combat. He not only shared the Vietnam veterans' appreciation in the value of every American life, but also understood that the U.S. public was concerned for all its service members regardless if they were drafted or volunteered to serve in the ranks. He saw from his long years of military service that the American people closely watched how their service members were treated, on whether or not the leadership took care of them, and most importantly how they were employed in combat. While Colonel Swain understood this from serving in the U.S. Army, it was a lesson that some presidents had to learn quickly while serving as Commander-in-Chief during times of war.

### ***Research Focus***

My research seeks to explore the general proposition that the AVF will be associated with presidents being more likely to involve U.S. troops in conflict and with presidential support remaining generally stable and relatively high even when casualties and financial costs rise. Presidents, of course, are commanders-in-chief of the United States armed forces. Prior to the AVF, conscription was used to meet the personnel needs of the U.S. military; however, this system became problematic when it was used to fight conflicts that were unpopular with the American public. Not only were the loyalty and performance of the conscripts often questioned, but the American public also was likely to place pressure on presidents to curb U.S. military operations overseas. The introduction of the AVF ended the conscription system, replacing it with a new recruitment program that encouraged people to volunteer with better pay, benefits, and job opportunities. Meanwhile, those not wishing to serve in the AVF would not have to; they could put aside concerns they might have about fighting in conflicts that they did not support. The creation of the AVF supposedly transformed the relationship between the executive

branch and the people by allowing presidents to deploy the U.S. military as they see fit during times of war and peace, with less fear of U.S. public support quickly turning against administrations.

### ***Purpose of Thesis***

The purpose of the thesis is to look at whether or not the AVF has been associated with U.S. presidents having more support when using military force in various parts of the world. The objectives of the research are to explore differences in American public support, casualties, and financial costs under U.S. presidential administrations between 1949 and 2016, starting with President Truman's first full term in office and ending with the conclusion of President Obama's administration. This will allow the examination of data before and after the creation of the AVF. Finally, the research helps fill gaps in scholarship on the debate over the influences of the AVF. Much scholarly literature focuses on technical, historical, and social explanations of how the AVF was formed, but examines very little on the effects on public support of presidents, as reflected in Gallup measures of presidential approval, when the U.S. military engaged in conflicts before and after 1973.

### ***Organization of Thesis***

My thesis is organized to look thoroughly at the AVF and presidential use of military force. This chapter lays out the grounds for my argument for how the AVF transformed the relationship among the presidency, the military, and the people in allowing the commander-in-chief to use military force in conflicts and operations of increasingly questionable value. Chapter two examines the work of other scholars about the AVF from the perspective of its

technical and financial costs, and its effects on American society. Next in chapter three, I introduce the conceptual grounding and research design, presenting my primary hypothesis and describing how I explored the relationship between presidential use of military force and public support before and after the AVF from 1949 through 2016. Finally, chapter four analyzes my findings by comparing casualties, expenditures, and public support before and after the creation of the AVF while chapter five offers my conclusions.

### ***AVF and Presidential Use of Military Force***

Carl von Clausewitz stated that war is an extension of politics through other means.<sup>2</sup> He went on to propose that in order for a state to successfully fight a war, it must align its civilian government, the military, and the citizenry so that they can work together toward a common goal.<sup>3</sup> Failure to align these three elements cripples the state's potential power projection capabilities, leading to possible catastrophe and defeat. Michael I. Handel applies Clausewitz's "Trinity of War" to the Vietnam War, and finds that the American presidency was too focused on defeating the insurgency in the battlefield and not enough on the third element critical to the conflict's ultimate success: the American people. Thus, during the years fighting the communist insurgency, U.S. presidents failed to mobilize the support of the American people by articulating a clear, consistent political message about the war.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout history, most states have struggled to wield Clausewitz's trinity of war effectively. For example, Peter Paret argued that war is "organized mass violence" in which no one element of the trinity is wholly in control of its actions due to political, social, and economic

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<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 87.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>4</sup> Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London: Routledge, 2009), 106.

elements.<sup>5</sup> Further, others contend that authoritarian states are more successful in aligning the government, the military, and the people, because democratic countries, by virtue of being free societies that allow for debate and competing interests, usually face more challenges in this regard. However, history has shown that even democratic states can effectively wage war when Clausewitz's trinity of war is aligned based on mutual interests toward a strategic goal, usually in the form of national defense and survival. This alignment was seen in the case of Athens during the Greco-Persian Wars, the Roman Republic during the Punic Wars, and Republican France's early fight for survival before the rise of Napoleon.

For most of its history, the United States has maintained only a small military and relied on its isolated geographic location in the western hemisphere and its neutral foreign policy to stay out of war.<sup>6</sup> As the American republic quickly expanded across the western hemisphere during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries because of weak neighbors and divided American Indian tribes, the United States also successfully fought decisive conflicts such as the American Civil War, as well as the First and Second World Wars, because of strong presidents with ability to fight within the paradigm of Clausewitz's trinity of war. Robert Kagan observed that the rise of the United States was not based on its passivity, but its ability to use its political, economic, and military capabilities to first conquer the western hemisphere and then the rest of the world.<sup>7</sup>

During these major wars, the United States was able to fight and win because the president of the United States was able to align the civilian government, the military, and the people through the mutual interest of national survival in protecting the homeland. As John Mearsheimer argued in his analysis of American security policy, since becoming an independent

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 199.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 239.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 303.

country, the United States had used its power to prevent dangerous foes from posing a threat to its national security and welfare.<sup>8</sup> In the American Civil War, the Union North fought the Confederate South in order to prevent the country from breaking apart. Next, in the First World War, U.S. participation was based on Germany's Zimmerman Telegram, which promised Mexico control of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas if the Mexican government agreed to declare war on the United States. Finally, direct American participation in the Second World War was based on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the declarations of war by Germany and Italy, and the looming threat of a potential invasion of the American mainland.

However, Clausewitz's trinity of war began to work against the American presidency during the Cold War when the United States found itself competing with the Soviet Union. The Cold War became complicated due to dramatic changes in technology during the rise of the Atomic, Space and, later, Information Ages. Max Boot's study of how these advances created the modern world revealed the powerful influence technology had on military affairs and the manner in which it began to radically change the international order.<sup>9</sup> As a result, changes in communication, transportation, and weapons now made it possible to talk and travel internationally in an extraordinarily short amount of time—and also to potentially destroy all life on the planet.

This situation placed both the United States and the Soviet Union at an impasse in the anticipated final struggle over ideological and geopolitical supremacy. Perhaps because a direct confrontation between the two superpowers could quickly escalate to nuclear war, both sought to undermine and attack each other indirectly through a series of wars along the periphery of their

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<sup>8</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014), 265.

<sup>9</sup> Max Boot, *War Made New – Weapons, Warriors, and the Making of the Modern World*. (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), 296.

core interests. The superpowers sought to attract allies and client states with promises of military and economic assistance while also using their power projection capabilities and influence to put the other at a disadvantage. The United States pursued a policy of containment to stop the spread of Soviet influence within the international system, while the Soviet Union exploited the power vacuum created by the collapse of the centuries-old European colonial system in the developing world.<sup>10</sup> As a result, both the United States and the Soviet Union became directly involved in a series of inconclusive conflicts that politically undermined and damaged their respective national governments.

The United States fought a series of proxy wars, limited conflicts, and insurgencies of questionable value to its national security strategy, resulting in significant losses of blood and treasure.<sup>11</sup> American intervention in distant parts of the developing world, including parts of South America, Africa and Asia, culminated with U.S. military intervention in Vietnam from March 1965 to April 1975. During this time, President Lyndon B. Johnson and President Richard M. Nixon involved the United States in an indigenous conflict based on the premise of stopping the communists from taking over South Vietnam. Despite never having been to Vietnam, General Douglas MacArthur, former Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers during the Second World War, strongly advised Presidents Kennedy and Johnson against involving American troops in the conflict, based on his own experiences as a soldier and his studies of counterinsurgency campaigns. Those experiences gave him a clear idea of the obstacles and difficulties that the United States would face in Vietnam. According to Arthur M.

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<sup>10</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*. (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 522 – 523.

<sup>11</sup> Edwin P. Hoyt *America's Wars and Military Excursions*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987), 412.

Schlesinger, Jr., “MacArthur expressed his old view that anyone wanting to commit American ground forces to the [Asian] mainland should have his head examined.”<sup>12</sup>

For ten years, the American military won nearly every battle and campaign against the communists, but the United States ultimately lost the war by failing to maintain alignment within Clausewitz’s trinity of war. Some have argued that critical shortfalls existed in the political and military assessments while fighting in Vietnam; however, the fatal flaw came from American presidents failing to fully appreciate the influence of the American people’s support for the war. Stanley Karnow’s complete account of Vietnam revealed that over time, the escalation and brutality of the conflict changed how the U.S. public saw the conflict. In 1968, U.S. military forces had been fully engaged in Vietnam for three years, and the American people saw the grueling reality of the struggle on television through the evening news. Thus, the Tet Offensive in 1968 dealt a major blow to American presidential leadership as the communist attacks compromised the reports of steady progress being made by U.S. military forces.<sup>13</sup>

Despite having the best training, technology, and military leadership available, the United States relied on the draft to meet its personnel shortfalls in the Vietnam War. However, better economic opportunities, rising casualties, growing distrust of the presidency, and perceived unfairness in deferments to the draft system influenced the American public. In addition, daily news coverage, other forms of media, and returning service members shaped many Americans’ views of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. As the war dragged on and casualties continued to rise, opposition to the war grew as some began to question the fairness of the draft and being sent to fight in an unpopular, open-ended war. As Boot pointed out, “By relying primarily on conscripts, the Johnson administration was ignoring lessons learned by, among others, the

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<sup>12</sup> William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880 – 1964*. (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 696.

<sup>13</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*. (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 523.



Roman, Chinese, British, and French empires, all of which had found that pacification operations far from home [are] seldom popular and invariably costly and long-lasting. [Conflicts] were generally better left to professional soldiers who volunteered for this unglamorous duty rather than to unenthusiastic citizen-soldiers whose dispatch was certain to spark social unrest back home.”<sup>14</sup>

By the time the Vietnam War ended, the powerful influence of the American people was finally felt when nationwide demonstrations threatened to tear the country apart, and Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson was replaced with Republican President Richard M. Nixon, who resigned in scandal close to five years later. Meanwhile, the costs to the United States included \$111 billion (\$823.9 billion in constant 2018 dollars) and tens of thousands dead or wounded service members.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the U.S. presidency and the military suffered major blows to their credibility and faced a disenchanting, hostile American populace for years to come. Edwin Hyot pointed out that the military especially felt betrayed by the civilian government, the media, and the public despite years of fighting and sacrifices made to win the war.<sup>16</sup> To make matters worse, the war left the United States politically and militarily scarred and served as a powerful influence on presidential use of military force for at least the next 15 years.

Many lessons were learned from U.S. involvement in Vietnam, especially from a perspective in which partisan politics and electoral dynamics played powerful roles in limiting, shaping, and ultimately terminating the presidential use of military force. The conflict showed the world that despite superior military strength and technology, the United States could be defeated indirectly by exploiting critical vulnerabilities in its system of government and by

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<sup>14</sup> Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), 417.

<sup>15</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Costs of Major Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2012) 2.

<sup>16</sup> Edwin Hoyt, *America's Wars and Military Excursions*, 476 – 477.

targeting the American people to do so. This approach did not require physically attacking the American people. Instead, a calculated information campaign could cause doubt and division within the United States about the use of military power in many foreign policy causes. This approach to fighting a stronger country was not new, however; the United States faced a similar challenge during the Philippine Insurrection from 1899 to 1902. During that war, Emilio Aguinaldo, leader of the Filipino insurgents, based his guerrilla campaign on two objectives in order to win the Philippines' independence – wearing down the U.S. military and influencing American voters to support the anti-imperialists within the Democratic Party to win the presidential and congressional elections.<sup>17</sup>

In this view, to ensure that the American people would be sufficiently angry and frustrated with presidents and military leaders, future enemies understood that the United States would need to deploy its military to fight great distances from home under hostile, austere conditions. By pinning down American troops in various inconclusive battles, a weaker opponent could shape local conditions on the battlefield to inflict casualties, avoid final defeat, and attract media attention. According to Bevin Alexander, during the Vietnam War, many Americans did not care about enemy losses, but focused specifically on their own. As years of combat dragged on, people over time refused to support the war and turned against it.<sup>18</sup> Only by imposing costs that Americans found too expensive in terms of time, lives, and financial costs, could an adversary pressure U.S. presidents and the military to eventually cut its losses and return home, resulting in another blow to the country's prestige and credibility. In other words, so long as the American people were involved in the fortunes of war, the United States would

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<sup>17</sup> Warren Zimmerman, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 389.

<sup>18</sup> Bevin Alexander, *The Future of War*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 204.

remain vulnerable if it had to fight more unpopular wars to safeguard its interests both at home and abroad.

This powerful lesson became appreciated near the end of the Vietnam War, when Congress and the Nixon administration ended the military draft on January 27, 1973. Mostly as a result, the massive nationwide protests against U.S. involvement in Vietnam that threatened to tear the United States apart lost momentum and all but disappeared from the national scene. A few months later, on July 1, 1973, the AVF was created to strengthen and professionalize the U.S. military. A primary engine driving the transformation of American military forces arguably was the need for the U.S. presidency to rebalance Clausewitz's "trinity of war" in America's democratic society by creating a new relationship in which presidents would enjoy higher levels of American popular support in future conflicts by counting on the AVF instead of a military system that relied heavily on using the force of law to require male U.S. citizens to serve in the ranks. George Mastroianni, who served in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Georgetown University in 1973 and joined the ranks of the AVF after graduation, observed that his idealistic desire to serve his country for a few years was a rarity among his peers. Mastroianni also opined that Americans were "not only willing, but eager to leave the military to whoever would like it, so long as they are not called upon to serve."<sup>19</sup>

In the new AVF, the military no longer relied on the draft to meet its personnel needs in order to address various operational requirements both at home and abroad. With this new policy, the U.S. military could now make significant adjustments to its personnel program by first removing all Americans who were drafted into the ranks. Although most draftees served ably and honorably during the Vietnam War, some needed to be removed because they were not

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<sup>19</sup> George R. Mastroianni, "The All-Volunteer Force: Some Unintended Consequences," *Psychology Today*, Dec 6, 2012, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/headspace/201212/the-all-volunteer-force-some-unintended-consequences> (accessed August 19, 2018).

physically, mentally, or emotionally qualified to serve in combat and thus posed significant disciplinary problems that adversely affected morale and military readiness. Olivia Lanaras pointed out that the switch to the AVF made the American military more professional and well trained to fight in the nation's future wars, but had the side effect of creating a significant social gap that separated its fighting forces from the American people.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, unlike the draft military that the United States counted on to fight its past conflicts, Americans were now protected by a large, generally well-paid and well-equipped force to ensure their protection.

Besides removing drafted service members who could not or did not want to serve in the military, the AVF also reviewed and revamped its recruitment program in order to create incentives that would make it competitive with the American economy. Through a new talent management program, the U.S. military raised the physical and mental standards for potential volunteers to serve in the ranks. In addition, the recruiting process now included in-depth physical screenings and mental evaluations, as well as a mandatory requirement for volunteers to have a high school degree or equivalent and a clean felony record. In short, the AVF wanted to attract the best and brightest to its ranks in order to ably fight future U.S. wars. However, as David Cloud and Greg Jaffe noted in their study of the U.S. military in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, in addition to implementing these new requirements, the AVF had to modify its training, education, discipline, and technology to meet the new demands of future wars.<sup>21</sup>

From 1973 to 1990, the AVF slowly grew in strength, capabilities, and professionalism. Veterans from the Vietnam War created and implemented doctrine and training geared toward operating and fighting in a variety of environments within the range of military operations. In

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<sup>20</sup> Olivia Lanaras, "The Negative Effects of an All-Volunteer Force on Individualistic Societies," *The Claremont Journal of Law and Public Policy* Issue 2 (Winter 2016), 23.

<sup>21</sup> David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 25.

addition, talent and morale began to improve as the military established additional programs, such as better housing, higher pay and entitlements, family service support, improved medical services and enticing financial and educational opportunities, to attract and retain competent service members within its ranks. However, the AVF still harbored the psychological and emotional scars of the Vietnam War, which ultimately were detrimental during the Global War on Terror and especially during the Iraq War. Of particular importance was the U.S. military's inability to properly advise and challenge the political leadership about its use of the AVF. As Fred Kaplan noted in his study of the U.S. military during the 1970s and 1980s, the American military leadership was eager to forget the painful experience of Vietnam by actively suppressing American officers who sought to publicly critique the military's performance during the Vietnam War in a negative manner.<sup>22</sup>

Although expensive, the concept of the AVF was validated during the Gulf War when Saddam Hussein's military invaded Kuwait in August 1990. In subsequent months, President George H.W. Bush, with congressional support, authorized the use of the AVF to launch Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm to deploy and defeat Saddam Hussein, culminating in the destruction of the Iraqi dictator's large, powerful military and the liberation of Kuwait. This moment vindicated both the presidency and the AVF by supposedly exorcising the ghosts of the Vietnam War, paving the way for a bright future for the use of the military in future operations. The relatively few casualties it received during the war showed the AVF to be the best trained and equipped in the world, and there was also an outpouring of American support for its volunteers after their return home. The Gulf War, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor concluded in their study of the AVF during this period, reinforced "the post-Vietnam War

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<sup>22</sup> Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 32 – 33.

principle that Washington should establish the broad parameters of the war and leave the details up to the [military].”<sup>23</sup>

Ten years later, on September 11, 2001, terrorists took control of passenger-laden commercial planes and used them for suicide attacks against New York City, Washington, D.C., and rural Pennsylvania, resulting in over 2,000 casualties and billions of dollars in damages.<sup>24</sup> Soon afterwards, President George W. Bush declared a “Global War on Terror” and moved quickly against Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations around the world. In addition, in a separate policy from its Global War on Terror, the Bush administration identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the “Axis of Evil” for their past history of state sponsored terrorism and desire to pursue weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>25</sup> As a result of these policies, the United States became involved in two major regional wars, first in Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban and destroy Al-Qaeda terrorist bases and then in Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein based on intelligence that he was attempting to develop WMDs that potentially posed a threat to the American homeland. Upon the defeat and overthrow of Saddam Hussein, President George W. Bush landed on the *U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln* on May 1, 2003 under the banner of “Mission Accomplished.” He stated:

Our mission continues...The War on Terror continues, yet it is not endless. We do not know the day of final victory, but we have seen the turning of the tide. Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 326.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and The Stone: On War in the 21st Century*. (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2006), 130.

<sup>25</sup> Fred I. Greenstein, “The Person of the President, Leadership, and Greatness,” in *The Executive Branch*, Ed. by Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 233.

<sup>26</sup> Jarrett Murphy, “Text Of Bush Speech,” *CBS News*, May 1, 2003, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/text-of-bush-speech-01-05-2003/> (accessed August 19, 2018).

The Taliban and Al-Qaeda fled into the mountains of Afghanistan while no WMDs were discovered in Iraq. Soon both countries collapsed into anarchy and major insurgencies began to spring up against the American occupation. President Bush quickly changed the mission of the U.S. military to counterinsurgency operations while conducting massive state-building programs. In the end, after years of fighting at the enormous expense of American blood and treasure, the United States was able to establish fragile democratic governments in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Furthermore, U.S. combat troops were pulled out of Iraq in 2011 and later in Afghanistan by 2016. Following the withdrawal of the last U.S. combat troops, the United States still had to leave behind special forces, military advisors, and combat service support troops to help the Iraqi and Afghan militaries face continued threats to their respective countries – for Iraq, it was the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) while in Afghanistan, it was a resurgent Taliban.

Although in mid-2019 the United States remains involved in Afghanistan and Iraq, the terrible cost of fighting two major regional wars simultaneously came to an end thanks to the years of involvement and pressure from the American people. Unlike the Vietnam War that nearly tore the United States apart with nationwide protests, the American people took on a different approach in ending these conflicts by applying political pressure with popular votes to bring about changes in leadership and policies. President Bush indeed felt the pressure with the drop in the Gallup polls in his performance as Commander-in-Chief for the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Bush's unpopularity soon made itself felt when the American public enabled the Democrats to control both houses of Congress during the congressional elections. Afterwards, Barack Obama was elected in part based on his promises to responsibly withdraw all combat troops from both countries.

However, critics such as Andrew Bacevich argued that the AVF removed the American public's desire to involve itself in various U.S. conflicts. He believed that the reason was that racial and ethnic minorities, those from lower incomes, and the offspring of the officer class mostly staffed the AVF.<sup>27</sup> Bacevich went on to argue in a later book that the creation of the AVF bred and exacerbated problems underlying the civil-military relationship that did not become apparent until the Global War on Terror. These problems meant that the American public would turn a blind eye to the plight of the U.S. military force as it fought in conflicts that would drag on for years without worrying about the consequences.<sup>28</sup>

Based on my studies of the AVF in major conflicts between 1973 and 2016, the AVF did not balance Clausewitz's "Trinity of War" in the United States. While the remodeled U.S. military does allow the presidency to wield the nation's armed forces more quickly and efficiently during periods of crisis (e.g. terrorist attacks, nuclear threats), it does not remove accountability and worry from the U.S. public. Indeed, the results of the research reported below disproves that the creation of the AVF undermined the American public's influence over decisions about war and peace. Rather the AVF improved relations among elected and appointed civilian leaders, the military, and the people. Presidents could use military force as they saw fit by relying on volunteers to pursue and carry out policy on behalf of U.S. national security interests. Meanwhile, the military was able to screen, recruit, and train qualified volunteers to fill the ranks of ground, air, and naval forces. In addition, U.S. armed forces were given freer rein and a large budget to create the most powerful military in the world. Finally, the American people were freed from the burden and frequent unfairness of the military draft

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<sup>27</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 28.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 13 – 14.



system, but could still retain a voice in either supporting or opposing American conflicts overseas.

In a way, the AVF transformed relationships among the presidency, the military, and the people in a constitutional republic like the U.S, where one sees the civilian and military leadership being more sensitive to American public support. Although I originally believed that the AVF enervated the American public's influence over how presidents conducted military operations, I was surprised to find that the electoral influence of the American people was as strong as ever when compared to the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The American people still exercised their rights, organized protests, and voted for new leaders if those currently in power proved unable to command the AVF and pursue policies in conflicts that aligned with the interests of the American people.

Understanding and working with the AVF after Vietnam, however, was a gradual process that U.S. presidents had to learn about over time. The AVF certainly changed relationships among the civilian government, the military, and the people; it also sought to address perceived injustices in those relationships that had plagued the country at least since the American Civil War. Borrowing a chapter from the Marius Reforms of the Roman Republic, the United States professionalized its military with volunteers to meet its personnel needs in combat. Although certainly more expensive to recruit, train, and support, the AVF failed to break the paradigm of Clausewitz's "Trinity of War," because fighting a conflict still required the alignment of the people with civilian officials and the military. This did not change after Vietnam when the 1970s and 1980s were spent developing the newly established AVF. Later, the 1990s were the testing ground for the AVF's performance and capabilities, but U.S. presidents soon learned that the U.S. public was still very much concerned about how its military volunteers were used in

combat, beginning with worries during the Gulf War and later with public pressure to end the small, unpopular wars in Somalia and Yugoslavia as quickly as possible. Finally, U.S. leaders learned the limits of using the AVF during the Global War on Terror that while the American public originally understood the mission to deploy the U.S. military to various parts of the world to combat Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, the people made its voice heard when it was able to apply political pressure in the voting polls to end two major conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq when it became apparent their original missions drifted beyond destroying terrorist organizations and WMDs.

Despite the creation of the AVF, the American presidency, legislators, and military leaders are still accountable to the American public and they can count on the U.S. population pushing back against the country's involvement in potentially distant, dangerous, and expensive conflicts as seen from my research. Comparing data collected from military operations fought by the U.S. before and after the creation of the AVF, from 1949 through and 2016, failed to support my original hypothesis about greater public indifference following the creation of the AVF. This becomes quite apparent when the increasing duration of a military operation combined with human and financial costs affected public support for involvement in the conflict.

Most Americans evidently have accepted the AVF and its continual use to pursue policies abroad, but are still sensitive to how the U.S. military is used and its costs when the country becomes involved in a conflict. This was seen by the U.S. public's reaction to Afghanistan and Iraq when those conflicts threatened to destabilize the Middle East. Meanwhile, American civilian and military actions to deal with the rising security threats presented by Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea have been tempered to a more cautious defensive stance based on the U.S.

public's desire to prevent a conflict from being accidentally initiated by miscalculation by U.S. leaders.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Since the creation of the AVF in 1975, many books and articles have studied its development, costs, and influence. Under the Nixon administration, the Gates Commission recommended that the American military be transformed into a large, professional volunteer force in order to meet its personnel needs. This decision has generated numerous debates among scholars on the advantages and disadvantages of the AVF and what it means for the American republic. Scholarly examinations of the AVF revolve around three major issues: technical discussions of the origins of the AVF and its development; cost analyses of whether creating and maintaining the AVF is desirable and feasible given U.S. global commitments and interests; and discussions of how the AVF has affected American politics and society.

#### *Technical Views*

Beth Bailey, Barbara Bicksler, and Phillip Carter delve into the details of how the U.S. military embraced this transformation despite the reservations of veterans who fought in the Second World War, the Korean War, and Vietnam. Each scholar had a different view of the creation of the AVF, its development, and how it was deployed. The AVF was different from its conscript predecessor because it adopted a new recruitment and assessment system as well as embraced better ways of training, equipping, and supporting service members in combat.

In *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force*, Bailey examines how the AVF was the result of the draft protests and policy proposals during the Vietnam conflict. Bailey examines how the AVF developed and grew in the aftermath of Vietnam as well as how it transformed the

military to fight future conflicts. She studies this transformation by examining how the AVF eventually adopted policies and programs that sought to recruit a wide range of volunteers into the U.S. military's ranks. Better pay and benefits as well as the opportunity for advancement and success based on meritocracy were incentives that attracted potential recruits and turned them into devoted members of the AVF. By drawing recruits, indoctrinating them, and creating buy-in to the AVF, service members became both military professionals and quite loyal. This loyalty to the AVF remained after their active duty service was completed through organizational support networks that created a "cradle to grave" institution that allowed them to organize politically in support of laws and policies that advocated for the U.S. military.

While Bailey's exhaustive study of the AVF examines how it came to fight various conflicts over a range of military operations from the Cold War to the Global War on Terror, she also explores the AVF's internal dynamics, highlighting how it continues to evolve in an increasingly complex world faced with numerous security threats. The adoption of information technologies, laser-guided weapon systems, special operations, and cyber warfare combine to show how the AVF was able to undermine future anti-war sentiment and help civilian and military leaders understand that the creation of the AVF was essential for fighting conflicts that were long and frustrating. This was the ideal environment for the AVF: professional volunteers who handled day-to-day operations in defending the United States especially when it came to fighting in potential open-ended conflicts in often dangerous and austere environments.

Barbara Bicksler's *The All-Volunteer Force: Thirty Years of Service* built on Bailey's study by taking the reader through how these personnel policies focused on attracting qualified volunteers and how the AVF sought to make them even better by creating various career fields and implementing a human talent management system based on a battery of tests. The rise of

technology and its contribution to the growing complexity of warfare were driving factors in Bicksler's study of the AVF during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The Vietnam experience suggested the future challenges likely to face the United States were state and nonstate actors who are apt to fighting through unconventional means. This was emphasized not just by the U.S. defeat in Vietnam but also the 9/11 attacks when terrorists used major commercial, transportation, and communication global networks to launch devastating attacks on the American homeland.

With the "Global War on Terror" and the resulting Afghan and Iraq wars, the AVF frequently had to operate far from home with little civilian leadership or guidance. This was especially the case when the AVF inherited two major state-building projects in Afghanistan and Iraq following the liberation of both countries from oppressive political regimes. In addition, as the traumatic memories of 9/11 faded, the AVF continued to operate and fight in Afghanistan, Iraq, and a variety of other places throughout the world. Working in conjunction with host nation partners, the AVF was counted on to provide tactical and operational support by being able to fight alongside them, often in morally difficult and compromising situations. In other words, for Bicksler the AVF was a new force to be reckoned with in the world because it had the capability to fight long savage wars whose termination was not always clear cut. Compared to the conscript force, she finds that the AVF is more professional and adaptable as well as more precise and discriminating in how it tracks and destroys enemies both on and off the battlefield.

Finally, Phillip Carter, Katherine Kidder, Amy Schafer, and Andrew Swick from the Center for a New American Security wrote a working paper, "AVF 4.0: The Future of the All-Volunteer Force," in which they focus on the service members who operate as the "beating heart" of the national security machine. Despite the paper's acknowledgement of the success of

the AVF in past conflicts especially during the Cold War and the Gulf War, it argues that the technical shortfalls of the 21st century U.S. military reflect not its technology, but its people. The authors consider the screening and recruitment of AVF members to be antiquated and in need of change; the world has transformed as information technologies have accelerated globalization, creating a new operational environment.

Space, cyber, information, and special operations are among the new methods of fighting against potential threats. Although some would argue that great power competition is back with the rise of Russia and China, the days of big conventional militaries battling are over, especially when nuclear weapons help safeguard each competing power's core interests. As a result, precision technologies and highly trained volunteers are required to inflict both lethal and nonlethal harm. American use of special forces, China's employment of cyber warfare, and Russia's skillful conduct of information operations reflect the argument that the screening and recruitment of people into the AVF needs to change quickly to find, train, and employ people who are capable of fighting in this new environment.

Although the current AVF is appropriate for fighting the Cold War again, the changing conduct of warfare and the pursuit of national objectives are more nebulous and indirect than ever before, especially when global communication networks such as the Internet are tied to the daily operation and management of financial transactions, market regulations, energy consumption, industrial production, transportation, communication, and the food supply. This means both that the AVF is not configured to fight the next war and that events in the 2010s have shown that the United States is woefully behind in the new way great powers will seek to dominate the international system. As a result, according to Carter, et al., the recruitment of people is more than a personnel problem; it also is a skill problem: the U.S. military has to learn

new ways to fight potential adversaries in the Information Age. This becomes especially challenging when the AVF finds it difficult to compete in a job market where Google, Microsoft, SpaceX, Apple, and Amazon apparently attract the “best and brightest” people to contribute to the innovation and production of information technologies.

### ***AVF Costs: Desirability and Feasibility***

Other works debate the value of the volunteer military for the national defense of the United States. The arguments mainly revolve around partisan politics, the AVF’s combat effectiveness, and its financial costs. Even though during the Nixon administration the Gates Commission studied the viability and costs of an American military force composed of volunteers, others conducted their own analyses. Authors such as Harry Marmion, Richard Cooper, Olivia Lanaras, and Jennifer Mittelstadt wrote about the merits and drawbacks of the AVF, especially what it would mean for the American people and national defense. Their concern was not so much that the AVF would become one of the most powerful militaries in the world, but rather that the new volunteer military would be too weak and expensive to stand up to peer competitors such as the Soviet Union and China.

Although the creation of the AVF prompted little discussion of the potential human costs of fighting future conflicts with volunteers, scholars have examined whether the American people were willing to spend money for the AVF. The irony was that the expense of equipping and supplying the new U.S. military with the latest weapons and technologies was not the issue at the time; instead emphasis was on the amount of funding that would be required to restructure and reform the U.S. military into a volunteer force. Having become used to conscription as a way of meeting personnel needs, American civilian and military leaders now needed to find a



way to incentivize volunteers to serve in the U.S. military, especially after its disastrous defeat in Vietnam. The funds would be used to transform the military into a better and more professionalized fighting force. First, attention focused on removing drafted service members who had disciplinary or medical problems. Next, efforts were made to attract better qualified people into the ranks of the AVF through a series of new programs meant to screen, recruit, and train future service members.

Harry Marmion wrote *The Case Against a Volunteer Army* during the AVF debate as the Vietnam conflict was winding to a close. His arguments revolved around the likely failure of the AVF, because it would not attract enough volunteers to serve. Marmion's contentions were based on the decline of the U.S. military's popularity during the Vietnam conflict as well as on the military's poor treatment of service members. In addition, he pointed out that people who joined the AVF would be motivated to serve primarily because of financial opportunity and career enhancement instead of civic duty. However, Marmion's book fails to present any new material other than references to the Gates Report and to President Nixon's 1968 speech about the draft. The volume does not provide a detailed look into the costs of the AVF and instead restates possible problems of establishing the force. Far from being a serious scholarly work, *The Case Against a Volunteer Army* is a quick read for general readers who are interested in the debate about the AVF during the 1970's. Since the publication of Marmion's book, little support has appeared for his arguments about the costs and feasibility of the AVF.

Meanwhile, Richard Cooper's *The All-Volunteer Force – The Emerging National Debate* takes a more balanced view. He revisits Marmion's misgivings about a new volunteer military, but adds that the military would attract mostly unqualified people. Despite Cooper's view that new personnel, training, and education programs were key to building and improving the U.S.

military, he also thought that people who volunteered would use the military's opportunities as a means to seek future employment in the civilian sector, especially in high-paying technical jobs in heavy industry, transportation, and aviation. In addition, Cooper argued that the prospects of recruiting and training a better qualified and prepared military would be more difficult, since the draft system forced men from across American society to serve together. Instead of the draft system being a burden, Cooper saw it as part of the democratic system at work that pushed draftees to set aside their political, social, and economic differences in order to serve in the common defense of the nation.

For Cooper, the motivations of those who wanted to volunteer to serve in the U.S. military in a post-Vietnam environment were key. He understood that the AVF was necessary to respond to the arguments of anti-war critics. Yet Cooper also believed that the AVF removed the American people's civic responsibility to protect their country. In other words, without the conscription system, the United States would not have the qualified personnel necessary to defend itself from attack, particularly considering the then-popular belief that a final confrontation with the Soviet Union loomed. In such a conflict, the AVF would quickly be defeated, since those who served in the new U.S. military's ranks simply were not competitive to work in the commercial sector of the American economy. However, among the problems with Cooper's work is that he fails to provide any demographic, financial, or educational data as evidence about recruits who enter the military or even how they perform in the civilian sector after their service. Without such evidence, it is difficult to demonstrate that military service had become a burden that had been passed off to the less qualified segments of the population.

Finally, Olivia Lanaras and Jennifer Mittelstadt joined the debate with their views about the costs of the AVF. Lanaras's article, "The Negative Effects of an All-Volunteer Force on

Individualistic Societies,” retraces the evolution of the AVF and argues that there is a social divide between the military and civilian populations. Lanaras sees the divide based on racial, educational, and economic factors that widen with the values the military promotes. She contends that the ranks of the AVF are composed of racial and ethnic minorities often representing the underprivileged groups in American society. This attraction of minorities into military service is based on her argument that these service members are not as competitive for high-paying jobs in the American economy.

Although Lanaras touches on possible social and economic aspects of attraction to the AVF and the divide it may have created with the civilian population, she also looks at the AVF’s training and indoctrination programs in which the military casts itself as being morally superior to the rest of the United States. This is based not just on the training and educational programs that create a highly trained and professional fighting force, but also on a “state of mind” that transforms volunteers into a military elite that is socially and culturally removed from the civilian population. This situation is exacerbated when many in the American public treat the military differently with discounts, programs, and events that are dedicated to honoring service members. Many in the military also see themselves as being “better” than their civilian counterparts, adding to the separation. Some with military connections tend to distance themselves from most other Americans by sticking to their own communities of active, reserve, or retired service members. Lanaras points out, but does not provide supporting evidence that this could create a potential voting bloc in local, state, and federal elections in which candidates could promise better treatment of and support for the military and its veterans.

For Lanaras, the years following the establishment of the AVF created an environment that nurtured the political, social, and economic divisions between the military and civilian

population that surfaced during Vietnam. Although she raised some excellent points and perspectives that should be considered, her article fails to provide quantitative or qualitative data to support her arguments. Instead, Lanaras examines the AVF through historical analysis with reference to news updates and government policies.

Jennifer Mittelstadt focuses less on individual members and more on the costs of the AVF. She argues that its expense is based on high-priced weapons and technologies as well as the pay and support required to compensate service members and care for their families. Using qualitative data based on interviews as well as historical analysis of the AVF's gradual development, Mittelstadt's research covers how the U.S. military ended up developing high quality medical, dental, and social programs along with government housing, schools, childcare, and discount shopping and services. In terms of the costs associated with training and equipping service members, the author also points to generous paychecks and life insurance policies along with free medical and dental care to ensure that service members are ready to deploy. In addition, the cost of the service member grows exponentially when more money is spent for spouses, children, and other dependents who make up service members' families. No longer would service members have to use their salaries to pay for their life choices; instead, they rely heavily on the military support network, funded at taxpayers' expense, to ensure that service members' families are cared for and supported while serving at home or abroad.

Mittelstadt's contention that the AVF is the beginning of the rise of a "welfare state" for the U.S. military reflects both the expenses and limitations of each service trying to uphold its code of "taking care of their own," especially when service members retire or are discharged from the military. She goes on to argue that not only is the AVF too expensive, but also that it has become politicized when elected officials are attacked for failing to "support the troops." In

her view providing and caring for service members and their families is simply not feasible, and priority should be placed on ensuring that each service member is healthy and capable of serving in combat.

The growing expense of supporting service members and their families begs the question of how to alleviate the high costs of supporting the AVF. Such possibilities include outsourcing and privatizing services as well as creating policies to encourage service members to take care of themselves through blended retirement programs and medical insurance buy-in with commercial agencies. Mittelstadt relies on qualitative data based on oral histories and interviews with service members and dependents. She does not consider the concern that certain segments of service members and their dependents have to rely on other government social welfare programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or live in substandard housing.

Finally, Karl W. Eikenberry, in “Reassessing the All-Volunteer Force” in *The Washington Quarterly*, argues that “political ownership” of the military is no longer in the hands of the American people or civilian officials, but instead has been left in the hands of the defense establishment. As a result, Eikenberry contends that the AVF needs to be reassessed and brought back under civilian accountability to curb its strategic freedom of action against state and nonstate actors in the international system; in his view the United States has gotten involved in too many conflicts throughout the world without strong civilian oversight. This is not only seen in U.S. operations in the Middle East, but in Eastern Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, Africa, and South America as well. In addition, Eikenberry is worried about the expense of the AVF: military spending in 2013 was 19.9% of the federal budget, with only two programs exceeding this proportion – Social Security at 21.7% and health care at 23.5%.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry, “Reassessing the All-Volunteer Force,” *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2013), 12.

In other words, Eikenberry believed the AVF had created what President Eisenhower feared to be a military-industrial complex in which the U.S. military has been given a blank check to do what is necessary to define and uphold U.S. national security. This not only means U.S. military involvement in places that the U.S. has no right to be, but also the creation of a profitable dynamic known as “the revolving door” between the AVF and the defense commercial industry. By building networks and relationships between senior military leaders and corporate executives, defense contracts are signed and paid by the U.S. government. Later, newly retired military personnel join these same defense contractors to work with the next generation of military leaders.

### ***Effects on U.S. Society***

Yet the debate over the AVF has mostly failed to consider the potential influence the U.S. military has on the U.S. more generally. Andrew Bacevich as well as John Garofano and Ronald Steel touch on this aspect of the AVF. Bacevich’s books -- *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country*; *Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War* -- noted that political and social changes (which he blames for declining civic and moral character in the U.S.) have led to long-term abuse of the military. His arguments focused on the American people being oblivious to the plight of U.S. service members having to fight in endless wars and how disconnected elected leaders have become from the years of loss and sacrifice by the AVF. To put things in perspective on the extent to which elected officials are disconnected from the military, Bacevich noted that relatively few government officials are former military service members and even fewer have served in combat.

Discussions of how the AVF affects American politics and society came about as a result of its employment during the Global War on Terror, especially how the AVF was used in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Following its initial success in quickly defeating and occupying these countries, the AVF soon became bogged down in two violent and frustrating counterinsurgency campaigns that proved to be the longest conflicts fought in American history. The result was thousands of casualties and billions of dollars spent, and the creation of a situation in which the United States arguably lost perspective on both its national interests and ultimate objectives. This has led scholars to debate whether the AVF created a dynamic in which there was a lack of accountability to the American people about how the U.S. military is used to fight conflicts. Authors such as Bacevich see this as the result of a breakdown in links between elected leaders and the people; others such as Mark Perry argue this has always been a problem in U.S. military history, which has grown progressively worse with the establishment of the AVF.

Unlike other debates about the creation and expense of the AVF, some studies use the Global War on Terror as context for reexamining the AVF's past and its use to meet U.S. national security priorities in the international system. For example, *Washington Rules* focuses on the changing political dynamics of Washington, D.C. Bacevich accuses the U.S. government of becoming increasingly militaristic. He argues that since the Second World War, the Washington "governing class" has ruthlessly pursued its objectives through decades of aggressive military actions overseas in order to shape the international system according to U.S. interests. This is more than just American exceptionalism, but a trend in which the United States almost always believes it needs to use "hard power" to get what it wants immediately. No longer is "soft power" used first to influence countries and international organizations; instead

the U.S. threatens the use of military action at times and places of its own choosing. Bacevich argues that this approach has become problematic as the United States has become involved in conflicts in various parts of the world with questionable political, economic, or military value. As Bacevich observed, “Confidence in American arms has made it unnecessary to attend to what others might think or to consider how their aspirations might differ from our own.”<sup>2</sup>

In *Breach of Trust*, the follow up to *Washington Rules*, Bacevich compares the Second World War with the Global War on Terror to show how deep the divide is between the American people and the military. Although World War II brought a unified front and understanding in the United States about why the war had to be fought and personal sacrifices had to be made, the Global War on Terror was fought on an entirely different basis. Despite the death and destruction wrought during the 9/11 attacks, American elected leadership failed to appreciate that just like the Second World War, blood and treasure would have to be carefully managed and used against Al Qaeda and its terrorist network. Instead, the United States employed military power in two major regional wars in Afghanistan and Iraq of questionable strategic value, with little consequence from the American public. The AVF is now obligated to provide military personnel and support to prevent both countries from collapsing into chaos. In Afghanistan, U.S. service members are still put in harm’s way helping Afghan military forces combat the Taliban, while in Iraq the U.S. maintains a sizeable contingent of the AVF to help the Iraqi military keep the peace, conduct military operations in Syria and Yemen, and keep Iran in check. Bacevich argued, “Americans [sic] refused to permit war to exact demands. Instead, they remained intent

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 17.



on pursuing their chosen conceptions of life, liberty, and happiness, unhindered and unencumbered.”<sup>3</sup>

As the U.S. military continues to fight and die for questionable political and military objectives in Afghanistan and Iraq, will these conflicts be part of a business as usual dynamic? This is especially unnerving for Bacevich, since these conflicts have raged for nearly twenty years. Despite the end of Al Qaeda and the destruction of the proto-state, ISIL, he continues to worry that the American people will rarely devote more than passing attention to what the AVF does in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> Bacevich’s conclusion is more than a cynical observation. For him it reflects the American people’s history of indifference to how wars are fought, ranging from the various Indian Wars to 21<sup>st</sup> century military operations in the Middle East. Although presidents and other political leaders have proclaimed combat operations completed in Afghanistan and Iraq, combat missions are still conducted and reported in the U.S. media, especially when American service members are killed or wounded. The deaths of service members in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq simply highlight the lack of transparency and accountability in how and why the U.S. military is used without the American people being involved.

John Garofano and Ronald Steel, in their article, “The Gulf’s Legacy,” view the Persian Gulf conflict as a milestone for the United States, much as the Spanish-American War was a turning point with the U.S. finally being recognized as a major world power and its use of military force overseas. They saw how the AVF’s easy success in the conflict set conditions for how the U.S. military would be used later during the Global War on Terror, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. The use of highly trained volunteers, combined with the most advanced weapons and technology available at the end of the 20th century, made U.S. political and

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *Breach of Trust*, 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

military leaders confident about overthrowing the Taliban in Afghanistan for harboring Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda forces, and later about destroying the Saddam regime over the possibility that the dictator might possess WMDs. Garfano and Steel contend that the Persian Gulf War trapped the United States into a corner in the Middle East in which the only option is unconditional victory. The authors argued that friends and enemies alike would perceive pulling the AVF out of the region as an international humiliation for the United States.

Yet Garfano and Steel fail to present any data about public support during the conflict or examine the financial or human costs of combat operations. Instead they discuss the political and military reasons for maintaining a long-term presence in the Middle East and the need to use military force in the Global War on Terror. The authors see the AVF in the Global War on Terror through two perspectives – first, safeguarding the U.S. against another 9/11 attack, and second, promoting American values of democracy, freedom, and human rights throughout the globe. Garfano and Steel’s arguments fall short because they fail to back up their research with systematic data and they ignore many Americans turning a blind eye to abuses of American military power. Also neglected is the U.S. military being put in morally compromising situations that are contrary to American beliefs of human rights and decency as seen with the treatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib Prison, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In *The Pentagon Wars: The Military’s Undeclared War against America’s Presidents*, Mark Perry presents a different argument: the AVF essentially has become Frankenstein’s Monster in which the U.S. military has taken on a more assertive role in U.S. national security and foreign policy. Some may contend that this has been the case throughout American history, with President Abraham Lincoln relieving Major General George McClellan during the American Civil War to President Harry S Truman firing General Douglas McArthur during the

Korean War. Yet according to Perry the problem is that recent U.S. military leaders in the AVF are trying to drive policy overseas. He argues that the AVF created an environment that deepened the divide between the civilian and military leadership, especially in foreign policy and strategic decisions.

Perry goes on to maintain that elected officials attempted to correct this during the 1980's by passing the Goldwater-Nichols Act in an effort to legislate "visionary" military leadership and enforce a cooperative partnership, but to no avail. The Persian Gulf War was an indication of the bad blood that had developed when the AVF's military commanders and civilian leaders debated the scope and range of how the war to liberate Kuwait would be fought. Afterwards, despite the smashing success of the U.S. military in the destruction of Saddam's military forces in Kuwait, the conflicts that followed in Africa and the Balkans only underlined the growing friction between the AVF's military leaders and civilian authorities. This dynamic is further shown during the Global War on Terror when Admiral William Fallon, Combatant Commander for U.S. Central Command, resigned based on the controversy in an *Esquire* magazine article that depicted him as openly criticizing President George W. Bush's administration. Later, during President Barack Obama's administration, General Stanley McChrystal, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, was relieved following a *Rolling Stone* article in which the Commander and his staff mocked civilian government officials including Vice President Joe Biden, National Security Advisor James L. Jones, and Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry. Despite these top military leaders being quickly removed from command, for Perry these actions are symptoms of the divide between American civilian officials and those who command the AVF.

## ***Conclusion***

Although the AVF has generated scholarly debate since its creation in 1973, no one has looked at whether and how the AVF may be associated with presidents' willingness to involve U.S. troops in combat. More importantly, no research has been conducted to see if public support for presidents remains high when the AVF is used in a conflict despite rising casualties and financial costs. Although some authors touch on the political and social dynamics of the AVF in how civilian and military leaders make decisions and influence policy, none focuses on the use of military force and its consequences for presidents as commanders-in-chief. Scholarship on the AVF describe its problems in detail based on interviews, government documents, and academic discussions, but authors mostly fail to provide evidence of whether the AVF is able to fight long open-ended, unpopular conflicts with little fear of electoral consequences or shifts in policy as presidents respond to citizen concerns.

## Chapter 3

### Conceptual Grounding and Research Design

I expect that U.S. presidents received higher and more stable public support when using the U.S. military in conflicts after the adoption of the AVF in 1973 than they did between 1949 and 1972, even when financial costs and casualties increased. The AVF ended the conscription system to meet the personnel needs of the U.S. military when it was fighting conflicts. The transformation of the conscript military into the AVF meant volunteers instead of draftees would now serve and fight the nation's conflicts; I expect this to lessen public opposition to U.S. participation in a conflict. In conducting this study, my research explored the presidents, their political party affiliations, casualties, financial costs, and public approval during multiple conflicts (the Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Somalia Civil, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghan, and Iraq wars).

The primary hypothesis is that presidents would have higher and more stable approval levels when using the U.S. military in conflicts after the adoption of the AVF in 1973 than they did between 1949 and 1972. The creation of the AVF made citizen participation in conflicts strictly voluntary without the inconvenience or danger of individuals being potentially drafted to fight and die in combat. If this expectation is accurate, public approval levels would not track casualties or financial costs as closely after the adoption of the AVF as they had before.

#### ***Research Design***

The thesis employed an interrupted time series design to explore the relationship between presidential use of military force and presidential approval levels before and after adoption of the

AVF (from 1949 through 2016). The design examined the AVF as the key interruption of interest by looking to see if the relationship between military involvement and public approval changed after its adoption as well as whether there were changes in the relationship as U.S. casualties and expenditures increase.

The focal conflicts are military operations in which the U.S. government authorized the deployment of American combat forces into a country in order to use lethal force against either state or non-state actors to fulfill political and military objectives. I examined two primary independent variables and one dependent variable, each of which was measured annually. The independent variables are the total number of American casualties (U.S. service members either killed or wounded during hostile or non-hostile actions in a conflict), while the other is the total expense for fighting the conflict, measured in constant 2018 dollars. The dependent variable is public support of the president for keeping U.S. military forces involved in the conflict. This variable is tapped based on the percentage of the American public who answered positively to Gallup Poll questions regarding the use of U.S. military force in a conflict. Although I expect that the number of casualties and financial expenses incurred in a conflict to affect the public's support of the president as Commander-in-Chief in the conflict, the AVF loosened the ties between the public and the military, making casualties and financial costs less salient because of their weakening relationship with public approval of military involvement. I look at these relationships over time, noting whether and how presidential approval changed during the course of a conflict.

By doing a comparative analysis of how views of military conflict changes over time, I expect the relationships to reflect that public support for a president to be lower before the introduction of the AVF. Moreover, the decline in public support of the president during a

conflict will be more gradual before eventually stabilizing after the AVF compared to when conscription was in place.

In addition to the primary hypothesis are several related hypotheses. After the adoption of the AVF in 1973, the relationship between the president's use of military force and public support for U.S. involvement in a conflict will vary with financial expenditures: after 1973, the relationship will be more negative as financial expenditures increase beyond two years of the advent of U.S. involvement because of the American people's impatience in supporting the U.S. military to fight and win conflicts. More generally, the expense of deploying and supporting the U.S. military in conflicts might create public perceptions of military spending that deploying the military in combat had negative effects on the U.S. economy. With the U.S. conscription force arguably being cheaper than the AVF, it may be that the public's support for a president's decision to use the military in a conflict is influenced more by financial costs than by personnel losses. The hypotheses are:

1. From 1949 through 2016, as financial costs of military involvement increase, presidential support decreases.
2. From 1949 through 2016, as the number of casualties increase, presidential support decreases.
3. Starting in 1973, as financial costs increase, presidential support decreases, but as casualties increase, presidential support remains stable.

### ***Data Sources and Collection***

Information on U.S. military conflicts was obtained from the Congressional Research Service's specialists in defense policy and budgets. For each conflict, data on public opinion in

support of the conflict were collected from the Gallup Poll. Department of Defense databases and other records tracked casualties and spending during military conflicts.

Using the Gallup Poll website's archives and articles, the public opinion data analyzed here included responses to questions such as "was it a mistake to send troops?" or "do you favor or oppose the U.S. war?" While the questions used in the Gallup Polls varied, they evidently tapped whether or not respondents supported the president's military actions and decisions when the United States was involved in a conflict. In addition, for each survey, I recorded the percentage of people who approved or disapproved of U.S. involvement in the conflict.<sup>1</sup> Finally, I collected data on casualties and spending on an annual basis; most of the information was in this format, making it relatively easy to link conflicts, casualties, and expenditures.

The U.S. Department of Defense has an extensive casualty database that records and tracks both hostile and nonhostile casualties, which is further broken down into killed or wounded in action by year. Meanwhile, expenditure data come from a variety of sources including the Congressional Research Service, the Pentagon Library, and the Department of Defense Comptroller's Office. Although most of the data were categorized by conflict, exceptions are for information on casualties and expenditures, which is tracked by military operation. The Department of Defense tracks lives lost and monies spent in the Afghan War as "Operation Enduring Freedom," and the Iraq War was monitored as "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Both casualties and monies spent use military operations to define a military campaign in a theater of operations. For each year during the duration of the conflict, Department of Defense information was collected on total monies spent on military operations, which covers everything

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the Gallup Poll questions focused specifically on the approval rating of the President of the United States in regards to the management and progress of a military conflict, not on the president's overall approval rating ("do you approve or disapprove of the job President X is doing?").



from logistics and support of military units to the execution of various tactical operations against enemy forces. Here, money spent was converted into constant dollars, with 2018 as the base year.

Data on casualties and expenditures from the Congressional Research Service and the Department of Defense were collected for each of the following major conflicts: Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. However, data collection for these conflicts had limitations based on the source material available from both the Congressional Research Service and the Department of Defense despite exhaustive searches by their staffs.

For the Korean War, data collected for casualties and monies spent were not available by year, but as totals during the duration of the conflict. For this conflict, I cross-referenced Congressional Research Services and Department of Defense data to verify that approximately \$380.6 billion (in 2018 dollars) was spent and that the U.S. military suffered a total of 139,858 casualties from both hostile and non-hostile action. A closer look at the Department of Defense's Semiannual Report of the Secretary of Defense between 1950 and 1953 revealed that monies spent during the Korean War were rolled into semiannual expenditures in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and other Department of Defense offices. In other words, the money spent on the Korean emergency evidently was viewed at the time as another theater of operations for an ongoing struggle with the Soviet Union and its communist allies for global supremacy. This is seen in the introductions to these semiannual reports. For example, the Secretary of Defense began with a global strategic review in June 30, 1952 outlining the successes as well as the challenges in rebuilding U.S. military forces with only a passing reference to the Korean War. Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall argued that spending between January 1 to June 30,

1952 was justified, stating: “In June 1950, with the communist attack against the Republic of Korea, the American people decided to rebuild their military strength...As a result of the work of the past [two] years we can face the future with increased confidence.”<sup>2</sup>

A similar problem surfaced in accounting for spending in the Vietnam War. Although annual casualty data were located, financial spending was as difficult to track as during the Korean War. The accuracy of expenditure data is questionable, despite being tracked as assistance as part of the geographic area, Southeast Asia. *The Fiscal Year 1969-73 Defense Program and The 1969 Defense Budget* reported that spending between 1961 and 1967 grew to \$2.8 billion. Secretary Robert McNamara pointed out in his conclusions: “If not for the Vietnam conflict our [sic] balance in FY 1967 would have been only \$0.8 billion...due in large part to the increase in receipts from foreign military sales.”<sup>3</sup>

The reported financial data conflicted with the fact that Vietnam did not become an official American intervention to fight a conventional conflict until March 1965 when American combat troops were introduced to protect U.S. airfields and installations that provided critical close air support for South Vietnam’s military forces. According to Secretary McNamara’s assessment of the spending over the previous last seven years, “American policy toward Southeast Asia...must blend concern and restraint as we help the East Asian nations to build among themselves the true security that flows from economic and social progress. We must lend

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<sup>2</sup> Secretary of Defense, *Department of Defense Semiannual Report of the Secretary of Defense and the Semiannual Reports of the Secretary of the Army, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of the Air Force, January 1 to June 30, 1952*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. McNamara, *The Fiscal Year 1969-73 Defense Program and The 1969 Defense Budget*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 37.

support and assistance, where requested, yet remain constantly aware that these countries are both equipped and entitled to lead themselves, and it is in our interest that they do so.”<sup>4</sup>

### ***Summary***

Based on quantitative data, the study examined public opinion, casualties, and expenditures in eight major conflicts from January 20, 1949, the beginning of President Truman’s full term in office, through January 20, 2017, with the conclusion of President Obama’s administration. Included are appendices that elaborate on ending conscription and on the factors that influenced presidential use of the military including party control of the presidency and of Congress, specific events during each conflict, and U.S. economic conditions (tapped by the annual growth rate of Gross Domestic Product).

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 16.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

In conflicts involving the U.S. military between 1949 and 2017, no notable differences emerged in the relationships among presidential approval, casualties, and financial costs before and after the adoption of AVF. Regardless of the scale, duration, or presidential party during each conflict, public approval and disapproval levels appear tied to financial costs and casualties. Based on my analysis, the results did not support my primary hypothesis that presidents enjoyed higher and more stable approval levels when the U.S. military fought conflicts using the AVF after 1973 than they did with the conscripted military between 1949 and 1972. A closer examination of the evidence for each conflict provides some perspective about why having the AVF made little evident difference in public support for presidents compared to the conscription system.

#### ***Korean War***

After President Truman was elected to his first full term in office in 1949, his administration found itself dealing with both the political and economic fallout in a post-World War international system and the rise of communism in Europe and Asia. Although the Truman administration accepted the loss of Eastern Europe and the Balkans to the Soviet Union, the victory of the Communists under Mao Zedong in China came as a shock. President Truman's administration was determined to prevent further communist victories in the Asia-Pacific region by taking a more aggressive stance with U.S. military forces.

The sudden outbreak of the Korean War prompted an American military intervention when the communist government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea launched an invasion to conquer the Republic of Korea and unify the Korean Peninsula. With the U.S. having only a small active duty force in the Asia-Pacific region, the conscription system was activated, and a crash course was initiated to train, equip, and deploy the U.S. military from 1950 to 1953, at costs of 139,858 casualties and \$380.6 billion.

<b>War</b>	<b>Korean War</b>			
	<b>1950</b>	<b>1951</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>1953</b>
<b>President</b>	Truman			Eisenhower
<b>Political Party</b>	Democratic			Republican
<b>Casualties</b>	139,858			
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$380.6 Billion			
<b>Public Approval</b>	78%	47%	37%	50%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	15%	42%	50%	36%

**Table 4.1 Figures for the Korean War**

During the first year of the conflict, President Truman enjoyed a 78% approval rating from the American public, apparently based on his decision to protect South Korea from the communists. What kept the approval rating so high in 1950 despite the North Koreans trapping the last of the American forces in the Pusan Perimeter at the southeast corner of Korea was General MacArthur’s amphibious landing at Inchon. The result was the capture of the Korean capital of Seoul and the total destruction of the North Korean military. By the end of 1950, the

U.S. mission on the Korean Peninsula changed from defending South Korea to invading North Korea and reuniting the two states. From 1951 to 1952, however, American popular support dropped to nearly half as the Chinese Communists intervened. The appearance of Chinese military forces in the Korean Peninsula drove the Americans back into South Korea and resulted in over two years of heavy casualties and large amounts of money spent to maintain the war effort. The reversal in Korea, the relief of General MacArthur and Truman's decision to change the U.S. mission back into a defensive action were followed by a rise in disapproval; the Gallup poll reported 42% disapproval in 1951 and 50% disapproval in 1952. To make matters worse, the American economy was also doing poorly due to inflation produced by over two years of fighting a large conventional war in Korea, with the U.S. Gross Domestic Product declining from 8.7% to 4.7% before the country went into a recession in 1953 with GNP of -0.6%.<sup>1</sup>

That the draft system was needed to maintain U.S. military forces on the Korean Peninsula and the Truman administration's decision not to expand the war to the Chinese mainland helped retired General Dwight D. Eisenhower, victorious Supreme Allied Commander of Europe during the Second World War, become president. Once in office, the Eisenhower administration began negotiations to end the Korean conflict that resulted in an armistice that ended the fighting by July 1953. During this period, the public rallied in support of the Korean War under President Eisenhower. This probably reflected American battlefield victories against the Chinese in 1953 and the fact that the end of the war was in sight.

When the Korean conflict ended, the U.S. military forces that had been built and maintained through the conscription system for three years mostly were redeployed back to the U.S. and demobilized. Although President Eisenhower would go on to enjoy the popular support

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<sup>1</sup> Kimberly Amadeo, "US GDP by Year Compared to Recessions and Events," *The Balance*, February 28, 2019, <https://www.thebalance.com/us-gdp-by-year-3305543> (accessed February 28, 2019)

of the American people and serve a second term in the presidency, the Korean conflict served as a warning. Not only had the conduct of war changed with the U.S. as a superpower, but popular support for the president as commander-in-chief could quickly decline when forces were mobilized and deployed into battle. Eisenhower appreciated this lesson not just from watching President Truman's dramatic fall in popular support but also in seeking to becoming embroiled in large ground wars. As a result, Eisenhower relied more on special operation teams and covert operatives in various parts of the world and also turned to nuclear weapons as a deterrent against U.S. enemies.

### ***Vietnam War***

Presidents Eisenhower's and John F. Kennedy's lower key approach in deterring and fighting U.S. enemies ended under President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ). LBJ made the fateful decision in March 1965 to introduce conventional forces into South Vietnam to prevent communist insurgents from taking over the country. Johnson's decision was based on his desire to strengthen the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam where thousands of American service members already served as advisors and support personnel for the South Vietnamese military that had been fighting against the communist insurgency since 1955. In looking at the Gallup Poll archives between 1955 and 1964, I did not find any questionnaires or data that suggested how Americans felt about U.S. military involvement in South Vietnam. Casualty figures and financial expenses during this period were also not available, which reinforces the perception that many of the military activities that took place in Vietnam during the time were covert and not publicized in order to prevent the conflict from becoming an issue with the American people.

<b>War</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>								
<b>Year</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1966</b>	<b>1967</b>	<b>1968</b>	<b>1969</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1973</b>
<b>President</b>	Johnson				Nixon				
<b>Political Party</b>	Democratic				Republican				
<b>Casualties</b>	1,863	6,143	11,153	16,592	11,616	6,081	2,357	641	168
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$823.9 Billion								
<b>Public Approval</b>	61%	59%	52%	42%	39%	33%	31%	52%	29%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	24%	25%	32%	46%	52%	57%	59%	40%	60%

**Table 4.2 Figures for the Vietnam War**

With the introduction of conventional combat troops into South Vietnam, President Johnson changed the conduct of the war and brought it to the attention of the American public. Unlike Korea, the Vietnam conflict did not enjoy a high degree of support when President Johnson authorized intervention with conventional forces in 1965. Starting with an initial public approval rating of 61%, approval of the Administration's actions slowly declined until 1968 when support plummeted 10% following the Tet Offensive with over 16,000 American casualties. When American forces finally crushed the communist offensive, General Westmoreland and other U.S. military commanders asked for more troops despite having nearly half a million troops in South Vietnam. The Johnson administration's credibility was compromised after four years of preaching success in Vietnam. In the end President Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection.

Following the election of Richard Nixon, approval of the war under the newly elected president remained low, likely in part because the Selective Service System began to conduct



lotteries for the draft in December 1969 in order to meet the personnel needs of the U.S. military. Nixon's approval ratings dropped from 39% in 1969 to 33% in 1970 and hit an all-time low of 31% by 1971. The anti-war protests that took place between 1965 and 1968 in a small number of towns, cities, and college campuses exploded into nationwide protests in 1969 following the announcement of the draft lotteries. These protests quickly became violent in 1970 when the Kent State University shootings occurred on May 4, 1970 when the Ohio National Guard opened fire on a group of students who organized to publicly protest the Vietnam War. By 1971, the anti-war movement reached critical levels when half a million people marched in Washington, D.C. and conducted sit-ins outside government offices. In the May Day Protests 25,000 people staged a series of civil disturbances with the intent to shut down the U.S. government.<sup>2</sup>

With the country beginning to tear itself apart with anti-war protests, Nixon's approval ratings jumped in 1972 to 52% when his administration began to accelerate "Vietnamization." In an early version of the Iraq War's "clear, hold, and build" strategy, the U.S. military turned over responsibility for defending South Vietnam against the communists to the Vietnamese in the more stable and safer areas of the country. Congressional pressure and more anti-war protests, however, were followed by a drop in approval to 29% in 1973. This further complicated a gradual transition between the United States and South Vietnam, as U.S. forces turned over responsibility for operations to untested South Vietnamese units in more hostile parts of the country.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> L.A. Kauffman, *Direct Action: Protests and the Reinvention of American Radicalism*, (Brooklyn: Verso, 2017), 2.

<sup>3</sup> The most dangerous areas included the regions along the Demilitarized Zone and South Vietnam's western border with Cambodia and Laos, which continued to serve as assembly areas and logistical nodes for battle-hardened communist forces.

Although evaluating the annual financial costs of the Vietnam War was not possible, between 1969 and 1973 U.S. casualties dropped significantly despite increased combat operations culminating with the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in 1970. Even so, support for President Nixon continued to fall until he announced the end of the draft in 1972 and suddenly terminated it in 1973. As the conflict dragged on for two more years, the Gallup Poll did not have any records of public opinion polls on approval of President Nixon's actions in Vietnam. In addition, the nationwide protests that shook the nation from 1969 to 1973 ended when it became apparent that the U.S. would no longer rely on a conscription system to continue the fighting in Vietnam. Even though Presidents Nixon and Ford, with the help of National Security Assistant Henry Kissinger, presided over the end of U.S. involvement in Vietnam by 1975, the conflict can be seen as the catalyst that transformed the way in which the United States would fight future conflicts.

### ***Persian Gulf War***

The transformation of the U.S. military into the AVF was more than a change in how the U.S. would recruit, train, equip, and care for its operational units. It also was a period in which civilian and military leaders gradually tested it in a series of conflicts in the 1990's. The Persian Gulf War was the AVF's first conflict. Civilian and military leaders were nervous since Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein possessed one of the most powerful militaries in the world; it was experienced from fighting the Iranians from 1980 to 1988 during the Iran-Iraq War and it conquered Kuwait in a matter of hours. The last thing American officials and the public wanted was "another Vietnam" in which U.S. troops would get bogged down in a destructive war of attrition against the Iraqis. Unlike Vietnam, the American people supported President George

H.W. Bush in his decision to stop Iraqi aggression, liberate Kuwait, and protect the world's largest oil reserves.

Several factors helped produce Bush's high degree of public support. To begin with, the President worked closely with both domestic and international leaders to condemn the invasion of Kuwait and sought to build support for the authorization to use the AVF to protect Saudi Arabia from being invaded next. As the AVF was mobilized for a potentially long and costly conflict, Bush did not authorize the Selective Service Act to activate the conscription system. Instead, volunteers from the active duty and the reserves were used for strictly defensive purposes in the Gulf region. While I could not find any evidence to suggest that not using the draft was a major influence on the initial strong support of the American people, President Bush's actions during the build up to the Persian Gulf War had an unprecedented 74% approval rating.

<b>War</b>	<b>Persian Gulf War</b>	
	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>
<b>Year</b>		
<b>President</b>	H.W. Bush	
<b>Political Party</b>	Republican	
<b>Casualties</b>	850	
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$113.9 Billion	
<b>Public Approval</b>	74%	89%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	N/A	N/A

**Table 4.3 Figures for the Persian Gulf War**

When Bush received authorization from both the U.S. Congress and the UN to use military force to remove Saddam's forces from Kuwait, public support remained high. Yet many braced for heavy fighting and losses when Operation Desert Storm began on January 17, 1991 when the United States with a coalition of 35 other nations launched airstrikes on key Iraqi political, economic, and military targets. When the U.S. and its coalition partners began the ground assault on February 24, 1991, American public support surged by 15 points to 89%. The AVF suffered only light casualties when it defeated Iraq's powerful military and freed Kuwait in about 100 hours. The complete victory of the United States over Iraq vindicated the creation and use of the AVF.

President H.W. Bush's decision to use military force transformed the dynamics in presidential use of military power. By looking at the Persian Gulf War through the perspective of the conflicts of Korea and Vietnam, the cost analysis reveals that Korea and Vietnam were considerably more expensive in terms of time, money, casualties, and public support. Under President Truman, the Korean War cost \$380.6 billion and 139,858 casualties with public approval dropping from 78% to 37% after two years of war. During Vietnam, President Johnson's approval of 61% in 1965 had dropped to 42% by 1968. Meanwhile, President Nixon's inheritance of the conflict started dismally, with an approval rating of 39% that reached an all-time low of 29% by 1973. After nearly eight years of fighting in Vietnam under two presidential administrations, the conflict cost \$823.9 billion and 56,614 casualties. By comparison, although the Persian Gulf War had a price tag of \$113.9 billion and 850 American casualties, the ground conflict ended in four days, and Bush's presidential approval increased to 89%.

Although the material and lives spent in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts were expensive, the political costs of using the American conscript force were linked to the ruin of

three presidencies. Presidents Truman and Johnson decided not to run for reelection, while President Nixon's reelection victory in 1972 was helped with promises to reduce American military presence in Vietnam, ending the draft, and pushing Congress to support the creation of the AVF. Although the Nixon administration ended with the Watergate scandal, his presidency provided a possible solution for future presidents and their decision to use military force with having to worry less about the potential impact it would have on their popular support. Bush's decision to use the AVF in the Persian Gulf War without resorting to the draft was supposedly seen as justified when he enjoyed high levels of public approval despite the potential for high casualties and a conflict lasting for years. Bush's unexpected loss to Bill Clinton in the 1992 elections was arguably connected to a weak economy rather than foreign policy or the use of military force against Iraq. An economy in recession and the loss of jobs and markets to overseas competitors combined with the Bush administration's decision to renege on its promise of "no new taxes" erased the earlier success that President Bush had enjoyed from 1988 to 1991.

### ***Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo***

President Clinton's decision to use the AVF was influenced primarily by the global environment of a post-Cold War world. The collapse of the Soviet Union created a situation in which long suppressed nationalist, economic, and ideological forces were unleashed in Europe and Africa. Client states with decades of protection from the Soviet Union found themselves without support, resulting in these countries being consumed by revolution and unrest. These local conflicts became major humanitarian crises with international repercussions that forced the United States to take the lead in using military force to stabilize the situation. However, the Clinton administration's focus was more on domestic issues and helping the American economy

recover from recession. During this time, the AVF played a prominent role in conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, providing security, humanitarian aid and state-building projects to help bring peace to those countries. Yet, unlike Bush in the Persian Gulf War, Clinton did not enjoy a high degree of support in those conflicts.

No data are available on whether or not Americans initially supported or disapproved of U.S. intervention in Somalia's civil war after President Bush authorized the landing of military forces in 1992 to separate the combatants, assist the UN in humanitarian operations, and help negotiate peace among the warring factions in order to assist them in establishing a new Somali government. This lack of data perhaps can be attributed to Bush not staying in office long enough for polling data to be collected and analyzed. What is clear, however, is that U.S. public approval ratings were low under Clinton when, as the humanitarian mission became more operational, the AVF began targeting Somali warlords who continued to resist efforts to bring peace to the country. When American forces engaged in heavy fighting with Somali forces in Mogadishu in October 1993 that resulted in the death of several service members, President Clinton decided to end U.S. involvement in Somalia. The intervention, which the President inherited, ended up hurting him, with 32% approving and 59% disapproving U.S. military involvement in Somalia. The low approval rating likely was the result of the Black Hawk Down incident and American casualties, bringing many to question the purpose of the U.S. intervention and highlighting the dangers of mission creep in a humanitarian mission.

<b>War</b>	<b>Somalia Civil War</b>	
	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>
<b>Year</b>	H.W. Bush	Clinton
<b>President</b>	Republican	Democratic
<b>Political Party</b>	110	
<b>Casualties</b>	\$1.5 Billion	
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	32%	
<b>Public Approval</b>	59%	
<b>Public Disapproval</b>		

**Table 4.4 Figures for the Somali Civil War**

While the American public pressured Clinton to end the AVF's mission in Somalia, he took a firmer stand when using the AVF in the conflicts over Bosnia and Kosovo during his second term in office. These conflicts were part of a series of violent clashes during the Yugoslav Wars in which various ethnic groups broke away from Yugoslavia to form their own independent states from 1991 to 2001. The United States initially chose to stay out of the Bosnia conflict when fighting broke out in early 1992; however, as the scale of violence and destruction increased, President Clinton tried to work out a diplomatic approach when the UN was unable to stop the conflict. It was not until the Srebrenica Massacre in July 1995 that the United States and its allies intervened in a NATO operation.

Although the AVF and NATO made short work of Serbian ground and air forces and forced an end to the Bosnian conflict with no American casualties, U.S. public support for President Clinton's decision to intervene with military force was relatively low, with 41% approval and 54% disapproval ratings. From 1995 to 1997, the AVF deployed its forces alongside NATO to separate the combatants as well as to conduct humanitarian and state-

building operations. As the occupation continued into 1996 and 1997, the AVF still did not suffer casualties, while spending increased in order to support efforts to help build governance and security in Bosnia. Meanwhile, American public approval grew slowly from 41% in 1995 to 42% in 1996 and then to 49% when the AVF and NATO finished their mission in Bosnia and began to withdraw combat forces from the country and shift focus to Kosovo.

<b>War</b>	<b>Bosnia Intervention</b>			<b>Kosovo War</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>President</b>	Clinton				
<b>Political Party</b>	Democratic				
<b>Casualties</b>	0			0	
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$572 Million	\$4 Billion	\$3.6 Billion	\$4.5 Billion	
<b>Public Approval</b>	41%	42%	49%	42%	46%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	54%	51%	43%	41%	43%

**Table 4.5 Figures for the Bosnia Intervention and Kosovo War**

Following the AVF's intervention in Bosnia, Clinton decided to intervene in Kosovo as well when the Serbians began to suppress the Kosovar minority, triggering a humanitarian crisis in which Kosovars fled to neighboring Albania and Macedonia. Just like the Bosnian conflict, the President did not enjoy majority support for the intervention, with an approval rating of 42% in 1998 that rose slightly to 46% in 1999 and the AVF suffering no casualties. From the additional questions that the Gallup polls asked, 50% of the respondents did not think the United States needed to be involved in Kosovo in order to protect its own interests, while 42% saw U.S.



involvement as important to American interests. However, 58% responded that they believed the U.S. had a moral obligation to keep the peace in Kosovo; 37% believed it did not.<sup>4</sup>

During President Clinton's time in office, U.S. involvement in relatively minor conflicts such as Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo did not enjoy the high popular support of the Persian Gulf War. It was clear, however, during Clinton's time in office that the American public was not receptive to U.S. military adventures and would not tolerate putting its military volunteers into harm's way when the President's reasons were unclear and the conflicts did not appear vital to U.S. interests. This was reflected in the overall low popular support that Clinton received: approval ratings of 32% in Somalia, 41% in Bosnia and 49% in Kosovo. Such results can be viewed as indicators that President Clinton's use of the AVF was being closely watched in terms of where and how long he deployed American military forces. Finally, the danger of casualties was a politically sensitive subject for Americans as was seen from the Black Hawk Down incident in Somalia during Clinton's first months in office. It was something that the President had to worry about in such unpopular interventions, especially when Republicans controlled both houses of Congress.

### ***Afghan and Iraq Wars***

In the 2000 presidential election, candidate George W. Bush's platform emphasized avoiding more military involvement and state-building operations. However, the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001 changed the policy of the Bush administration. The resulting Global War on Terror saw the unprecedented deployment of the AVF in various parts of the world. While Afghanistan became the centerpiece of this global

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<sup>4</sup> Lydia Saad, "Americans Hesitant, As Usual, About U.S. Military Action in Balkans," *Gallup News*, March 24, 1999, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/3994/americans-hesitant-usual-about-us-military-action-balkans.aspx> (accessed on July 30, 2019).

campaign, Iraq was supposed to be a part of Bush’s plan to deal with the “Axis of Evil,” composed of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, which were seen as states that sponsored terrorism and sought to develop WMDs. Yet, Afghanistan and Iraq ended up being where the United States would fight two of its longest wars. The Iraq conflict would rage until 2010, while major fighting in Afghanistan continued until 2015 despite several attempts to suppress its insurgency and oversee the successful establishment of a secure democratic government.

Both conflicts cost billions of dollars and thousands of casualties as the U.S. military attempted to fight two major regional wars at the same time. They would come to define the legacy of President George W. Bush and would continue to plague President Barack Obama’s two terms in office. While the Vietnam War harmed the Johnson and Nixon presidencies, the Afghan and Iraq wars wore down President Bush’s popular support. A look at the Afghan War during the Bush presidency reveals strong public support declining over the years as money and lives were spent. From 2001 to 2008, President Bush’s public approval fell while using the AVF in Afghanistan at the costs of 2,317 casualties and over \$88 billion spent trying to destroy Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

<b>War</b>	<b>Afghan War</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>President</b>	G.W. Bush			
<b>Political Party</b>	Republican			
<b>Casualties</b>	44	123	144	269
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$472.5 Million	\$19.4 Billion	\$12.3 Billion	\$10.2 Billion
<b>Public Approval</b>	89%	93%	88%	72%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	9%	6%	10%	25%

**Table 4.6 Figures for the Afghan War: Bush First Term**

<b>War</b>	<b>Afghan War</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>President</b>	G.W. Bush			
<b>Political Party</b>	Republican			
<b>Casualties</b>	368	501	868	953
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$11.2 Billion	\$14.3 Billion	\$20.4 Billion	\$31.8 Billion
<b>Public Approval</b>	72%	71%	70%	68%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	25%	25%	25%	28%

**Table 4.7 Figures for the Afghan War: Bush Second Term**

Despite high public approval, after 2002, President Bush experienced a gradual decline in support for the Afghan War. As the casualties and financial costs rose, public approval declined and disapproval of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan rose. Public responses to the Afghan conflict after 2003 could also be related to the Iraq War, since the U.S. invasion of Iraq took resources and attention away from Afghanistan and prevented the AVF from as effectively combating its growing insurgency. As American casualties rose and Iraq threatened to collapse into chaos and civil war, popular support for the U.S. presence in Afghanistan fell as well. This was especially the case from 2007 to 2008 when the surge in Iraq began to affect military operations in Afghanistan when the Taliban insurgency and Al-Qaeda activities began to rebound and attacks started to rise along with American casualties.

When President Obama took over direction of the Afghan War, the associations among casualties, financial costs, and approval continued. Public approval dropped from 61% in 2009 to 52% by 2015. Again the drop is related to the increased casualties and financial spending. It also may have reflected some of the President's decisions as Commander-in-Chief, including relieving General David McKiernan and then General Stanley McChrystal as Commanders of the

International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan as well as agreeing to a surge of U.S. troops from 2009 to 2010.

The increase of additional military units in early 2009 focused on launching a counteroffensive against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which had slowly made gains in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2008. With the United States focused on the Iraq War, elements from these organizations were able to recover and began regaining ground in the outlying areas of Afghanistan, especially in the border provinces with Pakistan. From 2009 to 2011, casualties escalated and financial costs rose with increased military operations and state-building efforts. During this time, public approval dropped slowly before hitting 49% in 2014; meanwhile disapproval levels steadily rose to 48% in 2014 with over 2/3 of Gallup respondents expressing disapproval of Obama’s handling of the Afghanistan conflict.

<b>War</b>	<b>Afghan War</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>President</b>	Obama						
<b>Political Party</b>	Democratic						
<b>Casualties</b>	3,421 Casualties	5,762 Casualties	5,638 Casualties	3,230 Casualties	1,500 Casualties	435 Casualties	2 Casualties
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$48.1 Billion	\$78.9 Billion	\$99.3 Billion	\$100 Billion	\$79.9 Billion	\$61.5 Billion	\$48.1 Billion
<b>Public Approval</b>	61%	58%	58%	57%	51%	49%	52%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	37%	38%	39%	40%	44%	48%	42%

**Table 4.8 Figures for the Afghan War: Barack Obama**

Meanwhile, the approval data for the Iraq War differed from those for the Afghan War. In 2003, public approval for the President involving the U.S. in the Iraq conflict was 75% when the AVF invaded Iraq. At the costs of 2,909 casualties and \$43 billion, the AVF was able to crush Saddam's military forces in about a month and pave the way for the Coalition Provisional Authority under Paul Bremer to begin dismantling the Saddam regime and replacing it with a representative democratic government. Public support dropped to 56% in 2004, as casualties tripled to 8,850, and it became apparent that the Saddam regime did not possess WMDs. At the same time, the Coalition Provisional Authority was unable to establish a strong democratic government in Iraq, soon resulting in a dangerous power vacuum.

From 2005 to 2007, U.S. casualties and the financial cost of the conflict continued to rise as sectarian violence and powerful insurgency groups threatened to ignite a civil war in Iraq. Declining public support for the war and voters electing the Democrats to control both houses of Congress prompted President Bush to take action. Bush appointed General David Petraeus as the senior commander in Iraq and authorized a surge of several thousand U.S. troops to stop the violence and defeat the insurgency. The gamble paid off when U.S. casualties declined from 2008 to 2010. Meanwhile, monies spent remained high because of the increase in military operations and state-building projects. Throughout the course of the conflict from 2004 to its conclusion in 2010 when the last American combat units withdrew from Iraq, public approval remained around 40%, while disapproval rose to more than half by 2005, with 57% of respondents disapproving of U.S. involvement in 2007 and 2008.

<b>War</b>	<b>Iraq War</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>President</b>	G. W. Bush					
<b>Political Party</b>	Republican					
<b>Casualties</b>	2,909 Casualties	8,850 Casualties	6,789 Casualties	7,235 Casualties	7,024 Casualties	2,365 Casualties
<b>Financial Cost (Constant 2018 Dollars)</b>	\$43 Billion	\$58 Billion	\$72.7 Billion	\$85 Billion	\$121.9 Billion	\$133 Billion
<b>Public Approval</b>	75%	56%	47%	47%	41%	41%
<b>Public Disapproval</b>	23%	42%	52%	50%	57%	57%

**Table 4.9 Figures for the Iraq War: George W. Bush**

Obama spent the first two years of his presidency overseeing the end of the Iraq War. Despite the Administration’s commitment to pulling combat troops from Iraq by 2010 and declining U.S. casualties and monies spent, American popular support for the conflict remained around 40%, with disapproval levels over 50%. While I found little to help account for these consistently low poll numbers, one must consider the effects of the 2008 financial crisis that resulted in trouble at home for respondents. The resulting “Great Recession” affected the entire global economy. In the United States, GDP dropped to -2.5%, and 9.9% of the U.S. population did not have jobs by 2009. Although 2009 and 2010 also featured deteriorating political and military conditions in Afghanistan, American economic troubles at home arguably made people less supportive of the U.S. remaining involved in Iraq.

War	Iraq War	
	2009	2010
Year		
President	Obama	
Political Party	Democratic	
Casualties	828 Casualties	366 Casualties
Financial Costs (Constant 2018 Dollars)	\$92 Billion	\$73.7 Billion
Public Approval	43%	44%
Public Disapproval	56%	54%

**Table 4.10 Figures for the Iraq War: Barack Obama**

***Comparisons: Conscript Force and AVF***

Based on comparing the use of the conscript force during the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts with the deployment of the AVF starting with the Persian Gulf War and ending with the Afghan War, some noticeable trends emerge. For the presidencies that relied on either conscription or volunteers to staff the U.S. military during conflicts, popular support started to decline immediately for almost every presidency once military action started; the exception was President H.W. Bush during the Persian Gulf War. After one year of combat, regardless of the sourced of military personnel, public support levels dropped, tracking the number of casualties. The higher number of casualties, the greater decline in a president's approval rating. For example, Truman's support began to drop between 1950 and 1952 to a final approval rating of 37%, with total casualties exceeding 100,000 before Eisenhower was elected. Meanwhile, Johnson's approval ratings dropped as casualties rose, with a 42% approval rating when the Tet Offensive in 1968 resulted in 16,899 casualties. Not only did neither president decide to run for reelection, but their successors were from the opposition party.

Following adoption of the AVF, presidents did not enjoy higher popular approval levels when the U.S. was involved in military conflicts. A closer examination of each of the AVF's conflicts reveals similarities to the conscript force used during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, with H.W. Bush and the Persian Gulf War as the outlier. Although President H.W. Bush enjoyed higher approval levels even with casualties, President George W. Bush followed a trajectory similar to that of Truman and Johnson. Starting with 89% approval in 2001 with the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom and 75% approval in 2003 with the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as casualties rose with the escalation of combat operations, approval levels dropped to 68% and 41%, respectively, by the end of his presidency in 2008.

Neither Clinton nor Obama had strong approval levels during the conflicts they were directing while in office. Clinton inherited the Somali Civil War and later deployed the AVF to Bosnia and Kosovo.<sup>5</sup> None of the three conflicts produced high public approval levels despite having few casualties and being relatively inexpensive compared to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Obama on the other hand inherited unpopular conflicts with heavy casualties. Popular approval for the President likely was lower in part because the fighting in these countries had been going on for years. Unlike President Nixon who struggled to end the Vietnam conflict, the Obama administration managed a gradual and relatively smooth withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq in 2011 and Afghanistan in 2016. Despite rising casualties and financial costs, the President's approval ratings were generally stable at the 40% and 50% levels during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom respectively, while disapproval levels averaged around 50% for Iraq and 40% for Afghanistan.

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<sup>5</sup> Clinton's approval levels for the Bosnia and Kosovo conflicts improved only marginally over time, even as these campaigns concluded with minimal casualties and financial cost.



### ***Summary and Conclusion***

In looking at presidential use of military power with either conscripted or volunteer service members, creation of the AVF evidently gave no significant advantages to presidents during conflicts. The purpose of the AVF's establishment was to end conscription to support the U.S. military, due largely to the unfairness of the draft system that helped fueled nationwide protests against the unpopular Vietnam War. However, creation of the AVF apparently did not allow presidents to commit combat power at times and locations of their choosing for however long they wanted without having to worry as much about American popular support. In every conflict examined, each Commander-in-Chief discovered that even though the conscription system removed Americans from the possibility of being drafted to fight in a conflict, it did not mean that the American public did not care where or why volunteers were sent to fight. Indeed, the conditions that each president confronted were based on the public opinion of the American people. The people were the ones who ultimately helped set the conditions for conflict termination. Presidential failure to heed high degrees of public disapproval frequently was followed by the election of presidents and legislators who pledged to end the conflict.

The results of testing the primary hypothesis and three related hypotheses were somewhat surprising. Starting with the related hypotheses, for the presidents who directed conflicts fought by either conscripts or volunteers, as financial costs rose it was hard to determine if this was negatively related to presidential support. However, as the number of casualties increased, such a negative relationship did exist. After the formation of the AVF in 1973, as financial costs increased the relationship with presidential support did not become more negative; but as casualties increased after 1973, the relationship between involvement in the conflict and presidential support became more negative.

Finally, based on the data on casualties, monies spent, and popular support, my primary hypothesis was not supported: presidents did not enjoy higher and more stable approval levels when using the U.S. military in conflicts after adoption of the AVF in 1973 than they did between 1949 and 1972. It is worth noting the relationships between casualties and presidential approval ratings were similarly negative for both the U.S. conscript military and the AVF when examining conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. During the latter years of these conflicts, presidential approval ratings remained low or continued to drop even with notable decreases in American casualties. This also is the case for conflicts in which the AVF participated, such as Bosnia and Kosovo that resulted in no casualties; public approval in these instances remained at less than 50%.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The formation of the AVF did little to change Carl von Clausewitz's trinity of war argument: in order for a country to successfully fight a war, it needed to align the civilian officials, the military, and the people. Implementing Clausewitz's trinity of war remains difficult in a representative democratic political system like the U.S., particularly one based on separation of powers and checks and balances where the American people still have a very powerful say on how the U.S. government conducts business both at home and abroad.

Although the United States is viewed as a superpower based partly on its military might, a cursory look at American political and military history reveals that the country holds its leaders accountable when it enters a conflict. As Robert Kagan noted in his study of aggressive U.S. foreign policy and wars, these types of conflicts "reflected the tensions and contradictions inherent in the American creed [of freedom and democracy]."<sup>1</sup> The American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, and the American Civil War were major conflicts in which the United States was shaped by the powerful influence of popular support on U.S. leaders and policies. The First and Second World Wars were the exceptions rather than the rule because they dealt with external threats from foreign powers that threatened the American homeland. Korea and Vietnam differed, however, because they were military actions that were fought in distant lands, and were unpopular because of their dubious importance to American security.

Even though President Lincoln used conscription during the American Civil War in desperation to get the personnel the U.S. military needed to destroy and occupy the Confederate South, no U.S. president seriously entertained using the draft during the 18th and 19th centuries

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation*, 415.

because conscription was considered too controversial and politically damaging.<sup>2</sup> Part of this hesitation in using the draft was to prevent having to pull farmers and workers away from American agricultural and industrial communities, which would have adverse political and economic effects.<sup>3</sup> Another part arose from the inequality of the conscription system itself. Alexis de Tocqueville understood this better than a long line of U.S. civilian and military leaders when he observed: “Since military service is compulsory, the burden is shared indiscriminately and equally by all citizens...The government can more or less do what it wants provided it addresses itself to everyone at the same time; it is the inequality of the burden and not the burden itself that ordinarily makes you [the American people] resist.”<sup>4</sup>

The Vietnam War signaled the end of the U.S. conscription system as a means to staff military forces both at home and abroad. As Beth Bailey pointed out, “The war created a political perfect storm. It divided the nation, but it also gave legitimacy to vastly different arguments justifying the move to an all-volunteer force.”<sup>5</sup> Even though American civilian and military leaders had debated doing away with the draft since the end of the Second World War, their reluctance to do so was based on fears that relying on volunteers would mean that the U.S. military would not have enough people willing to serve in the ranks in case of a Third World War against the Soviet Union and its communist allies. Believing that a third global conflict would be like the second except fought with nuclear weapons, the United States wanted to stay battle ready due to Soviet aggression throughout the post-World War world. However, Vietnam became an issue for U.S. officials, including presidents, because the use of the draft pulled young

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force*, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, 63.

<sup>4</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Ed. by Eduardo Nolla (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., 2010), 1165 – 1166.

<sup>5</sup> Beth Bailey, *America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 3.

U.S. males from the electorate to fight in an open-ended conflict that made people question whether the war in Southeast Asia was worth fighting. American civilian and military leaders tried to avoid casualties, just as in 21<sup>st</sup> century conflicts, by pursuing strategies that used superior firepower and technology to overwhelm Vietnamese insurgents and inflict massive casualties in a war of attrition that would compel the enemy to surrender; in this case, it was to no avail.<sup>6</sup> Despite the horrendous losses inflicted on the Vietnamese, it became obvious to many that as American casualties also increased, the fundamental flaws in the conscription system made some seriously question who in the U.S. was paying the “butcher’s bill” and making the most difficult sacrifices in an unpopular war.

Just as draft riots threatened the country’s unified purpose during the American Civil War, the protests incited by the draft during Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s nearly tore the United States apart. The unrest was based in part on civilian and military leaders’ mishandling of the Vietnam War and on critical flaws in a conscription system that offered too many loopholes, exemptions, and ways to avoid having to fight in Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup> When the Vietnam War dragged on and became too costly, popular opinion turned against involvement in South Vietnam and opposition to the conflict grew and increased in violence. In addition, anti-war sentiment began to influence Congress, which started to push for curbing American military involvement in Southeast Asia by cutting funds and imposing restrictions on what the president could do operationally in South Vietnam. Although President Nixon undercut the anti-war movement by ending the draft, it was already too late to make a difference. Too much had been lost in the Vietnam War, and many Americans had become too emotionally involved in the

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Nagl. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 154 – 155.

<sup>7</sup> Christian G. Appy, “Class Wars,” in *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How Not to Learn from the Past*, Ed. by Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young (New York: The New Press, 2007), 139.

conflict. At this point, the United States withdrew and accepted defeat as it watched South Vietnam quickly collapse when North Vietnam invaded in 1975.<sup>8</sup>

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, American leaders focused addressing the damaged relationships among the civilian government, the military, and the people. The United States did not merely lose a war, but the support of its people as well; many were in no mood for more military involvement, regardless of potential threats to national security. Reflection on the U.S. defeat in Vietnam and how to prevent future defeats on the battlefield led U.S. officials to conclude that critical shortfalls and injustices existed in the conscription system. More importantly, officials realized that the AVF needed to be a different type of military, one that embraced more progressive training and education methods while also using the best possible weapons and technology. The Gates Commission explored the positive and negative implications of a U.S. military staffed by volunteers, and it sought to address many of the concerns that some civilian and military leaders believed could fatally compromise the nation's ability to fight in future wars.<sup>9</sup> Among the main questions were whether Americans would join the U.S. military to voluntarily risk their lives in combat, and whether the public would remain concerned about and involved in future conflicts.

The answer to both questions was a resounding “yes.” Not only did the newly formed AVF attract quality volunteers to serve in a highly professionalized military, but the U.S. public made its voice heard by its civilian and military leaders in every major conflict. During the 1990s, civilian and military leaders discovered that the AVF was the most powerful force in the world; its training, weapons, equipment, and logistical support were second to none. In addition, the AVF was able to deploy to distant parts of the world and defeat the enemy with minimal loss

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Lee Lanning, *The Military 100*, 157.

<sup>9</sup> President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Force, *The Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*, 7.

of life, resulting in unprecedented respect from friends and enemies alike. Moreover, while Americans no longer had to worry about being drafted, they were still very concerned about when, where, and why military volunteers were used in combat operations.

Going back to my findings in chapter 4, I was surprised to discover that despite the creation of the AVF, the American public was just as sensitive to casualties. When one compares casualties before and after the creation of the AVF, public support remains tied to the level of casualties in a conflict. The effect of casualties on public support was definitely seen during the 1990's in Somalia when a small number of casualties from one day of fighting between U.S. forces and Somali militia resulted not only in low American popular support, but also pressure on the U.S. president to end the Somali mission and bring the troops home within a few months. A year later, although U.S. conflicts in Yugoslavia resulted in no casualties, again the American people were not happy to see volunteers put into harm's way, with popular support for these conflicts at less than 50%. The U.S. president minimized troop levels and financial expenses, and quickly pulled the troops out once they had completed the mission.

The 9/11 attacks on the U.S. and the Global War on Terror brought high levels of popular support for President Bush; volunteerism rose as Americans swelled the ranks of the AVF. While Afghanistan was invaded to destroy Al-Qaeda's base of operations and Iraq was attacked because some intelligence suggested that the country possessed WMDs, public opinion quickly turned against the President when the situation on the ground changed in these conflicts. In Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda was defeated and driven into the mountains, while in Iraq no WMDs were discovered. When President Bush changed the AVF's mission to state building and counterinsurgency operations in order to save both Afghanistan and Iraq from collapse, American public support dropped with rising costs of lives and money.

In the end, the combat operations of the AVF in both Afghanistan and Iraq came to a finish when the American people voted for a change in leadership in both the presidency and Congress. The U.S. public elected leaders who not only oversaw the withdrawal of the AVF from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also made it clear to future leaders that they would be held accountable if the AVF is unwisely used beyond the parameters of its original mission. In other words, while civilian and military leaders talked about the dangers of mission creep, public opinion and elections served as feedback mechanisms to keep the United States on course in its military missions overseas.

Looking at the creation of the AVF and comparing it with the conscript force, no notable changes appeared in associations between public support for presidential involvement in conflict and casualties and financial costs. As casualties and financial costs increased, popular support for U.S. presidents decreased, suggesting that unless changes were made, lack of public support could turn into action in the next presidential or congressional elections. This was seen in every major conflict from Korea to the Global War on Terror when voters elected leaders who would either change how the military was used to fight a conflict or completely withdraw from the conflict.

In almost every conflict regardless of using draftees or volunteers, presidential support was tied to the level of casualties. The only conflict that saw an increase in popular support for a U.S. president, regardless of lives lost or monies spent, was the Persian Gulf War. In this case, President H.W. Bush was able to describe to the American people the purpose for deploying the AVF, the large coalition of countries that would fight alongside the AVF, and the clearly defined objectives that would end the conflict. In this case, the defeat of Saddam's military and the liberation of Kuwait ended the Persian Gulf War and resulted in the quick return of U.S. forces.



President H.W. Bush's defeat in the 1992 presidential election was the result of the economic recession, not the costs of the Middle Eastern conflict.

President Clinton's leadership during three major conflicts presented another interesting outlier: his popular support was less than 50% even when there were only a handful of casualties in Somalia and no casualties in Bosnia or Kosovo. In addition, compared to the other major conflicts examined, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo were relatively cheap and short military operations. Based on my analysis of these conflicts, American public support was never high for these missions arguably because many in the U.S. public did not understand why military volunteers had to be placed in harm's way in regions of the world that had little to do with U.S. national security. These types of conflicts should have been worth noting during the beginning of President George W. Bush's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq because of his decision to change U.S. policy from using military force to protect the United States to undergoing years of counterinsurgency operations and state-building. As a result, President Bush's evident failure to learn from the past harmed his popular support and helped return the presidency to the Democrats.

Although the AVF did make significant changes in military performance and it became more responsive to elected officials and the American public, it did not make the presidency less accountable to the people. Not only did Americans support the AVF, but also they appear genuinely concerned when forces are used in conflicts. Even with the end of major combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. public still serves as a deterrent in the future use of military force against other countries. During the U.S. military's focus on the Global War on Terror, potential state competitors have now made the world a less safe place, with growing concerns in various parts of the world. According to Helene Cooper of *The New Times*, after

years of fighting terrorism, the shift of the AVF toward dealing with great power competitors has been difficult, and it will require the support the American people.<sup>10</sup>

In Europe, Russian power is resurgent, and Russia has used a combination of political, economic, cyber, information, intelligence, and military assets to reassert its control and influence over neighboring lands in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Arctic region. The rise of Vladimir Putin and his attempts to position Russia as one of the great powers in the international system has met with impressive progress, with, for example, land grabs from Georgia and Ukraine, and growing influence over Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Russia's support of the Iranians and the Syrians in the Middle East poses a special challenge to American efforts to maintain stability in the region and its access to cheap energy resources.

Meanwhile, in the Asia-Pacific, China has become a major political, economic, and military power in recent years. The rise of Xi Jinping and his government to rule the communist state for life makes him one of the most powerful Chinese leaders since Mao Zedong.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, China has been pursuing a geopolitical strategy to become a regional hegemon in the Asia-Pacific region and to extend its influence throughout the international system, especially in the developing world where Chinese companies are working in South America and Africa to secure markets and natural resources to feed its billion-plus residents. In addition, Chinese nationalism has become a potent force in the international system, as seen in its attempts to

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<sup>10</sup> Helene Cooper, "Military Shifts Focus to Threats by Russia and China, Not Terrorism," *The New York Times*, Jan 19, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/19/us/politics/military-china-russia-terrorism-focus.html> (accessed October 12, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Garry Kasparov, *Winter is Coming: What Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 202 – 203.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Wallace, "Is Xi Jinping now a 'Leader for Life,' like Mao? Here's Why This is Dangerous," *The Washington Post*, February 27, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/27/is-xi-jinping-now-a-leader-for-life-like-mao-heres-why-this-is-dangerous/?utm\\_term=.da41d4c4a876](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/27/is-xi-jinping-now-a-leader-for-life-like-mao-heres-why-this-is-dangerous/?utm_term=.da41d4c4a876) (accessed October 9, 2018).

challenge American authority overseas, especially in the South China Sea, Taiwan, and the Korean Peninsula. This challenge is reinforced by Chinese focus on modernizing its huge military, creating a first class navy, maintaining a nuclear arsenal, protecting its coasts and islands with anti-access weapons, and investing in cyber capabilities that seek to exploit, as well as potentially destroy, American information and communication networks.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, there is Iran, which has quietly extended its influence into the Middle East in the aftermath of Iraq's fall to the American invasion in 2003. Providing personnel, weapons, supplies, and funding to various factions and tribes in the Middle East, Iran has successfully begun to challenge U.S. presence in the region, as seen with Iranian support of Syria's Assad regime during its civil war as well as its growing influence in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq.<sup>14</sup> Although Saudi Arabia has sided with the United States to keep Iran's covert efforts in check, fear is growing that Iran will succeed in establishing hegemonic control of the Middle East and successfully produce a nuclear weapon. This threat might not only encourage regional competitors such as Saudi Arabia to develop nuclear weapons, but could also prompt Israel to attack Iran as it did Iraq when Iraq attempted to start its own nuclear weapons program. Such actions would mean a new round of regional warfare and disorder that could prompt major powers such as the United States, Russia, and China to intervene in order to protect their national interests.

The international situation and the return of great power competition in the aftermath of the Global War on Terror calls into question how the AVF will be used in future conflicts. The Gulf War, the Yugoslav Wars, the Iraq War, and the Afghan War demonstrated that the AVF

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<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* (New York: Random House, 2014), 38 – 39.

<sup>14</sup> Jay Sekulow, *Unholy Alliance: The Agenda Iran, Russia, and Jihadists Share for Conquering the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2016), 162.

was more than able to handle weaker hostile state actors, but it may well be a different story against a stronger, more modern power such as Russia and China. For now, clashes with these states have been in the shadows of intelligence, cyber warfare, and information operations. Escalation is certainly a possibility, especially when Russian and Chinese forces grow more confident in their modernized technologies and training. In the cases of Russia and China, close calls have been noted in the news periodically as each country attempts to test American resolve, whether it is in the Baltic region of Europe or in the South China Sea, in attempts to intimidate American military forces in the region. Such acts would mean a deliberate attempt to provoke a potential major regional conflict that some foreign policy strategists argue could be an opportunity for a strategic competitor to turn the international system on its head.<sup>15</sup>

Although the AVF might be up to handling these threats, the problem is how quickly things could escalate if such confrontations end in miscalculation and result in a shooting battle that could easily escalate to a third world war and, possibly, into a cyber or nuclear war that would have unforeseen consequences. A best-case scenario if war breaks out is that the AVF might end up fighting a limited war with a major power, similar to the Chinese during the Korean War, by keeping the conflict contained. A worst case could mean destruction of the world's globalized institutions through cyber or nuclear warfare. Peter H. Liotta and James F. Miskel share their fears in their study of megacities and global security when they pointed out how international institutions are simply not well positioned to address these challenges, because of the high population density of the world's urban centers as well as their interconnected

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<sup>15</sup> Mikhail Zygar, *All the Kremlin's Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 338.

transportation and communication nodes, which are necessary to feed, care for, and house tens of millions of people.<sup>16</sup>

As the presidency and the AVF face future security challenges, the support of the American people remains essential for fighting any potential conflict. Attempts to use the AVF in other countries were quickly curtailed by backlash against making large military commitments in conflicts in Libya and Syria. This was seen when Congress intervened to prevent President Obama from becoming too involved in these countries.<sup>17</sup>

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the creation of the AVF did not give presidents freedom of action to use military force as they saw fit. Instead the opposite happened when every president had to weigh their political and military decisions based on how the American public would react when using the AVF as seen in the Gulf War, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Although U.S. presidents will continue to use the AVF to tackle the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the American people will continue to serve as the ultimate check toward the use of military force.

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<sup>16</sup> Peter H. Liotta and James F. Miskel, *The Real Population Bomb: Megacities, Global Security, and the Map of the Future* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012), 166.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Perry, *The Pentagon Wars*, 250.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Legacy of Vietnam**

The Korean War was a warning about the limits of public support when the U.S. presidency used military force in conflicts of questionable value. President Truman's drop in popular support to 37% in 1952 made him one of the most unpopular U.S. presidents in office and revealed that the American public was concerned about how the nation picked and chose its battles overseas. This was highlighted when Truman was defeated during the New Hampshire Democratic primaries by Estes Kefauver, a U.S. Senator from Tennessee, in 1952. President Truman evidently ruined politically by his decision to involve the U.S. in Korea, added to conditions that allowed the Republican Party to win the presidency and both houses of Congress.

Truman's political defeat largely as a result of committing the U.S. military's conscript force in an unpopular war in Korea was an important lesson learned first by President Dwight Eisenhower and then by President John F. Kennedy. Both presidents avoided committing the U.S. military's conscripts in another distant conflict, but instead relied on small groups of career military advisors and special forces to pursue a geopolitical strategy during the Cold War. Yet, following the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson decided in 1965 to commit the U.S. military's conscript force in South Vietnam. Just like President Truman, President Johnson would get caught in the trap of having to rely on conscripts from the draft system to meet the personnel needs of the U.S. military in Vietnam.

Similar to Korea, the conflict in Vietnam quickly became unpopular when fighting against the communist insurgency became a long and bloody struggle. As casualties escalated into the thousands and spending into the billions, the American people began to turn against the

Johnson administration's determination to fight the conflict. Although presidential approval for the conflict started at 61% in 1965, it dropped to 39% by 1969 when President Johnson stepped down from office. Johnson's Republican successor, President Richard M. Nixon, faced a similar struggle when he took over management of the Vietnam conflict and command of the U.S. military. Just like his predecessor, Nixon watched as public support for the Vietnam conflict suffered dismal percentages from 1969 to 1973 with Gallup Poll levels staying mostly in the 30-percent range before reaching an all-time low of 29% in 1973 before the draft finally ended.

In order to understand how Johnson's and Nixon's popular support suffered so much, it is important to look into the origins of the Vietnam War, the conflict's progression from 1965 to 1973, and the anti-war movement. The rest of this appendix not only captures the casualty and financial costs of the conflict, but also discusses political, military, and social factors that contributed to how these figures impacted the U.S. presidency and helped influence the creation of the AVF during the Nixon administration.

### *The Vietnam War's Origins*

United States entry into Vietnam was the result of its gradual involvement since the 1950s to combat the rise of communism. In the 19th century, France conquered Vietnam and incorporated it into France's imperial system, becoming part of what was known as French Indochina. During the Second World War, French control of Vietnam weakened when Germany conquered France, and Japan quickly occupied French Indochina. Having to rely on their own resources and suffering from the brutal oppression of the Japanese Empire, the Vietnamese under

Ho Chi Minh formed a powerful resistance group that assisted the Allies by tying down large numbers of Japanese troops through insurgent operations.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese people believed that the Allies would recognize their sacrifices and contributions in the final defeat of Imperial Japan and establish an independent Vietnam. During the surrender of Japan, the Allies did not recognize Vietnam's sovereignty, and soon afterwards France organized a large expeditionary force to reoccupy Vietnam and the rest of French Indochina. As the Japanese garrison pulled out of the country and the French moved in, fighting soon broke out and escalated into the First Indochina War, during which both sides suffered heavy casualties as the conflict dragged on to become increasingly frustrating for both sides.<sup>2</sup>

During this time, the United States and the Soviet Union found themselves competing with each other over the power vacuum created by the Second World War. The total destruction of the European powers, the resulting decolonization of its imperial system, and the spread of nationalism in the developing world created a geopolitical situation in which the Americans and Soviets soon began to actively consolidate their power and influence in preparation for a possible third world war.<sup>3</sup> Known as the Cold War, this period was distinguished by geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union that manifested itself in a variety of proxy wars in different regions throughout the world. Thus, political and military leaders viewed the struggle between France and the communist insurgency in Indochina as another front in which the Soviet Union's ideological struggle and bid for global domination had to be stopped. As part of George Kennan's proposal for containment, Vietnam was seen as a "police action" to keep the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Lyons, *World War II: A Short History* (Englewood Cliffs: Simon & Schuster Company, 1994), 332.

<sup>2</sup> Max Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 351.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, 280 – 281.



Soviet Union and communism at bay. However, in doing so, the American political and military leadership began to slowly commit itself to the conflict.<sup>4</sup>

By 1954, it became apparent that the French were losing the war in Indochina. In a desperate bid to draw the Vietminh, the main organization responsible for the insurgency in Indochina, into open battle and stabilize the war effort, the French government deployed military forces under the command of General Henri Eugene Navarre to Dien Bien Phu. France underestimated the Vietminh's stealth and organizational capabilities. In less than two months, the insurgents surrounded and destroyed the French military force in Dien Bien Phu. As Bernard Fall pointed out, "Dien Bien Phu had been a Viet-Minh military victory over the French as well as a political victory over the United States."<sup>5</sup> In the 1954 Geneva Peace Conference that followed, Vietnam was temporarily divided along the 17th parallel and was to supposedly reunite upon conclusion of political elections. However, this reunification did not happen when South Vietnam under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem announced it would not participate in the elections. The South Vietnamese refused because of fears that a communist political victory would lead to forced land collectivization, executions of landlords and enemies of the state as well as persecution of its Roman Catholic minority.<sup>6</sup>

When it became apparent that the country would remain divided, North Vietnam began to move personnel, weapons, equipment, and supplies to the Viet Cong, a communism movement that sought to overthrow South Vietnam's government and forcibly reunite the country with the

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<sup>4</sup> Robert D. Schulzinger, *U.S. Diplomacy since 1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 208 – 209.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard B. Fall, *The Siege of Dien Bien Phu: Hell in a Very Small Place* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1966), 460.

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941 – 1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 80.

communist north.<sup>7</sup> From 1954 to 1960, the United States began to support South Vietnam with modest injections of weapons, supplies, and personnel to ensure that its army could keep the Viet Cong at bay; however, it soon became apparent that this limited support was not enough. South Vietnam's military, despite U.S. help, was simply not competent or skilled enough to defeat the Viet Cong. As a result, over time, the Viet Cong infiltrated the farms and villages, where it soon controlled most of South Vietnam's countryside, especially the Mekong Delta, which served as the "bread basket" of the country.

### ***Growing American Involvement in Vietnam***

American efforts in South Vietnam began to change with the election of President John F. Kennedy who based his election on taking a tougher stance against the Soviet Union and communism. However, with the rise of nuclear weapons, a direct confrontation against the Soviet Union was seen as too risky, since any conflict with the Soviets would likely escalate to a nuclear exchange. In addition, the rise of communism insurgencies in the developing world begged for a solution that would stop them from spreading across the globe. President Kennedy purported to have found the solution through the training and deployment of U.S. Special Forces: small groups of highly trained, motivated soldiers who could be inserted into various countries to interact and train with host nation peoples and forces. With this idea in mind, Kennedy created a small, versatile force that would win the trust of the local population by building local government support and services, while also conducting foreign internal defense by training a country's indigenous forces to protect themselves from insurgents.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 194 – 195.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Clancy, Carl Stiner, and Tony Koltz, *Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), 68.

In the case of Vietnam, the deployment of Special Forces was a creative, unconventional approach because it focused on training South Vietnam's ground forces and building political support for the legitimacy of Diem's government. With this approach, the United States did not have to stake its blood and treasure in a conflict that had little or no direct interest to Americans. As Robert Dalleck explained, "Kennedy's desire to limit U.S. involvement in the conflict by keeping it off the front pages made a certain amount of sense, since the aim was as much, if not more, to limit America's part in the fighting as to maintain Saigon's autonomy."<sup>9</sup> In 1963, the death of Ngo Dinh Diem began to change the direction of U.S. commitment in Vietnam. That year, Diem was killed by his own military during a coup sanctioned by the United States due to the belief that South Vietnam's top leader was undermining his own country by his religious persecution of the Buddhist sects, the massive corruption in his regime, and his government's inability to enact major land reforms.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, President Kennedy was assassinated, resulting in Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson being elevated to the presidency and taking charge of the direction of the Vietnam conflict.

President Johnson retained most of President Kennedy's National Security Council staff, including National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy who influenced the new president in escalating U.S. participation in the Vietnam conflict in order to protect Southeast Asia from the spread of communism. With the President using a North Vietnamese attack on the *U.S.S. Maddox* in August 1964 as justification, Congress enacted a joint resolution, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, that gave Johnson the authority to use military force in Southeast Asia.<sup>11</sup> It served as

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Dalleck, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917 – 1963* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2003), 459.

<sup>10</sup> H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 45 – 46.

<sup>11</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

a “blank check” to introduce American military forces to help fight the insurgency in South Vietnam, and it also authorized increased support to the country’s fledging government against North Vietnam. The United States was now committed to a war that would continue to escalate for several years.

### ***United States Intervention in Vietnam***

When the United States deployed its ground forces, the move was popular, supported by the belief that the military had adequate personnel to fight in Vietnam. By the time President Johnson decided in July 1965 to send conventional forces to Vietnam, the American people supported the U.S. government’s efforts to stop communism and shared the belief that the Cold War was an ideological crusade to prevent the world from becoming dominated by the Soviet Union. In addition, the American people were buoyed by victories over the last twenty years, including winning the Second World War, stopping the Soviet Union from taking over Europe, and now stopping the spread of communism in the Asia-Pacific region. Popular support for President Johnson’s decision to increase American involvement in Vietnam was demonstrated by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the presidential election of 1964. Many scholars argued that this widespread support for the use of presidential power in foreign affairs resulted from the belief that the presidency needed more power to face the threat of communism without congressional restraints.<sup>12</sup>

The potential outcome of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was foreshadowed by the previous military involvement of the United States against the communists in Korea. The Korean conflict was a warning of the scale and limitations that American intervention in Vietnam would require, since it bordered the People’s Republic of China (PRC), a powerful

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<sup>12</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam*, 359.

communist state that would not tolerate having American forces near its southern border. In fact, during the course of the Korean War, the Chinese military intervened when American forces approached its northern border near the Yalu River. The PRC's intervention in Korea took the United States by surprise. As a result, General Douglas MacArthur threatened to expand the war by pushing for a blockade of the Chinese coast and using atomic bombs on the Chinese mainland.<sup>13</sup> However, President Harry Truman, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Services, stepped in and instead opted for keeping the Korean War limited to the peninsula and used the conflict as a police action to protect South Korea, rather than expanding it into China.

In the beginning of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, American political and military leaders were less concerned about North Vietnam and the Vietcong than about the PRC. With this weighty consideration, the United States was very careful not to further provoke the Communist Chinese into militarily intervening in the conflict. To some critics in the United States, avoiding such provocation proved difficult because the U.S. government refused to recognize the PRC as a sovereign state despite its victory in the Chinese Civil War and its status as a nuclear power (in October 1964, it exploded its first atomic bomb).<sup>14</sup> However, U.S. commitment to limiting its operations to Vietnam and certain parts of Laos and Cambodia allowed North Vietnam and the Vietcong to recover and continue fighting, because they received support from both the PRC and the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup>

American military involvement in Vietnam escalated with the deployment of conventional forces, with the limited objective of protecting airfields and bases in order to allow

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Lee Lanning, *The Military 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Military Leaders of All Time* (Secaucus: Carol Publishing Group, 1996), 83.

<sup>14</sup> Dennis J. Blasko, "Always Faithful: The PLA from 1949 to 1989," in *A Military History of China*, Ed. by David A. Graff and Robin Higham (Secaucus: Carol Publishing Group, 1996), 254.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam*, 636.

the South Vietnamese government to free up more troops for counterinsurgency operations under the guidance of American military advisors.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the use of Special Forces to pacify South Vietnam's rural areas through the Strategic Hamlet Program was seen as a failure and terminated.<sup>17</sup> Instead, President Johnson replaced General Paul Harkins, who led U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, with General William Westmoreland, who wanted to use conventional warfare to pull communist insurgents from their sanctuaries and use overwhelming firepower to win on the battlefield through "search and destroy" missions.<sup>18</sup>

Johnson's and Westmoreland's strategic and tactical approach to winning the Vietnam War was flawed because it ignored the fact that South Vietnam's insurgency was mostly a political struggle that required the United States to protect and build legitimacy with the South Vietnamese people. By failing to cut off popular support for the communist insurgency, the American and South Vietnamese militaries fought many battles of attrition that resulted in needless casualties and antagonized the local population with incidents of indiscriminate slaughter of noncombatants as well as the collateral destruction of nonmilitary targets. Philip Caputo, a second lieutenant serving as a platoon commander in 1st Battalion, 3d Marine Regiment from 1965 to 1966 in the vicinity of Danang, noted with growing disillusionment the chaos and brutality of the war: "We passed through the [Vietnamese] village like a wind; by the time we started up Hill 52, there was nothing left of Ha Na but a long swath of smoldering ashes, charred tree trunks, their leaves burned off, and heaps of shattered concrete. Of all the ugly

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<sup>16</sup> Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), 566 – 567.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 666.

<sup>18</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 464 – 465.

sights I saw in Vietnam, that was one of the ugliest: the sudden disintegration of my platoon from a group of disciplined soldiers into an incendiary mob.”<sup>19</sup>

To make matters worse, President Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and General Westmoreland used body counts as a measure of victory--a deeply flawed criterion for progress. As Kenneth Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schonberger pointed out in their study of hyper-rational executive-led decisions, “The way to measure progress, therefore, was by the number of enemy killed...To the [Vietnam] war’s supporters it was proof of progress...[it] was the data point that defined an era.”<sup>20</sup> As a result, U.S. political and military leaders sent a false message to the American population: the war was steadily being won, and it was only a matter of time before military forces could return home.

Between 1965 and 1967, troop levels in Vietnam increased exponentially. Prior to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964, troop levels held at about 16,000 in the form of special forces, military advisors, aviation, and support personnel.<sup>21</sup> In 1965, the American presence increased by nearly a third to about 23,000. In 1966, it expanded to 184,000 as American forces began to spread into the towns and cities, and in 1967, it nearly doubled to 385,300. At the beginning of 1968, troop levels increased by a quarter to 535,000, as U.S. forces conducted more and more search-and-destroy operations in South Vietnam’s interior.<sup>22</sup> Tied to various bases and outposts throughout the country, the U.S. military did not use its large numbers of troops to embed itself with South Vietnam’s population in order to help provide security and governance;

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<sup>19</sup> Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1977), 304.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schonberger, “The Dictatorship of Data,” *MIT Technology Review*, May 31, 2013, <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/514591/the-dictatorship-of-data/> (accessed August 28, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 668.

<sup>22</sup> Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War*, 182.

instead American forces fought communist insurgents in a series of inconclusive battles in times and locations chosen by the enemy.

Meanwhile, American support for the war was still strong. Even though troop levels in Vietnam had grown steadily since the initial American military intervention in 1964, by the beginning of 1968, military operations were supposed to be winding down, and the South Vietnamese were supposed to assume the leading role in the protection and governance of their country. The military leadership tried to measure setbacks and success in its strategic and operational planning using statistics.<sup>23</sup> Based on the statistical information provided by the Johnson administration, the Vietnam War should have been won based on the extraordinary losses suffered by the communist insurgency. Based on the rate of reported casualties the communist forces were suffering, they simply could not continue fighting; the combined military firepower and sheer number of troops deployed in South Vietnam should have destroyed the communist forces as an effective fighting force.

According to Gallup polls prior to 1968, support of U.S. efforts in the Vietnam War remained consistently high despite the heavy losses suffered by the U.S. military during combat operations against Vietnamese guerillas, as seen in the battles of Pleiku and Van Tuong. According to Gallup, from August 27 to September 1, 1965 61% of interviewees believed American involvement in the Vietnam War was not a mistake, while 24% believed it was mistake, and 15% had no opinion. As a female respondent from Ravena, New York, who participated in the Gallup Poll pointed out, “It’s a necessary evil. If we can’t convince these smaller nations that the U.S. is willing to protect their freedom, they won’t be free for long.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 459

<sup>24</sup> Lydia Saad, “Gallup Vault: Hawks vs. Doves on Vietnam,” *Gallup Vault*, May 24, 2016, <https://news.gallup.com/vault/191828/gallup-vault-hawks-doves-vietnam.aspx> (accessed August 29, 2018).



In spite of protests against the Vietnam War growing increasingly common across the United States as the conflict dragged on, they were mostly restricted to college campuses and small-scale demonstrations. In 1964, few protests grabbed national attention because they were mostly led by “fringe” groups that included communists, pacifists and civil rights activists; however, by 1967 as American involvement expanded, 100,000 demonstrators gathered in Washington, D.C., at the Lincoln Memorial and then a third of them marched on the Pentagon. During this time, similar protests appeared in other cities across the country, where hundreds of thousands of people protested against the war, attracting national media attention.<sup>25</sup> The mass demonstrations were the result of various groups and organizations sharing common political cause against the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. To many of these groups, the conflict represented the injustices in the U.S. political, social, and economic system that the draft represented. Other groups voiced concerns about racism and intolerance in the U.S. during a time in which racial minorities were forced to fight for freedom for a country that did not treat them as full citizens. For others, opposition was based on religious, ethical, and personal beliefs against being made to serve in combat and potentially kill others in a country that posed no threat to the United States. Finally, some viewed the conflict as merely an exercise of authority for the rich and powerful to prosper at the expense of the people having to do the fighting. Only after years of fighting in Vietnam could these disparate groups set aside their differences and push for immediate withdrawal as a serious option.<sup>26</sup>

Coinciding with the protests was the steadily rising number of American casualties, dating back to 1956, when American service members began providing support to the French

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<sup>25</sup> Smithsonian, *The Vietnam War: The Definitive Illustrated History* (New York: DK Penguin Random House, 2017), 62.

<sup>26</sup> Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest against the War in Vietnam, 1963 – 1975* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984, xii – xiii.

military during the First Indochina War. Numbers of casualties and the intensity of the protests began to grow as significant numbers of U.S. casualties increased with the expanded U.S. military presence in Vietnam. In 1965, the number of combat-related deaths grew as the conflict intensified with 1,863 casualties; in 1966, this rose to 6,143 casualties. By 1967, losses almost doubled to 11,153 casualties.<sup>27</sup>

Even though the number of U.S. casualties was small compared to those suffered in the American Civil War, the First World War, and the Second World War, the Vietnam War was different: media coverage was extensive and mostly unfiltered compared to coverage of past U.S. conflicts. Thanks to advances in technology, news agencies throughout the world covered and reported the fighting and casualties via television almost every night. Although the media had used print, radio, and film to report past conflicts, the real time life and death struggle, the destruction and atrocities, and coverage of various views of the war were beamed on televisions throughout the United States. This reporting brought the brutality of the conflict into American homes every night, and it enabled various debates and protests to be televised, expanding the dialogue about the U.S. purpose and end state in Vietnam.<sup>28</sup> This dialogue became especially relevant when the anti-war movement began to gain traction, and various student organizations, anti-war groups, political clubs, and churches appeared throughout the country. Through advances in transportation and communication, the anti-war effort was no longer isolated and local; it rallied and united through cars, buses, aircraft, and trains. Demonstrators from all across

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<sup>27</sup> Military Factory, "Vietnam War Casualties," <https://www.militaryfactory.com/vietnam/casualties.asp> (accessed August 29, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 85.

the country, from Los Angeles to New York City, closed ranks and marched in great numbers to actively oppose the war in a size and scope unprecedented in U.S. history.<sup>29</sup>

Understanding the power of television, leaders of protests on campuses and in major cities became more skilled and rallied support from those who had been undecided on the issue. In addition, these protests sought the attention of the media as a means to better broadcast the message more quickly and easily than ever before.<sup>30</sup> With the power of pictures and words, television enabled anti-war messages and arguments against American involvement in Vietnam to be broadcast to a larger audience. In addition, news coverage reported by broadcasters such as Walter Cronkite presented American audiences with their perspective and commentary on the political and military aspects of the conflict. In turn, this coverage and commentary created opportunities for government officials, protesters, and other public figures to create their spins about Vietnam, therefore providing various interpretations of events and actions to influence public opinion and often altering the presentation of facts and events.<sup>31</sup>

By the end of 1967, despite continued protestations by political and military leaders that American intervention was ensuring the democratic sovereignty of South Vietnam, the Gallup Poll reported creeping doubt about support for Vietnam. According to the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, polls posed two questions: “Do you approve or disapprove the way President Johnson is handling the situation in Vietnam?” and “In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?” By December 1967, 49% of people disapproved of the Johnson administration’s handling of Vietnam, while 45% thought that the United States made a mistake sending troops to

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Powers, *The War at Home: Vietnam and the American People, 1964 – 1968* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973), 169.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 178 – 179.

<sup>31</sup> William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 173 – 174.

fight in Vietnam. In 1967, Louis Harris and Associates also asked: “If you had to make a choice about the Vietnam War now, which one course would you favor: fighting on to a total military victory, fighting until we achieve a negotiated peace, or trying to end the war and get out as quickly as possible?” Considering the visible popular opposition to the war in Vietnam, the results were surprising; in November 1967, 34% of respondents opted for the U.S. getting out of Vietnam, 33% preferred a negotiated peace, and 26% pushed for total military victory.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Political Impact of the Tet Offensive***

The growing doubt about the Vietnam War came to a head when on January 30, 1968, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese launched the Tet Offensive, a coordinated nationwide attack across South Vietnam in which communist guerrillas attempted to defeat the U.S. military and overthrow South Vietnam’s government.<sup>33</sup> The purpose was to inflict a devastating defeat on the United States in time for the upcoming presidential elections. In addition, it would force American political and military leaders to either escalate the war or to consider withdrawing.<sup>34</sup> From January to September 1968, the American and South Vietnamese military forces not only defended themselves from the surprise attacks, but quickly rallied and counterattacked. Specifically targeted because of their political and military importance, Saigon, Hue, and Khe Sanh became the focus of major fighting and significant casualties. In addition, the My Lai Massacre added to the controversy surrounding the Tet Offensive when U.S. troops in South Vietnam committed mass murder against several hundred unarmed civilians who were mostly

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<sup>32</sup> Carl Brown, “A Creeping Doubt: Public Support for Vietnam in 1967,” *Roper Center for Public Opinion Research*, <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/public-support-vietnam-1967/> (accessed August 29, 2018).

<sup>33</sup> Max Boot, *The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018), 516.

<sup>34</sup> James A. Warren, *Giap: The General Who Defeated America in Vietnam* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 170.

women, children, and older men, revealing to the American public the growing violence and strain of combat on an increasingly frustrated military.<sup>35</sup> As Richard Holmes pointed out, “The road to My Lai was paved, first and foremost, by the dehumanization of the Vietnamese and the ‘mere gook rule’ which declared that killing a Vietnamese civilian did not really count.”<sup>36</sup> By the end of 1968, the United States had suffered 16,899 casualties; however, the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong suffered far heavier losses.<sup>37</sup> Militarily, the Tet Offensive was a major defeat for North Vietnam and the Vietcong; the North Vietnamese were unable to launch any significant military offensive against the Americans for several months because the Vietcong’s military had been almost completely destroyed.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the Tet Offensive was a political disaster for President Johnson and General Westmoreland because of the massive loss of life, the destruction of South Vietnam’s towns and cities, and the numbers of refugees fleeing the fighting gave the anti-war movement the fuel it needed to challenge the legitimacy of the Vietnam War. The communist offensive also planted the seeds of doubt that the United States was able to win in Vietnam when Westmoreland requested 206,000 additional troops and the activation of 280,000 reservists. Westmoreland’s request was intended to continue the fighting in Vietnam as a war of attrition and allow military operations to expand into Laos, Cambodia, and possibly even North Vietnam.<sup>39</sup> However, President Johnson would not support General Westmoreland’s request because of the U.S. political situation. Within the Democratic Party, political advisors and key supporters urged him

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<sup>35</sup> Clarence R. Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993), 207.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 391-392.

<sup>37</sup> National Archives, “Vietnam War U.S. Military Fatal Casualty Statistics.”

<sup>38</sup> Robert Coram, *Brute: The Life of Victor Krulak, U.S. Marine* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2010), 318.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 313.

to change his approach in Vietnam especially after he nearly lost the presidential primary in New Hampshire. As a result, Johnson began to consider scaling back the American military presence in Vietnam and instead focus on building South Vietnam's armed forces so they could take over protection of their country.<sup>40</sup>

The Tet Offensive had severe repercussions in the United States. The anti-war movement now gained the upper hand, and public opinion turned definitively against the Vietnam War. In 1968, media coverage of the fighting was mostly negative, and Walter Cronkite's coverage and assessment of the war led to his damning televised commentary:

We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders...to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds. They may be right, that Hanoi's winter-spring offensive has been forced by the Communist realization that they could not win the longer war of attrition, and that the Communists hope that any success in the offensive will improve their position for eventual negotiations. It would improve their position, and it would also require our realization, that we should have had all along, that any negotiations must be that – negotiations, not the dictation of peace terms.

For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. This summer's almost certain standoff will either end in real give-and-take negotiations or terrible escalation; and for every means we have to escalate, the enemy can match us, and that applies to invasion of the North, the use of nuclear weapons, or the mere commitment of one hundred, two hundred, or three hundred thousand more American troops to the battle. And with each escalation, the world comes closer to the brink of cosmic disaster.

To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion.

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<sup>40</sup> James H. Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive: A Concise History* (New York: Columbia University, 2007), 121.

On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions, in case this is indeed his last big gasp before negotiations. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.<sup>41</sup>

The political impact of the war continued. Secretary of Defense McNamara resigned, General Westmoreland was replaced by General Creighton Abrams, and President Johnson announced that he would not run for a second term for the presidency. In addition, growing disillusionment and shock led to even more protests and anger across the country because of the growing “credibility gap” used to describe the U.S. government’s lack of honesty and transparency between the American people and many members of Congress. Even support for the U.S. military was compromised, not just by the My Lai Massacre, but also through word of other atrocities and practices quietly reported by returning service members. However, the protests that spread throughout the country were about more than Vietnam; they also included other demands for action, including those by civil rights, feminist, and environmental advocates. This generalized discontent, combined with the escalation and growing brutality of the Vietnam War, often merged into large, amorphous protests that continued to grow steadily in size and violence.<sup>42</sup>

Although the Johnson administration agreed not to send more troops into Vietnam after the Tet Offensive, 1969 led to American and South Vietnamese forces trying to regain the initiative due to a major decline in morale in both the U.S. military and at home. Public polls revealed a steady decline in support--from 61% in 1965 to 39% by 1969--for the American

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<sup>41</sup> Walter Cronkite, “Walter Cronkite Editorial on Tet and Vietnam,” *Alpha History*, <https://alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/walter-cronkite-editorial-1968/> (accessed April 1, 2019).

<sup>42</sup> John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945 - 1975* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2007), 245.

intervention in Vietnam and the Johnson administration's handling of the war.<sup>43</sup> In addition, resistance was growing to the American draft system that had been in place since the beginning of the Second World War to meet the military's various personnel needs. These personnel needs were now escalating due to combat losses, the rotation of service members who had met their service obligations, and new operational needs. The "injustice" of the American draft system was another target of public protests. During a "mass burn-in, turn-in" ceremony of Selective Service cards and draft notification letters, Dr. Dana McLean Greeley argued for resistance against the draft: "I don't know what justifies a nation in forcing young men to fight and die for a cause in which they do not believe. That is not democracy but totalitarianism, and it is not freedom but tyranny, if the nation is wrong."<sup>44</sup>

### ***The Antiwar Movement***

The Tet Offensive helped change public perceptions of the Vietnam War, and as a result, it increasingly was seen as an unpopular war. Recruitment of volunteers to serve in Vietnam dropped dramatically, especially in the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps in which people were more likely to serve in combat. Meanwhile, the draft, operated by the Selective Service System, became the focal point for the anti-war movement, especially by the eldest members of the large "baby boom" cohort, who questioned the U.S. government and legitimacy of the Vietnam War. In addition, the draft system was flawed due to loopholes and exemptions for marital, student, and physical or mental status. To make matters worse, men could potentially "cheat" being drafted by volunteering to join the Army National Guard, the Air Force, or the U.S. Navy where

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<sup>43</sup> Mark Gillespie, "Americans Look Back at Vietnam War," *Gallup News*, November 17, 2000, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/2299/americans-look-back-vietnam-war.aspx> (accessed April 6, 2019)

<sup>44</sup> Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 134.



they were less likely to be deployed to Vietnam. Finally, some did not register in the Selective Service System, refusing to answer the draft call to serve in the U.S. military or leaving the country and residing overseas. Ursula Diliberto, mother of a son killed in Vietnam, vented her frustration with those who complied with the draft and those who did not: “You were damned if you did go and damned if you didn’t. My son was a victim, my family was a victim, all boys of draft age were victims in one way or another.”<sup>45</sup>

With identified flaws in the Selective Service System, between 1965 and 1973, about 1,728,344 men were drafted into the U.S. military. Over 88% of the draftees who served in Vietnam were Caucasian, 10.6% were Black, and 1% belonged to other races. In the course of the Vietnam War, 58,202 service members were killed, 61% of whom were 21 years or younger. Of these, 86.8% were Caucasian, 12.1% were black, and 1.1% belonged to the other races. Finally, the socio-economic status of the people who served in Vietnam revealed that 76% of the service members were from lower middle/working class backgrounds and 79% had at least a high school education.<sup>46</sup> In sum, the draft and the casualties of the Vietnam War affected people at the lower end of the economic scale, while members of the upper and middle classes found ways to circumvent or “game” the draft system to avoid the dangers of combat. Lawrence M. Baskir’s and William A. Strauss’s study of the draft system during the Vietnam era revealed that “poorly educated, low-income whites and poorly educated, low-income blacks together bore a vastly disproportionate share of the burdens of Vietnam. [These men were] from disadvantaged

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<sup>45</sup> Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 13.

<sup>46</sup> International World History Project, “Vietnam War Statistics,” *World History from the Pre-Sumerian Period to the Present*, [http://history-world.org/vietnam\\_war\\_statistics.htm](http://history-world.org/vietnam_war_statistics.htm) (accessed August 31, 2018).

backgrounds [who] were about twice as likely as their better-off peers to serve in the military, go to Vietnam, and see combat.”<sup>47</sup>

As colleges and universities continued to serve as the epicenters for the anti-war movement against Vietnam, the price paid by the lower middle and working class in the draft began to influence American support for the war. The unfairness of the draft system, as well as the sacrifices and casualties suffered, led to returning veterans and wounded service members being disillusioned and bitter from their experiences. The impact that Vietnam veterans had in the anti-war movement revealed that while their civilian counterparts had a hard time setting aside political and ideological differences, the various veterans groups such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War were better organized and were able to push their anti-war message to the American public based on their service and sacrifice in Vietnam. Michael S. Foley’s look into the veterans’ groups’ anti-war efforts revealed the power of the sanctuary movement in which American service members deserted by seeking “sanctuary” in cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, and Honolulu. Besides deserters being protected from capture and prosecution, the deserters also supplemented the ranks and growing influence of veterans against the Vietnam war.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, incidents of insubordination, mutiny, and even murder of military officers by enlisted men increased, reflecting a break down in the professionalism and discipline of the U.S. armed services. The growing presence of alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution, racism, murder, and other social problems eroded the American military’s discipline

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<sup>47</sup> Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 277.

and performance.<sup>49</sup> To make matters worse, returning military personnel in some cases were targeted with ridicule, treated poorly, or attacked for serving in Vietnam. The irony of the anti-war movement between 1964 and 1973 was that while many middle and upper class youth were protesting, those from the lower end of the economic scale were doing most of the fighting and dying. As casualties and desertions rose and personnel requirements in Vietnam continued to grow, the draft system became strained and began to break down, requiring revisions to the draft in programs such as “Project 100,000” with the aim of enrolling 100,000 “new standard men” annually. According to George Q. Flynn, however, “the plan really amounted to a downward revision of eligibility standards” for physical and mental requirements to serve in the military.<sup>50</sup>

From 1968 to 1973, the anti-war movement undermined American political and military leadership. This impact was felt beyond recruiting and drafting to meet personnel requirements in the ranks; it influenced much of the rest of the American population, too. The message of the anti-war movement became more powerful and widespread thanks to the power of television, which brought anti-war views to a wider audience. Many Americans began to pull back support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam and showed their lack of support in the presidential elections. In 1969, while the Democratic Party retained control over both houses of Congress, it lost control of the executive branch when President Nixon was elected into office under the promise of ending the Vietnam War and bringing “peace with honor.”<sup>51</sup>

However, American impatience with the Nixon administration became apparent as anti-war protests grew more widespread and violent. This violence grew increasingly deadly, with

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<sup>49</sup> “1965 – the Present: The Draft: Institution in Crisis,” in *The Draft and Its Enemies: A Documentary History*, Ed. by John O’Sullivan and Alan M. Meckler (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 227.

<sup>50</sup> George Q. Flynn, *The Draft 1940 – 1973* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 209.

<sup>51</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 677.

the rise in casualties from clashes between protestors and the police and National Guard. The Kent State shootings on May 4, 1970, gained national attention when members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on a crowd of student protestors, resulting in four killed and nine wounded.<sup>52</sup> The infamous photo of Mary Ann Vecchio mourning over the body of fellow protestor Jeffrey Miller made national news and appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine. In Kent State's aftermath, hundreds of universities, colleges, and high schools closed across the United States as millions of students and faculty left classes to protest against the Vietnam war.<sup>53</sup>

The power of the anti-war movement further pressured President Nixon to end the conflict as quickly as possible while salvaging U.S. prestige and credibility. Many in Congress were now beholden to an anti-war movement that had the attention of the American people, with its power appearing in the polls. The U.S. executive's position became even worse when in 1971, *The New York Times* published the *Pentagon Papers*, a top secret history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. These papers further compromised the American government because they revealed how long and how deeply the United States was involved in Vietnam and neighboring countries, including bombings in Cambodia and Laos, raids on North Vietnam, and various covert operations that were not reported in the media. In short, the *Pentagon Papers* reflected the lack of transparency and accountability of the U.S. actions in the Vietnam conflict.<sup>54</sup>

Congressional leaders began to pressure the President to end the war sooner rather than later. From 1969 to 1973, President Nixon reduced the number of military personnel in Vietnam and, under the leadership of General Abrams, continued to hit North Vietnam and the

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<sup>52</sup> Spencer C. Tucker, *Encyclopedia of Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 335.

<sup>53</sup> John Prados, *Vietnam*, 368.

<sup>54</sup> T. Louise Brown, *War and Aftermath in Vietnam* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 114.

Vietcong with limited military operations meant to degrade their military strength as well as apply pressure for a favorable peace that would allow the United States to quietly end its commitments to South Vietnam.<sup>55</sup> As these operations were going on, the Nixon administration oversaw the training and modernization of South Vietnam's military in order for it to take over defense of the country from the American military. As a result, as U.S. forces stepped down and returned home, South Vietnam's military stepped in to take over operations.

By December 1972, American involvement in South Vietnam was down to a couple of hundred U.S. advisors and support personnel. President Nixon had just been elected to a second term, and he was determined to force North Vietnam to a negotiated peace by authorizing Operation Linebacker II, which brought about one of the greatest bombardments of the Vietnam War.<sup>56</sup> Launching B-52 Stratofortresses from Guam, the American military conducted round-the-clock bombing of North Vietnam. Despite bomber heavy losses, the United States managed to force an end to the fighting and set cease fire conditions for the Paris Peace Accords in January 27, 1973, after President Nixon's order to "bomb the bejesus" out of North Vietnam.<sup>57</sup> The peace talks enabled the United States to pull out of the war, but left South Vietnam to its fate. No sooner than the Americans had finished pulling out of the country then North and South Vietnam resumed fighting. The South Vietnamese military, despite being trained and equipped by the United States with the latest military weapons and equipment, were outmaneuvered and outfought. In addition, years of wasteful spending and corruption in South Vietnam left it no longer enjoying the same levels of funding and support. As South Vietnam's military melted

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<sup>55</sup> Gideon Rose, *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010) 162.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>57</sup> John Aloysius Farrell, "Richard Nixon: Deeply Flawed Visionary," in *Triumphs and Tragedies of the Modern Presidency*, Ed. by Maxmillian Angerholzer III, James Kitfield, Norman Ornstein, and Stephen Skowronek, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2016), 294.

away and the country collapsed before the onslaught of the North Vietnamese, Saigon was soon surrounded and conquered on April 30, 1975.

After years of fighting, the Vietnam War was finally over, but the conflict taught powerful lessons to future U.S. political and military leaders about how not to lose future wars. The second half of the 1970s and the decade of the 1980s were more than a time for recovery and healing; they also helped ensure that the powerful role the American people had played during Vietnam – when they helped decide the duration and results of the conflict – would not recur. The case for the AVF set in motion an emotional debate in political and military circles as well as a sea-change in the role the American public would play in future conflicts.

## **Appendix B:**

### **Formation of the All-Volunteer Force**

Establishment of the AVF was a political and military necessity for elected officials in Washington, including presidents based on the results of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Presidents Truman and Johnson saw their decisions to deploy U.S. forces in these regions as necessary to protect U.S. national security. The Truman administration saw North Korea's invasion of South Korea as the beginning of a worldwide communist offensive supported by the Soviet Union, while for the Johnson administration, the threat of South Vietnam falling to communist insurgents was seen as part of the "Domino Theory" in which free countries would be subverted one at a time by communist forces. However, presidential management of these military interventions resulted in political disaster, leading future presidents to decide on how best to fight "dirty little wars" without inciting public opposition that could end their term in office or lose wars. Based on Korea and Vietnam, the lesson U.S. enemies learned arguably was clear: the U.S. could be defeated by dragging out a conflict with its military forces and inflicting enough casualties that compelled the American public to force an end to the conflict.

Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy tried to avoid potential political repercussions of deploying the U.S. military's conscripted forces, each in his own way. For Eisenhower, the New Look Policy focused U.S. national security policy on balancing Cold War commitments with American resources. This meant reducing the size of the conscript force and relying more on strategic nuclear weapons as well as covert operations. This approach allowed the Eisenhower administration to avoid committing U.S. troops in any large scale military deployment as seen in his presidential actions in Indochina and the Middle East. Meanwhile, Kennedy followed a similar approach, but expanded the covert operations piece to include military advisors and his

newly created special forces organization. Unlike the Eisenhower administration's more defensive approach to U.S. national security, Kennedy believed that the United States needed to be more aggressive covertly to roll back communist influence. This was seen first with his supporting the Cuban Bay of Pigs operation and giving military assistance to South Vietnam's counterinsurgency campaign against the Vietcong. Although both administrations enjoyed popular support, they failed to address the possible necessity of having to send the U.S. conscript military to fight an open-ended, unpopular war.

President Nixon would resolve this problem by pursuing an alternative to the conscript force and instead push for a professional military composed of volunteers. Through the Gates Commission, the Nixon administration secured congressional support to end conscription in the United States and to embrace a new military built from people who volunteered and sought military careers. By ending the draft system, American popular opposition to U.S. involvement in a conflict was presumed to be more muted, since people were not being forced to fight for a cause they did not believe. This became apparent when the anti-war protests against U.S. involvement in Vietnam ended when the draft ended. Afterwards, President Nixon's primary concern was getting Congress to continue financial support for the war long enough for him to bring about a peaceful and honorable end to the conflict.

This chapter examines the formation and development of the AVF. It looks at how the AVF differed from the conscript military the U.S. relied on for years. In addition, the AVF was noticeably different in training, organization, and culture, helping produce a U.S. military that differed in operational performance and willingness to fight in conflicts. Even so, the repercussions on the presidential decision to use military force would not be appreciated until after the Cold War.



## *Origins of the AVF*

The creation of the AVF was something that had been considered for years before U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The method of providing the personnel needed to protect the United States and fight its wars gradually evolved in response to changes in both the national and international environments. During colonial times, the individual colonies that eventually became the United States relied on a militia system to help keep order and provide defense for the colony during times of crisis, invasion, or Indian attacks.<sup>1</sup> When the United States won its independence at the end of the American Revolution in 1789, it originally did not have a conscription system; it had no experience with compulsory service until Congress passed a conscription act in 1863 to meet the large personnel needs of the Union armies.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, in *The Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton argued that the defense of the nation would need to rely on the militia and a regular military to protect its frontiers and help maintain order.<sup>3</sup> He did not believe a conscription system was necessary to help maintain its military. Hamilton believed that the military had become too specialized and that drafting people away from their civilian occupations to fight wars would be too difficult, since it would require a lot of training and education. He argued:

The industrious habits of people of the present day, absorbed in the pursuits of gain, and devoted to the improvements of agriculture and commerce are incompatible with the condition of a nation of soldiers, which was the true condition of the people of those republics. The means of revenue, which have been so greatly

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<sup>1</sup> Harry A. Marmion, *The Case Against a Volunteer Army* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Harry A. Marmion, "Historical background of Selective Service in the United States," in *Selective Service and American Society*, Ed. by Roger W. Little (Hartford: Connecticut Printers, Inc., 1969), 52.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, Ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: New American Library, 1961), 61.

multiplied by the increase of gold and silver and of the arts of industry, and the science of finance, which is the offspring of modern times, concurring with the habits of nations, have produced an entire revolution in the system of war, and have rendered disciplined armies, distinct from the body of citizens, the inseparable companion of frequent hostility.<sup>4</sup>

As the country expanded in territory, its political and economic interests expanded as well. The War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War highlighted the need for a full-time professional military under federal government control to serve as a full-time force against potential enemies. In his study of the War of 1812, Donald R. Hickey noted that the American military was grossly unprepared to fight the British in Canada due to glaring shortcomings in its military leadership, recruitment, training, and organizational system. To make matters worse, the militia and volunteers lacked the discipline, experience, and reliability required to fight a war against a professional army from a hostile nation, because most would rather be doing their civilian occupations at home.<sup>5</sup> While throughout the War of 1812 U.S. professional military forces remained small, they served as the core for the mobilization and deployment of U.S. militia and volunteer units. A key limitation of this arrangement was that as the militia and volunteer forces grew in size, the small group of professional military officers and senior enlisted leaders had great difficulty organizing, training, and leading these forces into combat. To make matters worse, the various militia and volunteer units were restricted by their own military codes and state laws that established limitations on length of service and geographic location. The limitations of the militia and volunteer force also appeared in subsequent conflicts in the Mexican-American War and the American Civil War. It was not uncommon that many militia and volunteer units left the ranks after completing their obligated service.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>5</sup> Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 76.

During the latter half of the American Civil War, both Union and Confederate governments used conscription systems, but these systems were new and imperfect, with flaws and loopholes that conscripts exploited to their own advantage. For example, draftees could purchase exemptions or recruit substitutes to fight in their place.<sup>6</sup> As a result, Brevet Brigadier General James Oates, who was responsible for conscription in Illinois during the American Civil War, drafted a report for the United States War Department that was quickly filed and not read until 50 years later, when the Department began to coordinate the mobilization and preparation of the American Expeditionary Force to fight in the First World War. Oates's report noted that if the United States had to implement a law to introduce national conscription, five things must be done:

1. that a system of local boards be set up,
2. that the primary administrative unit be the state rather than the voting district,
3. that each citizen be required to report to a designated center rather than rely on a government door-to-door canvass,
4. that the term of service be for the duration of the conflict, rather than a fixed period,
5. that all bounties, substitutes, and computations of service be eliminated.<sup>7</sup>

Many of these suggestions were implemented with the passage of the Selective Service Act of 1917, which authorized the United States federal government to raise a national force to fight in the First World War through conscription. Two factors primarily influenced the adoption of this personnel system: appreciation of the scale and scope of the type of military force that would be needed to fight the war in Europe against Germany, and more importantly, the lack of American volunteers who were ready, able, and willing to serve in the ranks of the American Expeditionary Force that was being organized to deploy to France to fight on the

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce Catton, *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1960), 484 – 485.

<sup>7</sup> Harry A. Marmion, *The Case Against a Volunteer Army*, 24.

Western Front. Although conscription succeeded in mobilizing the American population to fight in the First World War, the activities of the Selective Service System was quickly curtailed once the armistice was signed with Germany on November 11, 1918; it was terminated by July 1919. However, the Selective Service System would be revived with the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 when it became apparent that the growing threat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during the Second World War would mean it would only be a matter of time before the United States was forced to enter the conflict.

In the years following America's victory in the Second World War and its elevation as a superpower, the need for the AVF was now possible because of a combination of factors. Demographically, the United States population had grown dramatically with the rise of the Baby Boom generation. This generation created a large personnel pool of physically, mentally, and morally fit men who could be recruited to serve as volunteers in the United States Armed Forces. Economically, the United States faced an ever-increasing and complex industrial and market system in which a large, educated and skilled workforce would be necessary to maintain and increase American prosperity. Militarily, with the rise of the Nuclear Age, American forces were more powerful than during the Second World War because their weapons systems were so technologically advanced that specialized military personnel were required to help operate them. In short, the U.S. government seriously considered the early creation of the AVF because it did not want to strain the American economy. Political and military leaders believed that the population surplus would be more than enough to meet the personnel needs of a modern military force in face of the Cold War. As a result, according George Flynn, the antidemocratic bias that was starting to creep into the draft process raised concerns about the Selective Service System. People who were either too old or unhealthy received deferments, but so did individuals who had

key jobs or who were attending college, creating the impression that the draft was unfavorable to the poor and less educated.<sup>8</sup>

Opponents of the AVF believed it would fail because it would be unable to recruit and retain the personnel necessary to protect the United States as well as meet its foreign and defense obligations overseas.<sup>9</sup> Without conscription, advocates argued that the nation would not be strong enough to face the Soviet Union and its allies in the upcoming battles of the Cold War. Seeing the Cold War through the nation's recent experience in the Second World War, opponents saw conscription as essential to the nation's preparedness to prevent a future surprise attack like Pearl Harbor. President Harry Truman's address to Congress in 1948 captured this belief: "I believe that we have learned the importance of maintaining military strength as a means of preventing war. We have found that a sound military system is necessary in time of peace if we are to remain at peace."<sup>10</sup>

However, the Korean War seemed to put the concept of the AVF on hold with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The sudden invasion and the presidential decision to commit American troops resulted in the U.S. getting into a war at the wrong place at the wrong time. Due to five years of defense cuts, the U.S. military was not ready to fight and as a result ended up using the draft because it didn't have time to recruit the manpower it needed to save South Korea from conquest. While the draft succeeded in supplying the U.S. military the forces it needed to throw back the North Korean invasion, the draft continued to pull more conscripts from the American population as it expanded its commitments beyond South Korea. It began to deploy draftees to Europe in preparation against a possible Soviet attack in that theater of

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<sup>8</sup> George Q. Flynn, *The Draft*, 145.

<sup>9</sup> James M. Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy: Issues in Military Manpower Procurement, 1945-1970* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), 118 – 119.

<sup>10</sup> "Truman's Address to Congress, 1948," in *The Draft and Its Enemies*, Ed. by John O'Sullivan and Alan M. Meckler, 206.

operations. In addition, the U.S. attempt to invade and conquer North Korea in order to reunite the country under one democratic government met disaster when China's intervention resulted in heavy American casualties and threatened to expand the scope of the war deep into the Asian mainland as well. The reversal in the Korean War and the possibility that the conflict could expand into Asia and Europe turned American public opinion against President Truman with the end result being the election of President Eisenhower and the signing of the Korean Armistice.

As the Cold War continued, discussion for the creation of an AVF continued intermittently within political and military circles until the Vietnam War. As a result of the sudden increase in operational requirements in South Vietnam, the United States needed more personnel to meet a wide range of combat and combat service support requirements. The United States sought additional personnel to provide experts that could help address South Vietnam's nascent democratic government and public institutions. Finally, American intervention in Vietnam encompassed the threat of a major regional war with the People's Republic of China, because Vietnam bordered China to the north.<sup>11</sup> Despite these risks, the American military did not want to pull troops from its other commitments throughout the world, especially Europe, where both political and military leaders believed the main confrontation with the Soviet Union and communism would still occur. Having to face large Soviet and Warsaw Pact military formations in Central Europe, as well as fighting against other communist forces in various parts of the world, American leaders believed that the draft was the best approach to meet the Vietnam War's growing personnel needs.

Going back to the Civil War, the draft had been controversial in the United States. After registering for the draft and being randomly selected by lottery, American males reported to mobilization centers for evaluation and processing in preparation for follow-on training and

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<sup>11</sup> James M. Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, 275.

serving in the military for a certain amount of time. Although the problems with the draft system, as seen with exemptions and loopholes, created disgruntlement, it also gave the American people a vested interest in the wars that the United States undertook in various parts of the world. A study conducted by the Rand Corporation about the reasons for the push to create the AVF stated, “The basic policy problem of the Sixties [and Seventies] can be traced to the growing inequity of the selective service draft created by the selective way that the burden of military service was applied to young men of military age.”<sup>12</sup>

### ***Decision to Create the AVF***

The systematic unfairness of the draft, combined with the thousands of American casualties suffered from the Vietnam War, led to massive anti-war protests. These protests impacted the ability to draft able-bodied Americans to serve in Vietnam and led to nationwide civil disorder. This in turn brought extreme pressure through congressional elections to end the Vietnam War as quickly as possible. To make the war more emotional and real for the rest of the U.S., anti-war organizers changed the tone of the protests from being low-key and solemn gatherings into graphic, highly charged events. Protestors used acts and props, such as fake body bags and cans filled with red paint to represent blood, to visually communicate the Vietnam War on the streets and campuses.<sup>13</sup> The Tet Offensive in 1968 only fueled the anti-war movement when it became clear to Americans that the United States was no closer to defeating the communist insurgency and ending the war in Vietnam. Despite appeals from the government to

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<sup>12</sup> Richard V.L. Cooper, *The All-Volunteer Force – The Emerging National Debate* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1977), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew E. Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans against the War*, (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 82.

maintain the course, the American people voted for a change in leadership with the election of President Richard Nixon, who promised to end the Vietnam War and the military draft as well.

Upon becoming President, Nixon initiated a special commission on March 27, 1969, to look into the viability of ending the draft and the possibility of creating the AVF. Led by former Secretary of Defense Thomas S. Gates, Jr., the commission spent the next several months looking into the pros and cons of the American draft system against the AVF. Originally, Gates opposed the concept of the AVF, but during the course of the investigation, he changed his mind, and his report argued that it was possible for the United States to recruit and maintain the AVF without having to compromise U.S. national security at home or abroad. The committee's conclusions:

We have examined how the return to volunteer forces might affect the decision to use U.S. military power. We conclude that the recommended All-Volunteer Force will actually increase democratic participation in decisions concerning the use of military force. We reject the fear of increased military aggressiveness or reduced civilian concern following the return to an All-Volunteer Force.<sup>14</sup>

The report triggered a debate in political and military circles over whether the AVF was doomed to fail. Many in the civilian population viewed military careers with suspicion; service members worked long hours, were always deployed or training, enjoyed very few opportunities to spend time with family, and frequently did not pick up meaningful skills for careers in the civilian sector. Some viewed the creation of the AVF as a danger to American society, not so much through the potential subversion of democratic rights and institutions, but the possible creation of a social welfare organization in which the American citizen would be paying for the service member to serve in the ranks as well as taking care of that service member's family and

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<sup>14</sup> President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Force, *The Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 155.



medical expenses. In other words, the government would now be responsible for paying for service members' families' food, support, and medical care, including for family members with complex medical conditions and diseases. This possibility raised the question: was the potential price for each service member, especially those with large families, worth it? It also presented another question: would the American public be willing to pay for all this care? The answer to both questions was an unequivocal "yes"; Americans did not want to be coerced to serve in the military. Instead of required military service, many were willing to pay increased taxes in order to attract more volunteers into the AVF.<sup>15</sup> As Bernard D. Rostker pointed out, "As the cost of the draft climbed [in past U.S. wars], so also did the pressure to end it... The full social cost is a lower bound estimate of the price of freedom."<sup>16</sup>

### ***Transition from Conscripted to Volunteer Force***

Making the transition from an all-draft to an all-volunteer military force during the middle of a war was both difficult and time consuming. President Nixon knew that the existing draft law was due to expire in June 1971 and requested a two-year extension in order to maintain American military strength in Vietnam until he could find a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. As a result, Nixon worked closely with key members of Congress to overcome Senator Mike Gravel's opposition to the draft renewal bill, and he was able to buy time for the military in its efforts in Vietnam. In addition, the U.S. military implemented a series of ambitious recruitment programs that used a combination of media advertisements, monetary incentives, and promises

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<sup>15</sup> John T. Warner and Beth J. Asch, "The Record and Prospects of the All-Volunteer Military in the United States," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2001), 188.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Y. Oi, "No More Greetings" in *The All-Volunteer Force: Thirty Years of Service*, Ed. by Barbara A. Bicksler, Curtis L. Gilroy, and John T. Warner (Washington D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2004), 47.

of better quality of living to attract volunteers.<sup>17</sup> Through these efforts, Nixon succeeded in making the AVF a legal reality and managed to undercut the anti-war movement in Vietnam. Due to this strategy, the President gained enough time to use the military to leverage peace out of North Vietnam as well as to conduct some diplomatic maneuvering that brought the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China to pressure North Vietnam to come to terms with the Americans at the peace conference.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the draft system ending in December 1972 when the United States withdrew the last American combat troops from South Vietnam, the American military continued to suffer from poor morale and low-quality troops.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the military leadership was still facing a variety of morale problems in a post-Vietnam force, including rampant desertion, racism, drug use, and crime.<sup>20</sup> To make matters worse, the United States faced crises on the Korean Peninsula, problems in the Middle East due to the Arab-Israel conflict, and growing Soviet aggression in its involvement with various regions of the developing world, especially Africa and South America.

To add to the misery of the military, its Commander-in-Chief resigned on August 9, 1974, and Congress dramatically cut the military budget to address pressing domestic issues at home, including an ailing economy, growing unemployment and crime, decay of cities, and a variety of social issues.<sup>21</sup> The American military was mostly unprepared to deal with the challenges it faced, and over the next several years, it was not involved in high-visibility missions. The rapid decline of the U.S. military force was underlined by the *Mayaguez* Incident

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<sup>17</sup> David E. Rosenbaum, "Gravel Speaks 3 Hours," *The New York Times*, June 30, 1971, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/30/archives/gravel-speaks-3-hours-senator-reading-study-to-press.html> (accessed October 13, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 695.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 694.

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 82.

<sup>21</sup> John Aloysius Farrell, "Richard Nixon: Deeply Flawed Visionary," 293.

in Cambodia during 1975, Operation Eagle Claw in Iran in 1980, and the Multinational Force in Lebanon from 1982 to 1984.<sup>22</sup> In each of these operations, the American military found itself unprepared and as a result suffered unnecessary casualties as well as major political embarrassments for Presidents Ford, Carter, and Reagan.

During these setbacks, the U.S. military began to transition to the AVF. This transition was prolonged by the legacy of the Vietnam War. The U.S. military was exhausted by fighting one of the longest wars in American history, and the nation had been nearly torn apart by the conflict. Thus, while the Gates Commission during the Nixon administration concluded that establishing and maintaining a large military force was possible without the need for conscription, the design and implementation of this force began during the Ford administration, and the transition to it was not complete until the end of the President Reagan's second term in 1989.<sup>23</sup> In short, the AVF was reorganized and rebuilt from the ground up to ensure it was more professionally trained and technologically advanced in order to continue fighting conventional wars against potential hostile states such as the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations.<sup>24</sup>

Under the supervision of battle-tested military leaders from the Vietnam War, the U.S. armed forces began by focusing on recruitment and retention programs. Leaders raised recruitment standards by requiring all potential service members to have high school degrees or the equivalent, be physically and mentally fit, and not have any felony convictions. In addition, in order to attract better-quality recruits, the Services also began offering financial incentives, enlistment bonuses, preferred military occupational specialties, college funding as well as

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<sup>22</sup> Edwin P. Hoyt, *America's Wars*, 482 – 483.

<sup>23</sup> Phillip Carter, Katherine Kidder, Amy Schafer, and Andrew Swick, "All-Volunteer Force 4.0: The Future of the All-Volunteer Force," *Center for a New American Security*, March 2017, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/All-Volunteer-Force-4-0-the-future-of-the-all-volunteer-force> (accessed on October 14, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents*, 41.

specialized skills and training.<sup>25</sup> These new standards and benefits combined to produce an influx of highly qualified recruits who could be trained and educated to serve and fight in a new highly modernized American military.

As better quality recruits began to populate the officer and enlisted ranks, the Services also began to crack down on the poor morale and quality of troops left over from the Vietnam War. Disciplinary measures were against service members with drug, alcohol, and criminal problems, having them removed and discharged from duty. In addition, physical fitness and training programs were improved to help rebuild discipline, restore *esprit de corps*, and increase military competence within the ranks. Finally, various financial, social, and educational programs were established to give service members opportunities for self-improvement. The growth and influence of these programs gradually improved and was refined over the years so that service members were better trained and educated for the realities of combat. As a result, the rank and file of the AVF were highly motivated to use initiative and judgment in helping the U.S. military operate faster and more effectively.

Additional programs were instrumental in helping rebuild and improve the American military. Family readiness and equal opportunity programs began to take form in the AVF. Understanding that the U.S armed services needed to improve its quality of life to attract and maintain high-quality officers and enlisted personnel, military leaders began to push for dramatic changes in military life.<sup>26</sup> The military established family readiness programs and offices to help service members and their families cope with the long hours and stressful demands of the military. Family readiness kept families notified about important events and deployments and provided a mechanism for spouses and relatives to reach out to unit commanders to address

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<sup>25</sup> John T. Warner and Beth J. Asch, “The Record and Prospects of the All-Volunteer Military in the United States,” 181.

<sup>26</sup> Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 140 – 141.

problems within the unit or family. In addition, family readiness programs offered experts, classes, and offices to help families obtain food, clothing, childrearing, education, or medical care. Finally, newly created equal opportunity programs addressed long-lived religious and racial divisions within the ranks by providing mandatory training, counseling, and venues to report cases of workplace hostility and discrimination.

Looking beyond the recruitment and personnel systems, military leaders still envisioned that the next conflict after Vietnam would be in Europe, where the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would one day have to face a potential war with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations. In planning for a potential confrontation against the Soviet Union, the United States refocused its efforts in training and equipping its military forces with state-of-the-art technology and realistic training to ensure that service members were able to survive and thrive in such a high-intensity conflict. New and improved tanks, artillery, mechanized vehicles, attack helicopters, strategic bombers, nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, and jet fighters were developed and tested, thanks to close relationships with commercial defense industries that specialized in military technology, weaponry, and aviation such as General Electric, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, General Dynamics, and Lockheed Martin.<sup>27</sup> Not only did these new systems prove to be lethal and effective, but they relied heavily on computer systems that enabled American forces to move and attack at an extraordinary pace. Michael Hunt, however, pointed out the trade-off for aligning industries closely with the AVF: “To minimize the size of that force and to achieve market efficiencies, the Department of Defense privatized a wide range of military functions. Between 1994 and 2002 the Pentagon signed contracts worth \$300 billion to ‘outsource’ numerous programs and services such as food services, base upkeep, supply,

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<sup>27</sup> Bevin Alexander, *The Future of War*, 81.

intelligence gathering, language translation, advanced weapons systems management, covert operations, and even running ROTC programs.”<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces sought to create first-class training areas and facilities for its military forces that would enable service members to rehearse, visualize, and condition themselves for every aspect of killing on the battlefield.<sup>29</sup> With congressional support, the military secured large centers, usually in distant, isolated locations that were safely away from local population centers. Locations such as the Fort Irwin National Training Center and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms allowed for large-scale unit maneuvers and training in various tactical scenarios.<sup>30</sup> These types of facilities permitted live fire exercises to help train troops in the use of new and complicated weapon systems as well as allowed the commanders and their staffs to operate in war games against each other. By making the training, exercises, and war games as realistic as possible, they helped build the confidence and skill of air, ground, and naval units to ensure that they were able to perform optimally under the most hostile conditions of combat.

As the AVF was being rebuilt, a subtle shift occurred in the American military’s culture and outlook toward the presidency, Congress, and the American people. The legacy of the Vietnam War left scars on the U.S. military’s psyche that was passed to future generations of service members.<sup>31</sup> The military leaders who had served and fought in the Vietnam War thought that the conflict was not lost on the battlefields of Southeast Asia, but at home. Many Vietnam-era service members believed that micromanagement and scrutiny by political leaders and

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<sup>28</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained & Wielded Global Dominance*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 299 – 300.

<sup>29</sup> Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, (New York: Back Bay Books, 1996), 254.

<sup>30</sup> David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy*, 300.

government officials in Washington, D.C., led to the military's failure on the battlefield. In support, these service members repeated stories about elected officials such as President Johnson maintaining a sand table of Khe Sanh in the basement of the White House while receiving daily reports of the siege, as well as the Commander-in-Chief famously reviewing and picking targets for air strikes.<sup>32</sup> These perspectives generated harsh internal debates, accusations, and recriminations within the military, and led to the publication of countless books and articles that tried to pinpoint how the American military "lost" the Vietnam War. As a result, military leaders of the AVF were adamant that they would not put American forces in compromising positions that set them up for failure and defeat.<sup>33</sup> This commitment was key as the AVF refocused its efforts against the Soviet Union while developing a wariness of deploying troops in open-ended conflicts with questionable gains. Although the military leadership tried to remain apolitical, they used the legacy of Vietnam to push for more funding and support for personnel, weapons, and training initiatives for the AVF. In 1972, as the Vietnam War was drawing to a close, the Gates Commission reported that the AVF would cost \$463 million for pay increases, \$105.2 million for recruitment and advertising, \$66.5 million for special problems and medical care, \$209 million for quality of life, and \$446 million toward other expenses.<sup>34</sup>

U.S. military leadership supported the policies and objectives that political leaders established for the Vietnam War. However, problems arose when civilian leaders refused to give the military the autonomy military officers believed was necessary to achieve those objectives. Just as in the Korean War, in Vietnam, the American military believed its hands were tied in how

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Pisor, *The End of the Line: The Siege of Khe Sanh*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 134.

<sup>33</sup> Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 318.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 2006), 167.

and where it fought; it was unable to attack the Vietnamese insurgency in its safe havens in North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Despite the use of air power to destroy insurgency bases and supply routes, the deployment of American ground forces was kept strictly within South Vietnam, with the exception of the U.S. invasion of Cambodia from April to July 1970.<sup>35</sup> As a result of this experience, civilian and military officials reached an understanding about how the AVF would operate in future conflicts: the president and other civilian officials would dictate the policy objectives, while the AVF would be allowed to operate and fight without interference. This agreement meant that the military leadership would be less passive in its advice in presidential decision-making when the AVF was deployed.

Meanwhile, Vietnam severely damaged the relationship between the U.S. military and the American people. Growing popular resistance to the draft focused hostility on the U.S. military as the fighting escalated in Vietnam. As the brutality of the Vietnam War mounted, so did the atrocities. For example, the My Lai Massacre in March 1968 came to represent a complete breakdown of morality and discipline in the U.S. military. While individual service members such as Hugh Thomas, Jr., Glenn Andreotta, and Lawrence Colburn intervened to stop the massacre from getting worse, the public learned about the incident after it was revealed that the American military had attempted to cover it up.<sup>36</sup> Investigative journalism, combined with reports from the field, soon revealed the scope of the atrocities committed in My Lai when *Time* and *Life* magazines published articles describing what had happened. Public outrage erupted, and although the military did take legal action against those involved in the massacre, the damage to its reputation had been done. For many, all military service members were associated

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<sup>35</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam*, 609.

<sup>36</sup> Trent Angers, "Nixon and the My Lai Massacre Cover-up," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2014, <https://nypost.com/2014/03/15/richard-nixon-and-the-my-lai-massacre-coverup/> (accessed October 14, 2018).



with the My Lai Massacre, and the public readily believed rumors of other atrocities and suspected cover ups. Scott Brooks Miller, from Spokane, Washington, returning to the United States after serving with the Marines in Vietnam described his experience during his return home, “We took the brunt of the anger of the American people...I was spat on and that moment in time came to symbolize to me the way that the American people felt about me [and my service in the military.]”<sup>37</sup>

Memories of the backlash and the neglect suffered in the aftermath of the Vietnam War lingered among military leaders and veterans. The frustration, bitterness, and sense of betrayal many in the military felt played an important factor as it slowly recovered from the trauma of Vietnam. As the AVF began to take shape, some senior military officials believed that U.S. civilian leaders and the public caused the United States to lose the Vietnam War.<sup>38</sup> In this view, despite winning almost every battle in Vietnam and making many positive changes in South Vietnam, the U.S. military lost the war due to the interference of elected officials and their appointees as well as an unreliable civilian population. In short, the formation of the AVF created a new dynamic in which top military leaders could now use their Vietnam experience to leverage a greater degree of freedom and external support for their actions.

With the creation of the AVF, the military could no longer rely on the Selective Service System to meet its personnel requirements. Instead the Armed Services had to spend money annually to screen and recruit qualified people to serve in the military. Tens of millions of dollars have been invested in professional recruiters, engaging commercials, and offers of financial bonuses, promised career paths, technical training, and college tuition to attract potential volunteers. In addition, the number and variety of potential volunteers had expanded

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<sup>37</sup> Bob Greene, *Homecoming: When the Soldiers Returned from Vietnam*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1989), 18.

<sup>38</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy*, 234.

since 1973, and it continued to expand well into the 21st century, when the force included people of both sexes, many races and ethnicities, and diverse sexual orientations. However, while the AVF has diversified its recruitment efforts, the military culture remained, as illustrated by the divisions that remained between the military and civilian populations. The bitterness and betrayal of the Vietnam War gradually gave way to elitism, as some accused the American military of looking down on the civilian leaders and the public they have sworn to defend.<sup>39</sup>

Other changes in the AVF focused on ensuring all service members maximized their potentials. With a career track that could potentially last between 20 to 30 years, volunteers could now look to advancing in the enlisted or officer ranks based on a promotion system built mostly around meritocracy. With opportunities for additional training and education from schools, service members now had the opportunity to advance in responsibility and pay, and they could look forward to being more marketable in the commercial or government sectors after military service. In addition, the AVF offered more responsive human resources management by matching skills and abilities with career fields and assignments. This innovation was especially impactful for women who, after decades of being assigned to combat service support roles, could now serve in all military assignments, including the combat arms and Special Forces. By redefining itself during its transition and evolution from the 1970s to 2019, the AVF is no longer seen as a “dead end” job, but as a potential career that enabled volunteers to serve their country and maximize their full potential.

The transformation of the U.S. military brought changes that had repercussions in future wars. Even with the end of the draft and the Vietnam War, the military attracted people who wanted to enter the service of their own free will. Despite the anti-war atmosphere and cynicism in the United States during the closing months of the Vietnam War, thousands of volunteers

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<sup>39</sup> Olivia Lanaras, “The Negative Effects of an All-Volunteer Force,” 25 – 26.

flocked to the U.S. military's recruiting stations. This surge in recruits occurred especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the United States suffered through a variety of economic ailments, including two recessions and an energy crisis that resulted in high unemployment and an unstable economy.

A review of the studies conducted to determine recruits' reasons for joining the AVF revealed that service attracted most for a variety of reasons. Some reported they joined out of a sense of patriotism and volunteerism to serve the United States, though financial opportunities and the potential for a stable career that would enable them to advance up the ranks, also were important.<sup>40</sup> A look at the demographics revealed that the composition of the AVF was not very different from the draft-supported force. Despite aggressive recruiting, financial incentives, and educational opportunities, the force was mostly composed of Caucasians, followed by African Americans, and smaller numbers of Asian Americans and others. Meanwhile, most volunteers were from the lower middle and working classes. Although physical, mental, and educational qualification requirements increased in the recruitment of officers and enlisted, the demographics remained roughly the same. Upper and middle class volunteers in the ranks remained few, especially when the AVF was established and evolved into a competitive, attractive career.

### ***Conclusion***

Although physically and mentally qualified volunteers improved the performance and quality of the AVF during the 1970s and 1980s, the question of how well these volunteers would perform in a potential regional war had yet to be tested. The legacy of Vietnam War and the fall of Saigon, capturing the zeitgeist of U.S. failure, influenced American foreign policy, especially

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<sup>40</sup> Jared Keller, "The Top 5 Reasons Soldiers Really Join the Army, According to Junior Enlisted," *Task & Purpose*, May 14, 2018, <https://taskandpurpose.com/5-reasons-soldiers-join-army/> (accessed October 14, 2018).

the possible deployment of military forces overseas.<sup>41</sup> This influence was particularly apparent when small military detachments were sent to various parts of the world to provide security and assistance to countries that were of strategic importance to the United States. Military units were deployed to Lebanon in 1982 to serve as peacekeepers, to Grenada in 1983 to restore its government after being overthrown by communists, and to Panama in 1989 to depose the Dictator Manuel Noriega. In each case, according to Chaim Kaufmann, “Opponents have painted each prospective intervention as another Vietnam. This understanding has gone largely unchallenged, because proponents of [sic] interventions have generally conceded that any commitment of U.S. ground troops... would be disastrous.”<sup>42</sup> Yet although these operations were limited in scope and did not align with the military’s focus on conventional high-intensity warfare with the Soviet Union and other peer state competitors, they provided invaluable combat and operational experience for the future low-intensity conflicts the AVF would find itself embroiled in during the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

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<sup>41</sup> James Stavridis, *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World’s Oceans* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 182.

<sup>42</sup> Chaim Kaufmann, “Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars,” in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, Ed. by Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 394.

## **Appendix C:**

### **Testing the All-Volunteer Force**

Although the creation of the AVF transformed how the U.S. military trained and fought based on changes in its recruitment and support programs, its use by U.S. presidents in conflicts following the Vietnam War would be gradual. This hesitance to use military force overseas during the 1970's and 1980's was based in large part on the legacy of Vietnam and presidential fears of the American public's reactions to the U.S. being involved in another conflict. It would not be until the first major regional conflict in the Middle East with Iraq during the 1990's that U.S. presidential actions began to change. The quick and almost bloodless victory of the AVF in the Middle East eventually would be followed by more U.S. military operations in Africa and Europe.

In the Persian Gulf War, President H.W. Bush enjoyed an all-time high of 89% approval rating in using the AVF, while President Bill Clinton had cold to lukewarm approval ratings for using the U.S. military in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. For these latter conflicts, the concern was not the casualties, spending, or an anti-war movement, but instead the people publicly questioning the president's decision to use American forces to fight in these countries. President Clinton's decision to keep U.S. service members in harm's way rankled the American public and they made it clear through the opinion polls and siding with the Republican Party during the election season in order to put pressure on the presidency and the Democratic Party during the voting season to terminate the conflict and bring the troops home.

This chapter examines the events, public support, and costs of the 1990's, demonstrating that this decade was a testing period for both the AVF and presidential use of military force. The

period not only saw increased U.S. military intervention in dangerous parts of the world, but also set the stage for long-term U.S. involvement in various open-ended conflicts and police actions. Unlike the Vietnam War, the American people supported the AVF and expressed its support through countless public events and ceremonies, but at the same time were not overwhelmingly supportive of U.S. involvement in its series of small wars throughout the 1990's.

### ***New World Disorder***

By 1990, the AVF was one of the largest, most powerful militaries in the world. Forces were trained in high-intensity conventional warfare and supplied with electronic state-of-the-art weapons and equipment for a war in Central Europe with the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations. Plans for a global conflict presupposed tanks, armored personnel carriers, fixed-wing aircraft and attack helicopters engaging equally trained and equipped Soviet forces in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. However, after years of training and preparation, the AVF did not face the Soviet Union; instead it faced hostile state and nonstate actors around the globe.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union had collapsed due to a variety of internal troubles. It had lost a ten-year war against Afghanistan, its economy had stagnated, and its population faced massive food shortages.<sup>2</sup> Without a shot being fired by the NATO nations, the Soviet Union dissolved in a wave of democratic and nationalistic movements that successfully pushed for freedom, democracy, and self-determination. The end of the Cold War and the sudden transformation of the international system, brought about what President G.W. Bush called a “New World Order.” Many dramatic changes took place in the international system.<sup>3</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Zinni, *Battle Ready* (London: Pan Books, 2004), 188.

<sup>2</sup> David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran, *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), 679.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 804 – 805.

changes included increased nuclear disarmament, strengthening of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), regional integration in Europe and Southeast Asia, and German reunification, as well as a greater push for human rights and free trade.

During this period, the United States found itself the hegemon of a unipolar system with no hostile peer competitors. Without a war to fight, some saw the AVF as a financial burden, and elected officials began to talk about the “peace dividend,” in which the military budget would be drastically cut to reallocate government funding toward paying off the national debt, modernizing the country’s transportation and communication infrastructure, reinvesting in improving its educational institutions, and expanding social programs. Although the end of the Cold War did indeed bring about a “New World Order,” some have instead pointed out that it brought a “New World Disorder” that unleashed national, ethnic, and religious forces previously held in check by the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the power vacuum created by the end of the Soviet Union brought conflict, unrest, and crisis to Europe, Africa, and Asia. This turmoil threatened destabilization and war.

### ***The Gulf War***

Although the AVF trained specifically for a conventional war, it adapted to the changing strategic and operational environments. Its first test was a conventional war in the Middle East when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990.<sup>5</sup> With Iraq possessing one of the largest modern militaries in the world, some in the international community feared that Saddam’s ambitions went beyond Kuwait and included Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. If Saddam had conquered the region, Iraq would have controlled the largest oil reserves in the

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<sup>4</sup> Tony Zinni, *The Battle for Peace: A Frontline Vision of America’s Power and Purpose* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 188.

<sup>5</sup> Rose Gideon, *How Wars End*, 202 – 203.

world. In this scenario, Saddam could set prices at whatever rate he wanted as a means to enrich himself, legitimize his conquests, and dominate the rest of the Middle East. As a result, President H.W. Bush began to rally political, military, and economic support from the international community to begin building a coalition against Saddam Hussein.<sup>6</sup>

Through Bush's political and diplomatic maneuvering, he obtained authorization from both the U.S. Congress and the UN to use military force to remove Saddam from Kuwait. In what became Operation Desert Shield, for the first time since the Vietnam War, the United States deployed a large military force over 7,000 miles away, this time to fight in the Middle East. To support the AVF against the Iraqi army, President Bush built an international coalition of trusted allies, nonaligned states, and former adversaries to deploy their militaries to help protect Saudi Arabia and prepare for combat operations to liberate Kuwait.<sup>7</sup>

The President enjoyed both domestic and international support for deploying the AVF. Unlike the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the authorization to use military force against Iraq was based on the specific objective of stopping Iraqi aggression in the Middle East and using military force to liberate Kuwait from the oppression of Saddam Hussein. Even though some critics argued that the AVF in the Middle East would eventually become bogged down in another Vietnam, others argued that this conflict was necessary in order to protect American interests and preserve international order. For both the United States and the world, the deployment of the AVF was seen as necessary in order to liberate the sovereign nation of Kuwait as well as keep the world's energy supply available to all countries.<sup>8</sup> In a 62-question poll conducted by *The New York Times*, from a sample of 1,000 adults interviewed between September 21 and 26, 1990, nine

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<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey J. Matthews, "Exemplary Followership," in *The Art of Command: Military Leadership from George Washington to Colin Powell*, Ed. by Harry S. Laver and Jeffrey J. Matthews (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2008), 255.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Lee Lanning, *The Military 100*, 300.

<sup>8</sup> Bevin Alexander, *The Future of War*, 22.



out of ten Americans were not ready for the country to start a war, while seven out of ten said the United States should not consider starting a war until the economic blockade of Iraq was given a chance to work. However, two-thirds of those polled were very supportive of American military readiness in the Middle East against future Iraqi aggression.<sup>9</sup>

Part of this popular support may have been due to the U.S. military being composed of volunteers instead of draftees. To prevent losing public support, elected officials calmed American fears that a potential war with Iraq would require activation of the draft to meet military personnel requirements. In spite of both civilian and military leaders believing that the AVF was up to the fight ahead, some privately feared that American and coalition forces would sustain heavy losses and that a campaign against the Iraqi Army would be lengthy. This initial assessment was based on political, economic, and military factors according to intelligence on Iraq. In 1990, Iraq was one of the largest, richest states in the Middle East. Its wealth was based primarily on energy resources in the form of oil and natural gas, which the developed world (especially the U.S. and western Europe) relied upon for its economy. In addition, Saddam's dictatorship was firmly in control of Iraq based on years in which its government and security forces dominated and forced compliance in Iraq's Kurdish, Sunni, and Shia populations. Finally, Iraq possessed one of the largest, most powerful militaries in the world. The country had just recently emerged from nearly eight years of war with Iran in which tens of thousands of lives were lost in a long war of attrition. The Iraqi military was viewed as battle-hardened and experienced from eight years of conventional warfare; it possessed modern weapons, equipment,

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Oreskes, "Confrontation in the Gulf; Poll Finds Strong Support for Bush's Goals, but Reluctance to Start War," *The New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/01/world/confrontation-gulf-poll-finds-strong-support-for-bush-s-goals-but-reluctance.html> (accessed October 14, 2018).

tanks, planes, missiles, antiaircraft systems and—disconcertingly—biological and chemical weapons, which it used against its people and during the Iran-Iraq War against Iranian soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

Based on these reservations, the ghosts of Vietnam lingered in U.S. consciousness. Civilian and military leaders feared a long, drawn-out war that would cost tens of thousands of American casualties, which could potentially mean that the intensity and violence of the coming war would drain its personnel pool. Even at the outset, Operation Desert Shield called on the largest activation and mobilization of reserves since the Second World War in order to strengthen forces deployed in Saudi Arabia as well as prepare for offensive operations in Iraq and Kuwait.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the American population's behavior during the military buildup and preparations for war was completely different than its behavior during the Vietnam War. In general, the American public overwhelmingly supported President H.W. Bush, the AVF, and the need for military force to stop Iraqi aggression in the Middle East. In a *New York Times* poll, of the 867 people interviewed, Bush stood at 84% for his handling of the crisis in the Middle East, while 76% believed that the United States was right in using military force against Iraq. However, only about 20% believed that the war would be over in a few weeks.<sup>12</sup>

Operation Desert Shield transitioned to Operation Desert Storm on January 17, 1991, when the United States and the coalition launched a massive air campaign to destroy Iraq's military capabilities, including its industries, infrastructure, communications, supply centers, airfields, and ground forces. General Charles Horner, who commanded the American aerial forces during Operation Desert Storm, later reflected on the operation, "No one should imply that

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<sup>10</sup> Efraim Karsh and Martin Navias, "Iraq Military Power and Its Threat to Regional Stability," *Harvard International Review* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1990/91), 12.

<sup>11</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Clymer, "War in the Gulf: Public Opinion; Poll Finds Deep Backing While Optimism Fades," *The New York Times*, January 22, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/22/us/war-in-the-gulf-public-opinion-poll-finds-deep-backing-while-optimism-fades.html> (accessed September 6, 2018).

the air war was nothing more than a ‘turkey shoot.’...Our success was the result of superior equipment, training, and tactics; our countermeasures were better; and we were able to overcome their air defenses in a very short time.”<sup>13</sup> After a month of air operations, U.S. and coalition forces launched the ground campaign that quickly pinned down and surrounded Iraq’s large military formations in Kuwait. In less than four days, the Iraqi military suffered a devastating defeat, Kuwait was liberated, and revolution threatened to overthrow Saddam’s dictatorship.

Despite some American civilian and military leaders who urged the President to authorize the AVF to move into Iraq and overthrow Saddam Hussein, the Commander-in-Chief stayed within the political and military objectives initially established when Iraq first conquered Kuwait. His concern was based on domestic and international considerations rather than the AVF’s readiness for a possible invasion of Iraq to overthrow Saddam. Back home, the quick, crushing victory by the United States in the Gulf War elevated President Bush’s popularity and support for the war. With relatively few casualties, Bush rallied American support and liberated a weak, oil-rich country, safeguarding U.S. interests in the Middle East and deterring potential aggressors from challenging American hegemony in a post-Cold War world. As David Isenberg observed, “The Persian Gulf War of 1990-91 is perceived by many military and civilian analysts as the benchmark against which to measure likely future conflicts. It also is seen as a war that is likely to be repeated in the future.”<sup>14</sup>

With the success of the Gulf War, the possibility of pushing into Iraq and taking Baghdad in order to overthrow Saddam was a possibility; however, such a move also was potentially bloody. During Operation Desert Storm, most of Saddam’s Republican Guard, the best trained

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<sup>13</sup> Charles A. Horner, “Desert Shield / Desert Storm: An Overview,” *Air Power History* 38, no. 3 (Fall 1991), 7.

<sup>14</sup> David Isenberg, “Desert Storm Redux?” *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 3 (Summer, 1993), 429.

and equipped troops in the Iraqi military, managed to escape into Iraq and would more than likely have fought to the death since they would now be fighting in their homeland.<sup>15</sup> In addition, President Bush believed that the revolution started by the Kurds and Shia populations in Iraq would be more than capable of overthrowing Saddam from power.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, internationally, the United States rallied global support to build a military coalition for the Gulf War based strictly on the objectives of stopping Iraqi aggression and liberating Kuwait. Now that this task was complete, an invasion of Iraq would only ruin worldwide support for the United States and, worse, would antagonize the Arab states and splinter the coalition. As the President announced victory from the Oval Office in February 27, 1991, he concluded, “We must now begin to look beyond victory in war. We must meet the challenge of securing the peace.”<sup>17</sup>

Many claimed the AVF’s performance during the Gulf War ended the legacy of the Vietnam War, but the lightning victory took civilian and military leaders by surprise based on how quickly the conflict was fought and concluded at such low cost. As victorious U.S. military forces returned to a proud, grateful nation, they were the focus of extensive media coverage, public events, and even big military parades in New York City and Washington, D.C. Thus, the use of the AVF became an option during 1990s and beyond when the new U.S. military proved to be ready and willing to fight the nation’s future wars and conflicts.<sup>18</sup>

Civilian and military leaders did not know, however, how the American people would react to the AVF being used in future conflicts. By December 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union was complete, and the new Russian Federation established a representative democratic

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<sup>15</sup> Mark C. Nowland, “The Iraqi Republican Guard Basra Escape,” *Eliminating the Rhetoric: An Evaluation of the Halt-Phase Strategy* (Feb. 1, 2001), 62.

<sup>16</sup> Jon Meacham, *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush* (New York: Random House, 2015), 467.

<sup>17</sup> Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Gregory A. Raymond, *From War to Peace: Fateful Decisions in International Politics*, (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 189.

<sup>18</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, (New York: Bantam Book, 1992), 571.

government under its first elected president, Boris Yeltsin.<sup>19</sup> As Russia strove to deal with political, economic, and social problems at home, former Russian client states found themselves cut off from support and on their own. Without Russian power to keep things in check, dormant national, ethnic, and religious animosities rekindled, and a series of local conflicts broke out, threatening the peace and stability of the international system. The UN had difficulty bringing these conflicts under control and looked to the United States for help, especially since its victory in the Gulf War demonstrated that American military capabilities remained second to none. As a result, U.S. leaders found themselves turning more and more to the AVF to help address and resolve these conflicts.

### ***Somalia Intervention***

Somalia became an international hotspot shortly after the conclusion of the Gulf War when President Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown, and the country quickly spiraled into chaos as various Somali clans battled each other for political supremacy.<sup>20</sup> As warfare escalated, the country's government and public services collapsed, resulting in most Somalis without food, medicine, or shelter. In order to end the fighting and use the suffering to their political advantage, warring Somali clans began to use these basic human requirements as a means to expand and consolidate their power in the country.<sup>21</sup> The fighting dragged on, however, and the situation became a humanitarian crisis, in which thousands of Somalis died from starvation, disease, and exposure. The UN authorized the creation of a task force in Somalia to help restore governance in the country as well as to provide humanitarian relief. When it became apparent

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<sup>19</sup> David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran, *A History of Russia*, 661.

<sup>20</sup> Mohamed Haji Ingiriis, "The Making of the 1990 Manifesto: Somalia's Last Chance for State Survival," *Northeast African Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012), 64.

<sup>21</sup> Bill Rudich and Dave Pruitt, "Operation Restore Hope," *The Military Engineer* 109, no. 707 (March-April 2017), 83.

that the UN mission in Somalia was failing, President H.W. Bush offered to send U.S. forces as part of a multinational force to help secure the country and assist with humanitarian operations. The President justified his decision: “I understand the United States alone cannot right the world’s wrongs...But we also know that some crises in the world cannot be resolved without American involvement, that American action is often necessary as a catalyst for broader involvement in the community of nations.”<sup>22</sup>

The UN accepted this offer, and the United States ordered the deployment of the AVF to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope. On December 9, 1992, working with 24 countries in its multinational force, the U.S. military spearheaded the effort with an amphibious landing conducted by Marines on the beaches of Somalia, seized Mogadishu, and quickly spread to secure the surrounding country.<sup>23</sup> Despite the AVF being equipped and trained for conventional warfare, it proved to be adaptable and quickly assessed conditions in Somalia in order to adjust tactics, techniques and procedures in an austere, dynamic operational environment. Having no experience working with Somalis or with civilian humanitarian organizations on the ground, the AVF nonetheless quickly restored peace and order to allow the flow of relief supplies and services to the Somali people. In addition, the U.S. military and its multinational partners separated the warring clans and helped the UN mission begin tentative talks about a political settlement. The discussions between the warring clans were geared toward ending the fighting and begin working together to establish a transitional Somali government that would gradually take over governance of the country. In turn, this development ultimately would lead to

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<sup>22</sup> Jon Meacham, *Destiny and Power*, 529

<sup>23</sup> Mark Fineman and Scott Kraft, “Marines Go Ashore in Somalia,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1992, [http://articles.latimes.com/1992-12-09/news/mn-1697\\_1\\_somalis-marines-port-and-airport](http://articles.latimes.com/1992-12-09/news/mn-1697_1_somalis-marines-port-and-airport) (accessed October 27, 2018).

coordinating democratic elections in Somalia and overseeing the permanent foundations of a strong national government.<sup>24</sup>

President Bush's decision to deploy the AVF did not enjoy high American popular support like in the Gulf War. By March 1993, with the change in the presidency to Bill Clinton, Operation Restore Hope transitioned to UN Operation in Somalia II. Despite this change, according to a poll conducted by ABC News on June 28, 1993, American approval for the Somalia intervention was 62%, with CBS News reporting 51% approval between June 21 and 24, 1993.<sup>25</sup> As the AVF continued humanitarian assistance and peace keeping operations in Somalia, it found itself facing growing Somali hostility. During the summer, the Habr Gidr Clan, led by Mohamed Farrah Aidid, attacked UN forces and convoys to cut off humanitarian assistance with the intent of driving the UN from the country and establishing himself in power.<sup>26</sup> As the UN suffered continued attacks, harassment, and casualties from Aidid's clan, the United States began to take countermeasures to stop the Habr Gidr Clan by launching raids to track and capture Aidid and his leadership.<sup>27</sup> The U.S. sought to avoid a direct confrontation with the Somali clan's militia and instead conducted sophisticated special operations raids to decapitate its leadership and ultimately neutralize the clan. Even as U.S. raids continued, the Habr Gidr Clan attacked UN forces at times and locations of its own choosing. The AVF experienced "mission creep" as the original objectives of intervening in Somalia gradually changed from humanitarian assistance to conducting raids and tactical engagements against Aidid's forces.

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<sup>24</sup> Louis J. Klarevas, "The United States Peace Operation in Somalia," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (Winter, 2000), 526.

<sup>25</sup> Eric V. Larson and Bogdan Savych, *American Public Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2005), 31.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*, (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 3 – 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

The tension between the United States and the Somalis came to a head on October 3, 1993, when U.S. Special Forces were engaged in combat with local Somali militias.<sup>28</sup> The battle between American and Somali forces came about as a result of a failed attempt by U.S. Special Forces to capture Aidid during one of many raids in Mogadishu. Intelligence and tactical errors committed during the raid allowed the Somali militia time to rally and counterattack. During the daylong battle, hundreds of Somalis were killed or wounded, two UH-60 Black Hawks were shot down, and 16 American service members were killed, with more than 70 wounded.<sup>29</sup> To make matters worse, Chief Warrant Officer Four Michael Durant was captured by a Somali mob and held prisoner while the bodies of American service members killed in one of the downed helicopters were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. being photographed and televised worldwide.

In the aftermath of the battle, Time/CNN conducted a poll on October 7, 1993, asking people how the United States should respond to the fighting that had broken out between U.S. forces and Somali militia. The results are revealing: 60% of respondents believed “Nothing the U.S. could accomplish in Somalia is worth the death of even one more U.S. soldier.”<sup>30</sup> After the Black Hawk Down incident, NBC conducted a poll on October 6, 1993, that showed 56% of respondents believed the situation in Somalia could turn into another Vietnam for the United States. The same question and survey conducted by Time/CNN on October 7, 1993, and NBC/Wall Street Journal indicated that 66% and 62% of respondents, respectively, believed that

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Whetstone, *Madness in Mogadishu: Commanding the 10th Mountain Division's Quick Reaction Company during Black Hawk Down*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2015), xxi.

<sup>29</sup> Matt Eversmann, “Operation Gothic Serpent,” in *The Battle of Mogadishu: Firsthand Accounts from the Men of Task Force Ranger*, Ed. by Matt Eversmann and Dan Schilling (New York: Presidio Press Book, 2004), 34.

<sup>30</sup> Louis J. Klarevas, “The United States Peace Operation in Somalia,” 527.



Somalia could become another Vietnam.<sup>31</sup> General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, understood the drop in American support, especially when the U.S. military failed to capture or kill Aidid despite increasing amounts of personnel and resources being devoted to the effort of bringing the warlord to justice in a failed state, “This [Aidid] threat understandably confused Americans. Why, since we had gone into Somalia to feed its starving people were our troops being shot?”<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, President Clinton moved quickly to address the situation in Somalia. He directed that all military actions against Aidid and his forces be stopped unless it was for self-defense. In addition, he appointed Ambassador Robert B. Oakley as special envoy to negotiate a cease-fire and the release of Chief Warrant Officer Four Durant as well as the bodies of all American service members.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the President called for the gradual withdrawal of the AVF from Somalia no later than March 31, 1994. Later, Clinton reflected, “I was responsible for the operation that I had approved but not in its particulars...the losses shocked the U.S., and the battle that produced them was inconsistent with our larger humanitarian mission and the UN’s.”<sup>34</sup> A review of the Gallup Polls in October 1993 revealed that public opinion was against any sort of long-term involvement in Somalia. Of the people surveyed, only 32% believed that order had been restored to Somalia, while 64% thought otherwise.<sup>35</sup> In the same survey, however, only 12% had heard a great deal about America’s goals outlined in Somalia, with 30% hearing little and 33% hearing nothing. The responses suggest that though U.S. respondents had little detailed knowledge about the reasons for U.S. involvement in Somalia, they wanted to end

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 540.

<sup>32</sup> Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 586.

<sup>33</sup> Michael J. Durant, *In the Company of Heroes*, (New York: New American Library, 2003) 316.

<sup>34</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Random House, 2004), 552.

<sup>35</sup> George Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1993* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1994), 175 – 176.

the AVF's deployment as a result of the Black Hawk Down incident and the humiliating coverage of dead American service members being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu.<sup>36</sup>

President Clinton's decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Somalia was the result of American outrage over the Black Hawk Down incident and polls that believed that he had handled Somalia poorly when his approval ratings dropped 15 points to 40%.<sup>37</sup> In addition, Clinton could feel the political pressure to withdraw from Congress as well whom the presidency needed on his side to support his ambitious agenda of domestic policies. Facing popular and congressional pressure, Clinton announced the withdraw of the U.S. military from Somalia based on the belief that the UN humanitarian assistance mission had failed, and it would likely lead to mission creep and ultimately a long American military presence in the country. There, the AVF could face the prospect of potentially becoming trapped in a quagmire where U.S. forces would become involved with years of supporting an unstable host nation government that would more than likely collapse once the United States pulled its troops out.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Yugoslav Wars***

President Clinton's decision to withdraw the U.S. military from Somalia was completed by March 1994 and evidently influenced his hesitation to use the AVF in future operations.<sup>39</sup> The last thing that Clinton or any president wanted was a repeat of the Black Hawk Down incident. The possibility of such incidents appeared likely in the developing world where the

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<sup>36</sup> Louis J. Klarevas, "The United States Peace Operation in Somalia," 524.

<sup>37</sup> George Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1993*, 176.

<sup>38</sup> Leigh Neville, *Day of the Rangers: The Battle of Mogadishu 25 Years On*, (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2018), 275.

<sup>39</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals*, (New York: Scribner, 2001), 264.

post-Cold War dynamics created areas of instability and violence in various parts of South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia.

In April 1994, President Clinton faced the Rwandan genocide, during which the Hutu majority in Rwanda began to systematically round up and kill the Tutsi minority. The genocide was part of a confusing, bloody civil war in Rwanda in which Hutus and Tutsis fought each other for political and economic supremacy. The UN tried, but failed, to intervene to stop the killing. The international organization was simply not powerful enough to stop the violence, and as a result, between five hundred thousand and one million people were systematically killed.<sup>40</sup>

The failure of the United States to use the AVF in Rwanda became a powerful driver for President Clinton to take action in the Balkans when genocide was being committed in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>41</sup> The breakup of Yugoslavia resulted from a series of political, social, economic, and security factors that slowly escalated out of control with the death of its leader, Josip Broz Tito, in 1980 and later the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The rise of nationalism among Yugoslavia's ethnic groups accelerated the breakup, and war soon broke out as the communist state began to fracture into its different nations, with each battling for independence and supremacy. In the initial chaos and fighting, Slobodan Milosevic took advantage of the situation to appeal to Serbia's nationalism and advocated a harsh policy of suppressing these independence movements and maintaining Serbian dominance.<sup>42</sup> While Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia threw off Serbian control and received international recognition of their independence, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo became battlegrounds as Serbia attempted to keep them under its control. Desperate to maintain power, Milosevic

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<sup>40</sup> Catharine Newbury, "Background to Genocide: Rwanda," *A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 2 (1995), 12.

<sup>41</sup> John Garofano and Ronald Steel, "The Gulf War's Legacy," *The Wilson Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (Spring, 2001), 3.

<sup>42</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, 26 – 27.

authorized the use of military force and advocated extreme measures to pursue Serbian interests, which eventually led to genocide in regions that were politically and economically important.<sup>43</sup>

As in Somalia and Rwanda, the UN deployed peacekeepers to separate the combatants in the Balkans in order to help negotiate a peaceful settlement to the conflict, but it could not. The Serbians were not interested in UN assistance, but instead actively supported the Bosnian-Serb militias and paramilitary units that purposely violated UN-negotiated cease fires, entered UN-protected areas, and used UN peacekeepers as hostages and human shields. To make matters worse, Milosevic supported Bosnian-Serb military forces that continued to commit countless atrocities as well as pursue policies of ethnic cleansing and genocide in the embattled regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.<sup>44</sup> In July 1995, the Srebrenica Massacre occurred; Bosnian-Serb forces rounded up more than 8,000 men and boys of Bosnian ethnicity in and around the town of Srebrenica, a designated UN safe zone and systematically killed and buried them in a mass grave. The inability of the UN peacekeepers assigned to Srebrenica to separate the combatants and later protect the Bosnians from the massacre was an embarrassing failure for the international organization.<sup>45</sup> This massacre showed that the global community was unable to stop naked aggression and ethnic cleansing and genocide in Europe as it was seen in Africa.

The deployment of the AVF did not take place right away due to President Clinton's reservations about sending U.S. military forces into combat. In addition, in 1992, General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the first year of the Clinton administration, advised against deploying the AVF in the Balkans. Powell was fearful that the difficult terrain

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<sup>43</sup> Aleksa Djilas, "A Profile of Slobodan Milosevic," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer, 1993), 83.

<sup>44</sup> Janez Drnovsek, "Yugoslavia in Retrospect: Lessons from the War," *Harvard International Review* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 17.

<sup>45</sup> David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 352.

and logistical support required to support such a force would end with U.S. forces getting bogged down in heavy fighting in the Balkans. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN during General Powell's tenure, while understanding and appreciative of the Vietnam legacy, was frustrated by the hesitation to deploy U.S. military forces. In exasperation, Albright asked Powell, "What are you saving this superb military for, Colin, if we can't use it?"<sup>46</sup> Powell later remarked in his memoirs that her question "nearly gave him an aneurysm" because he believed that "American GIs were not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board."<sup>47</sup> He would go on to write, "I patiently explained [to Secretary Albright] that we had used our armed forces more than two dozen times in the preceding three years for war, peace keeping, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance."<sup>48</sup>

As these examples suggest, use of the AVF to intervene in the Yugoslav Wars was a contentious issue for both civilian and military leaders during the 1990s. It had been nearly 20 years since the Vietnam War ended, and the people in power had been shaped by that conflict. Clinton, Powell, and Albright saw the Yugoslav Wars and the deployment of the AVF from different perspectives shaped in part by their own experiences. The President of the United States and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff both believed in the Weinberger Doctrine that outlined the conditions when the AVF should be deployed in military engagements. In the list it stresses using force only for vital national interests and clearly defined political and military objectives--and only as a last resort.<sup>49</sup> Albright, however, saw the Yugoslav Wars as involving more than nationalism and national interests; it was a war in which ethnic cleansing,

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<sup>46</sup> Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (New York: Miramax Books, 2003), 182.

<sup>47</sup> Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, 576.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 576 – 577.

<sup>49</sup> Jeffrey Record, "Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine?" *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2007), 79.

genocide, and crimes against humanity were being committed. She saw the AVF as a potential force for good to stop the genocidal war, bring the war criminals to justice, and prevent the conflict from growing beyond the Balkans.

President Clinton opted for a middle course without necessarily committing the AVF right away. With NATO, the United States directed a sustained air campaign to assist the UN on the ground. The campaign involved bombing Bosnian-Serb forces that threatened or attacked UN safe zones. From August 30 to September 20, 1995, American and NATO aircraft targeted Bosnian-Serb ground forces, assembly areas, logistics centers, and bases.<sup>50</sup> This approach halted Bosnian-Serb military units and provided the pressure needed for the negotiation of a cease fire to pave the way for the Dayton Peace Agreement. This diplomatic victory for the United States ended the fighting in the Balkans, allowed the introduction of 20,000 American troops to serve as peacekeepers, and provided a political solution to the ethnic divisions that had plagued Bosnia-Herzegovina since its declaration of independence.<sup>51</sup>

Although Serbia ended its support to the Bosnian-Serbs as a means to keep Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of Yugoslavia, Serbia continued its efforts to keep Kosovo under its control and soon escalated those efforts to such an extent that the United States and NATO intervened once again. The Albanians who primarily inhabited Kosovo also wanted freedom and independence from Yugoslavia. Using military force, the Serbian military faced continued resistance and attacks by the Kosovo Liberation Army, which then led to the Serbian military taking increasingly violent, oppressive measures. As a result, reports of ethnic cleansing and genocide emerged when over a million Kosovo Albanian refugees began fleeing into

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<sup>50</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, 356 – 357.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 358 – 359.

neighboring Albania and Macedonia for safety.<sup>52</sup> In March 1999, in order to end the fighting and bring the refugee crisis under control, American, British, and Albanian delegations were sent to negotiate the Rambouillet Agreement, a proposed peace agreement between Yugoslavia and Kosovo in which NATO and the UN would be allowed into the country to separate the combatants and help mediate a political settlement to the conflict.<sup>53</sup> As soon as negotiations broke down, the United States and NATO began an air campaign against Yugoslavia.

Similar to the other Yugoslav Wars, the potential for a long open-ended conflict existed. Moreover, this time the AVF would have to invade a sovereign country to accomplish its mission to bring peace to Kosovo. To make matters worse yet, Russia could be drawn to the conflict against the United States and NATO, since Yugoslavia was geographically so close to the Russian Federation. If the Russians decided to become involved, then the conflict potentially could become more complicated, especially if Russian weapons and personnel were provided to the Serbians.<sup>54</sup> President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation, however, was juggling poor health, an ailing Russian economy, a fragile democratic government, and a difficult war with Chechnya. With few allies to turn to for help and Chechen rebels repeatedly embarrassing the Russian military in the Caucasus, Yeltsin had little choice but to convince President Milosevic to agree to allow NATO and the UN into Kosovo.

The deployment of the AVF with NATO and the UN into Kosovo expanded America's commitment in the Balkans. It also became unexpectedly complicated when they came across Russian peace keeping forces that had already been deployed to secure the Pristina airport in

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<sup>52</sup> Tzvetan Todorov and John Anzalone, "The Kosovo War," *Salmagundi* no. 128 / 129 (Fall 2000 – Winter 2001), 4.

<sup>53</sup> Karen Talbot, "The Real Reasons for War in Yugoslavia: Backing up Globalization with Military Might," *Social Justice* 27, no. 4 (Winter 2000), 97 – 98.

<sup>54</sup> Vlad Sobell, "NATO, Russia and the Yugoslav War," *The World Today* 51, no. 11 (Nov., 1995), 214 – 215.

Kosovo. However, after a few hours of tensions, the international force was able to coordinate shared peace keeping responsibilities with the Russians in Kosovo before going on to negotiate cease-fire agreements between the Kosovar and Serbian combatants, and oversee the withdrawal of all Serbian military forces.<sup>55</sup>

The presence of the AVF with NATO and the UN became a long-term commitment of almost ten years; it was a sign of things to come in Afghanistan and Iraq. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo were not dangerous tours for the AVF, but they were operational tours that required bringing a combination of state building, deterrence, and peace keeping to a region that was torn by war and violence. More importantly, these conflicts gave civilian and military leaders confidence that the AVF could effectively handle long-term conflicts and police actions.

During the Yugoslav Wars, American support for the deployment of the AVF to Bosnia-Herzegovina was less than 50%. In a Gallup Poll conducted in December 1995, 54% of the respondents disapproved of the presence of U.S. troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This pattern continued in another poll in December 1997, when 43% disapproved of the American deployment, compared to 49% who approved. To better understand the dynamics of American poll numbers in December 1997, the Gallup Poll also included follow on questions that revealed 53% of respondents do not understand the Clinton administration's policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, in the Gallup Poll's randomly selected national sample of 1,005 adults conducted between December 18 and 21, 1997, only 28% believed that the Clinton administration had a clear policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina compared to 60% who did not.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Erik Yesson, "NATO and Russia in Kosovo," *Perspectives* no. 13 (Winter 1999 / 2000), 11.

<sup>56</sup> David W. Moore, "Americans Divided on U.S Troops in Bosnia," *Gallup News*, December 24, 1997, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4285/americans-divided-us-troops-bosnia.aspx> (accessed September 16, 2018).



The use of the AVF in Kosovo in 1999 was equally unpopular with the American public as well. In the Gallup Poll conducted on April 26 and 27, 1999, based on a random national survey of 1,073 adults, only 38% of Americans believed that President Clinton had crafted a clear, and well-thought-out policy for Kosovo, while 54% did not think so. Meanwhile, the presidential decision to initiate military action against Serbia received mostly negative responses. Although 57% favored the United States using air and missile strikes against Serbian military targets in Yugoslavia, with 40% opposing; only 40% favored President Clinton sending ground forces into the country alongside other NATO countries, with 56% opposed to it.<sup>57</sup>

The 1990s were a time of flux and transition for the international system as a result of the new post-Cold War environment. The decade ended the bipolarity between the United States and the Soviet Union resulting in American leaders deploying the AVF to various different geographic locations. However, these leaders in power were influenced by the legacy of the Vietnam War and as a result deployed the AVF to the Gulf War, Somalia, and the Yugoslav Wars with hesitation.

Although many claimed that the success of the Gulf War redeemed the U.S. military and enabled Americans to put the tragedy and defeat of Vietnam behind them, many Americans still feared involvement in open-ended conflicts where decisive victory or defeat on a conventional battlefield did not exist. Somalia reawakened fears of Vietnam when U.S. Special Forces engaged in a violent, bloody day-long firefight with Somali militias, resulting in American service members getting killed and their bodies dragged through the streets on global news networks. This experience created further hesitation for the United States, making it slow to act decisively in the Rwandan genocide and the Yugoslav Wars. Although the United States failed

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<sup>57</sup> Frank Newport, "Public Support for U.S. Involvement in Kosovo Diminishing," *Gallup News*, April 29, 1999, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/3892/public-support-us-involvement-kosovo-diminishing.aspx> (accessed September 16, 2018).

to act in Rwanda, it did deploy the AVF to Yugoslavia in a police and state-building action that committed service members in a country that was torn by war and destruction. Rotation of forces and personnel in and out of the Balkans was both similar to and different from Vietnam. This time the AVF enjoyed support at home while the policies that the military acted on behalf of their Commander-in-Chief were neither clear cut nor strongly supported.

The 1990s were a test bed for the AVF's skills and capabilities. They were a time in which civilian and military leaders tested public tolerance for U.S. casualties during combat. President Clinton and General Powell weighed the use of military force based on the possibility of casualties and how the American people would react. So strongly did they focus on public reaction that some observers saw this as a phobia that clouded judgment, even to the extent that every situation that called for the potential use of military force seemed to them like a future Vietnam. During the 1990s, a 24-hour news cycle emerged, permitting Americans to see and hear what was going on throughout the world. At the time, few could appreciate the rise of 24-hour news channels and how they reported different perspectives of events as well as provided their own commentary and spin on policies. This new media force not only brought minute-by-minute reporting of the AVF's operations in different parts of the world, but also served as an immediate feedback mechanism on public support for the presidency's decisions and policies. This was especially the case in Somalia, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia when the Clinton administration was making decisions and adjusting responses based on news reports from the ground in these conflict zones. This way of doing business would go on being used during significant events in the United States as seen during the Los Angeles riots, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, and the Columbine high school shooting that grabbed the American people's attention and helped formulate public opinion.

## **Appendix D:**

### **The Global War on Terror**

The 1990's was more than a trial period for the AVF in how it would fight in combat. It also was a time in which U.S. presidents began to test how much and how long U.S. volunteers could be deployed in harm's way. Having to fight in open-ended ambiguous conflicts in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Africa revealed that U.S. presidents could be held back by U.S. public support from having to fight future conflicts of greater intensity and longevity. This was seen by many Americans supporting the troops, but were still wary of its deployment into combat. While President Bush was the exception with an 89% approval rating in the Persian Gulf War, President Clinton had approval ratings of less than 50% when the AVF was deployed to Somalia and Yugoslavia. Clinton's tepid popular support in these conflicts revealed that even though the draft ended years ago, it did not end the American public's concerns for how the AVF was used in conflicts.

The beginning of the 21st century placed the United States in a unique position in the international system. It had few powerful rivals: Russia was in the throes of trying to hold itself together after the collapse of the Soviet Union, China was undergoing extraordinary economic development, while Iran and North Korea were both isolated within their borders. In addition, the success of American interventions in the Middle East and the Balkans during the 1990's expanded U.S. geopolitical power and influence. The United States now had a large military presence where the world's largest energy reserves were located, while NATO was expanding to the very borders of Russia.

The United States had been fortunate during the 1990's because the conflicts fought by the AVF had mostly been short affairs that resulted in few casualties. In addition, Gallup Polls from the Gulf War, Somalia, and Yugoslavia showed that American leaders still had to be careful how it used the AVF. The Persian Gulf War enjoyed high U.S. public support from beginning to the end. The reason was because the conflict was easy to understand for most Americans since it dealt with stopping a crazed dictator from conquering a large chunk of the Middle East and controlling most of the world's oil hence a direct threat to America's livelihood. More importantly it was fought quickly, honorably, and almost bloodlessly through conventional warfare.

The conflicts in Somalia and Yugoslavia were different and never enjoyed a high degree of U.S. public support. As pointed out in the Gallup polls, most Americans did not really understand why the United States had to get the AVF involved in those countries. Even for humanitarian assistance reasons, U.S. policy remained unclear to the majority of Americans because there was no defined end to the mission and bringing the troops home. Instead Americans grew increasingly confused and upset when these humanitarian and peacekeeping missions became violent and involved U.S. service members engaging in combat. For Somalia, Americans were angered at the presidency for using the AVF in combat operations in a country that the United States was trying to help; while in Yugoslavia, the U.S. public was frustrated with the long-term presence of the AVF when it should be the UN and NATO taking on the responsibility of policing the Balkans. In time, American public opinion in those conflicts eventually pressured the president to end the AVF's missions in those countries and bring its service members back home. This is important because the American public would still continue

to play a powerful role in influencing presidential actions when it came to using the AVF in the 21st century.

This appendix explores the AVF being used in the Global War on Terror including Afghanistan and Iraq. As hostile nonstate actors, such as Al Qaeda, grew in strength and confidence in attacking the United States both at home and abroad, they did not realize that U.S. use of the AVF would not be as restricted as it was in Korea and Vietnam. Osama bin Laden's plans of attacking the U.S. homeland and drawing it to fight the terrorist organization in distant and hostile lands were realized when the AVF invaded Afghanistan. Hoping for a repeat of Vietnam, bin Laden wanted to wear down the American superpower in a long frustrating war of attrition, believing that the American public would grow frustrated with the rising casualties and costs before turning on the U.S. president and conceding defeat.

What happened instead was the AVF quickly moving into Afghanistan and attacking Al Qaeda's bases in the Hindu Kush mountain range. By October 2001, the last of Al Qaeda's organized resistance was destroyed with the remnants fleeing into Pakistan's ungoverned northwest territories. The Afghan conflict was reminiscent of the Gulf War in which the opening moves against Al Qaeda was a quick military operation with minimal losses that enjoyed high levels of American popular support. However, the United States' initial high degree of success and popular support began to sour over time when the Afghan conflict began to expand beyond the original parameters of destroying the Al Qaeda threat. Over time the United States became involved in a major regional conflict with Iraq while also taking on a difficult counterinsurgency and state-building program in Afghanistan that by 2019 had continued for nearly 20 years.

## ***Global War on Terror***

In August 1996, what George W. Bush later termed “the Global War on Terror” appeared on the horizon when Osama bin Laden declared war on the United States by issuing a fatwa from his headquarters in the mountains of Afghanistan. This declaration of war was primarily a reaction to the presence of American military forces in Saudi Arabia. After the Gulf War, these forces had remained in place to protect the region from future Iraqi aggression. Bin Laden also saw American involvement in the Middle East and various parts of the world as a growing threat to Islam and his Wahhabi notion of its prescribed way of life due to continued U.S. support of Israel, its “immoral” behavior, and its sanctions against Iraq.<sup>1</sup> In a series of terrorist operations that were increasingly complex and destructive, bin Laden’s Al Qaeda network was suspected of several terrorist acts throughout the world, including high-profile attacks against American targets such as the U.S. embassy bombings in Africa in 1998 and the bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole* in 2000.<sup>2</sup>

On September 11, 2001, 18 terrorists seized four American commercial airliners and used them to conduct suicide attacks against Washington, D.C. and New York City.<sup>3</sup> As the country recovered from the shock of the terrorist attack and mourned its losses, President George W. Bush announced a “Global War on Terror” by aligning government agencies and resources against current and potential threats.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the Bush administration enjoyed widespread domestic and international support to take whatever means necessary to prevent future catastrophic attacks. The AVF received special attention when it received the funding and other

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<sup>1</sup> Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 19 – 20.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11.* (New York: Random House, 2006), 351.

<sup>3</sup> Bevin Alexander, *How Wars Are Won: The 13 Rules of War from Ancient Greece to the War on Terror.* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>4</sup> William Pfaff, *The Irony of Manifest Destiny: The Tragedy of America’s Foreign Policy.* (New York: Walker & Company, 2010), 108 – 109.

resources it needed to crack down on various terrorist cells, organizations, and hostile state actors overseas, especially Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan.

At a time when the United States had just been attacked, President Bush addressed the nation to promise justice to those involved and suggested that the individuals would not need to give up their normal daily lives.

Americans are asking, "What is expected of us?"

I ask you to live your lives and hug your children.

I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat.

I ask you to uphold the values of America and remember why so many have come here.

We're in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith.

I ask you to continue to support the victims of this tragedy with your contributions. Those who want to give can go to a central source of information, [Libertyunites.org](http://Libertyunites.org), to find the names of groups providing direct help in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The thousands of FBI agents who are now at work in this investigation may need your cooperation, and I ask you to give it. I ask for your patience with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security and for your patience in what will be a long struggle.

I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. Terrorists attacked a symbol of American prosperity; they did not touch its source.

America is successful because of the hard work and creativity and enterprise of our people. These were the true

strengths of our economy before September 11, and they are our strengths today.<sup>5</sup>

The 9/11 attacks resulted in a “rally around the flag effect” that brought a high degree of support for the Bush administration to act as it saw fit in order to ensure U.S. national security. Not only would the United States use its political and economic strength to influence countries to crack down on extremist groups, but it would also seek permission to search and destroy them with U.S. forces. As a result, the AVF deployed small special forces teams to kill and capture terrorists in various parts of the world, as well as prepare the way for the U.S. to attack countries suspected of supporting terrorism. Through the surge of public support after the 9/11 attacks and the fear of future strikes against the United States, the “Bush doctrine” of preventive war appeared necessary for defending the United States.<sup>6</sup>

In Gallup polls, the American public overwhelmingly backed the use of military force to attack bin Laden and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. In a survey conducted on October 8, 2001 of 660 adults aged 18 or older, more than eight in ten believed that the 9/11 attacks were merely the beginning of future and possibly even more destructive terrorist attacks. This belief was compounded on September 18, 2001, when letters arrived at several news agencies and at senatorial offices containing anthrax, a dangerous bacterium. These letters caused five deaths and seventeen anthrax infections. When the United States began its attacks against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, 90% of Americans in Gallup polls approved, with only 5% opposing. In addition, 92% approved of President Bush’s handling of the Global War on Terror, while only 5% disapproved. Meanwhile, Gallup polls reported that 77% of Americans supported the involvement of U.S. ground troops in Afghanistan, with 17% opposing. Finally, the Gallup

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<sup>5</sup> “Text: President Bush Addresses the Nation,” *The Washington Post*, Sept. 20, 2001, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress\\_092001.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html) (accessed September 19, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, 153.



survey revealed something about respondents' views of the United States attacking other countries and the potential length of the Global War on Terror: 78% supported the U.S. attacking countries that the government believed were harboring terrorists, while 16% were against such actions. Respondents were unsure how long this war would last: 10% believed it would be a few weeks, 34% said it would be several months, 26% thought it would be a year or two, and 22% indicated it would be more than two years.<sup>7</sup>

The AVF moved decisively against Afghanistan when the Taliban refused to give up bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda operatives to American officials. With NATO support, the AVF used a combination of special operatives, light infantry, and long-range strategic bombers to work with tribes who opposed the Taliban's control of Afghanistan's government and establish conditions for follow-on forces to capture or kill bin Laden and destroy his Al-Qaeda network.<sup>8</sup> Despite respect for Afghanistan's mountainous terrain and the Afghan tribes' 1989 defeat of the Soviet Union, fear of possible repercussions of heavy casualties or a long, drawn-out war were set aside. Moving with speed in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom began, and in less than a month, the AVF defeated the Taliban, seized Al-Qaeda sanctuaries, and brought the Northern Alliance to power. As NATO and American forces assisted the Northern Alliance to establish political control over the country, the AVF's special forces and front-line units began to comb the Afghan mountains and valleys for bin Laden. The AVF missed its opportunity to capture or kill bin Laden, when American forces were engaged in heavy fighting at Tora Bora near the Afghan-Pakistani border, where remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda had made a stand in

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<sup>7</sup> David W. Moore, "Public Overwhelmingly Backs Bush Attacks on Afghanistan," *Gallup News*, October 8, 2001, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4966/public-overwhelmingly-backs-bush-attacks-afghanistan.aspx> (accessed September 19, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Max Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 525 – 526.

heavily fortified defenses and caves.<sup>9</sup> Taliban and Al-Qaeda hopes of stopping the AVF were dashed when American units quickly surrounded and destroyed their forces in a few days. Yet, although both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda ceased to exist as organized fighting forces, survivors of the battle escaped further into the mountains and eventually found sanctuary in Pakistan's Northwest Region.<sup>10</sup>

Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan was a success: it overthrew the Taliban and neutralized bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network in the country. Unlike the Soviet-Afghan War, the AVF neither became bogged down by the mountainous terrain nor engaged in protracted war with the Taliban or Al-Qaeda. With the Northern Alliance in control of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, the United States began to pull military forces out of the country in order to focus on other potential adversaries that were well outside the scope in America's Global War on Terror.

President Bush highlighted an "Axis of Evil" in his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, that targeted foreign governments who were suspected of state sponsored terrorism and seeking WMDs. Specifically, Bush saw Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as rogue states that threatened world peace by utilizing hostile nonstate actors to commit attacks on the United States and its allies.<sup>11</sup> Fears of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons penetrating border security through terrorists, aircraft, or cargo were seen as real possibilities, especially after the 9/11 attacks.

For the Bush administration, the only way to prevent this possibility was to use a whole-of-government approach that applied political, military, and economic pressure to bring these

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 399.

<sup>10</sup> William Pfaff, *The Irony of Manifest Destiny*, 161.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan Deane, "Revisiting the 'Axis of Evil' 15 Years After George Bush Coined the Term," *The Washington Examiner*, May 9, 2017, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/revisiting-the-axis-of-evil-15-years-after-george-w-bush-coined-the-term> (accessed October 18, 2018).

states to heel. The Administration identified Iraq as the next state in the Axis of Evil that it would use the AVF against. In addition to Iraq still possessing a powerful military, some suspected it also possessed WMDs.<sup>12</sup> This suspicion was based on Iraq's long history of using its oil revenues to purchase or develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Although the Iraqis had developed chemical weapons, its nuclear program suffered a severe setback when Israel launched a surprise air strike against Iraq's nuclear reactor near Baghdad in June 7, 1981.<sup>13</sup> However, Iraq used its chemical weapons arsenal extensively during the Iran-Iraq War, inflicting thousands of Iranian casualties and successfully countering Iran's human wave attacks.<sup>14</sup> Saddam also employed chemical weapons to stay in power against Kurdish and Shia uprisings. Chemical weapons allowed the Iraqi military to rally and crush internal unrest and, more importantly, to intimidate the rest of the country into submission. Years later, Bush and key advisors like Vice President Richard Cheney feared that Saddam and his regime would attempt to break out of international economic sanctions and renew their ambitions to conquer the Middle East with the threat of WMDs. Bush quietly gave the order for the AVF to prepare for Operation Iraqi Freedom with the intent to overthrow the Saddam regime and destroy its WMD destruction program before it was used against the United States.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Williamson Murray and Robert H. Scales, Jr., *The Iraq War: A Military History*. (First Harvard University Press, 2003), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraq and the War of Sanctions: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction*. (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 442.

<sup>14</sup> Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War 1980 – 1988*. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 37 – 38.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History*. (New York: Random House, 2016), 248.

### ***The Iraq War – Invasion and Regime Change***

The Bush administration used the 9/11 attacks and its success in Afghanistan to begin building international support to use military force to overthrow the Saddam dictatorship and dismantle Iraq's WMD program.<sup>16</sup> Unlike Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Operation Iraqi Freedom was contentious in both the United States and the international community. Despite many countries supporting the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq was a different story. It was neither connected with the 9/11 attacks nor a state sponsor of terrorism against the United States. Although Iraq used its military in the past to conquer territory, gain resources, and terrorize its people, Saddam's dictatorship was based on expanding the country's wealth and power in order to become a regional hegemon in the Middle East.

President Bush sought to commit the AVF to war when Congress, after some debate, passed the Iraq Resolution in October 2002 authorizing the use of military action against Iraq.<sup>17</sup> To build international support for the Iraq invasion, the Bush administration used Secretary of State Colin Powell to argue that the Saddam regime possessed WMDs and also sought to develop nuclear weapons. Using the UN as a forum, Powell pointed out the long list of Iraqi violations and obstacles that Saddam imposed on international inspectors who sought to investigate and report the status of the Iraqi dictator's WMD program. In addition, American intelligence provided circumstantial evidence that Iraq still possessed an arsenal of biological and chemical weapons and was attempting to resurrect its nuclear program by building installations and purchasing materials that could be used to potentially develop nuclear weapons. Finally, Secretary Powell also noted that Iraq was harboring one of bin Laden's lieutenants, Abu

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<sup>16</sup> Wesley K. Clark, *Winning Modern Wars*, 137.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 63.

Musab al-Zarqawi, and a cell of Al-Qaeda terrorists who had fled the fighting in Afghanistan and were currently trying to recover and regroup in Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

In the end, U.S. arguments did not convince the international community, which opposed American military action against Iraq. This opposition was especially clear in the UN Security Council when the majority of its members opposed the use of military action to force the disarmament of Iraq. Instead, the Council opted for patience, diplomacy, and continued international inspections. Powell's arguments were not strong enough, and some, such as Iraqi connections to bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, were flimsy at best. Moreover, the majority of the Security Council believed that a U.S. invasion of Iraq would be a disaster. Regardless of international opinion, the United States spent most of 2002 slowly preparing the AVF for military action against Iraq with the help of a "coalition of the willing" composed mainly of the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland.

In the Gallup polls, American support for a war with Iraq was initially strong in late 2001, but weakened greatly just weeks prior to the invasion in early 2003. Throughout 2002, as the Bush administration built its argument for using military force against Iraq, the trauma of the 9/11 attacks was still fresh for many in the American public. In addition, the AVF had suffered few casualties in Afghanistan, and the United States had not had to mobilize the reserves or use the draft system to pull additional personnel to fight. In a poll taken between November 26 and 27, 2001, from a national sample of 1,003 adults who were 18 years or older, 74% favored sending American troops back to the Persian Gulf in order to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, with 20% opposing. Later in a poll taken between February 24 and 26, 2003, however, the numbers dropped, with only 59% in favor of removing Saddam from power, with

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<sup>18</sup> Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2015), 95.

37% opposing.<sup>19</sup> Yet, when the Iraq War began, a Gallup reported that based on telephone interviews with 1,020 people nationwide age 18 or older, support for military action against Iraq had a “rally around the flag” effect, with 72% of Americans favoring the war and 25% opposing it.<sup>20</sup>

On March 20, 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom began when the AVF, commanded by General Tommy Franks, crossed into Iraq and began its drive toward Baghdad. Spearheaded by the I Marine Expeditionary Force and the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, the AVF quickly bypassed entrenched Iraqi defenses and seized Iraq’s vast oilfields and refineries while British forces captured Basra to cut off Iraq’s access to the Persian Gulf.<sup>21</sup> Afterwards, American forces advanced along the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in a race to capture the Saddam regime’s military command-and-control center, as well as to prevent the Iraqi dictator from employing biological and chemical weapons against coalition forces.

Hoping to bog down and inflict heavy casualties on the United States and its coalition partners through urban warfare, Saddam’s military divisions entrenched themselves in Iraqi cities along the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in an attempt to stop the invasion.<sup>22</sup> However, the AVF refused to engage the Iraqi military and instead used American and coalition follow-on forces to contain it in the cities. Meanwhile, American and coalition aircraft quickly destroyed much of Iraq’s air force, anti-aircraft defenses, communications, and infrastructure. This destruction

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<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, “Public Support for Invasion of Iraq Holds Steady,” *Gallup News*, February 28, 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/7891/public-support-invasion-iraq-holds-steady.aspx> (accessed September 20, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Frank Newport, “Seventy-Two Percent of Americans Support War Against Iraq,” *Gallup News*, March 24, 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/8038/seventytwo-percent-americans-support-war-against-iraq.aspx> (accessed September 20, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Williamson Murray and Robert H. Scales, Jr., *The Iraq War*, 69.

<sup>22</sup> Bing West and Ray L. Smith, *The March Up: Taking Baghdad with the United States Marines*. (New York: Bantam Books, 2003), 120.

ensured that the AVF enjoyed air superiority, and it also paralyzed the Iraqi military by making it impossible to coordinate defenses against the invasion force.

As American and coalition forces invaded Iraq from the south, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, along with special operation teams, launched airborne assaults along Iraq's northern border, resulting in Saddam redeploying his reserves and some of his forces from the south to face the impending American threat to the north of Baghdad.<sup>23</sup> Besides Saddam's military failing to stop the airborne invasion, it also found itself fighting for its life when Kurdish Peshmerga forces began to coordinate their military operations with the Americans, resulting in Iraq losing the largest northern cities, Kirkuk and Mosul. Soon, the combined American and Kurdish forces drove the Iraqi forces south toward Baghdad and grew in strength as airfields were secured to allow additional U.S. Army and Marine units to enter the country from the north.

As Iraq's northern and southern fronts fell apart before the unexpected success of American forces and their allies, the Saddam regime began to pull its remaining forces back toward Baghdad for a final stand. As the AVF approached from the north and south, General Franks allowed for an operational pause in order for units to resupply and prepare for the final assault on Saddam's forces. In addition, some feared that Saddam would use WMDs to hit the coalition forces in a final attempt to inflict as many casualties as possible before falling in defeat. Fearing some sort of nuclear, chemical, or biological attack, the operational pause allowed the AVF and its coalition partners to prepare for the worst and consolidate their supply lines before pushing into the Iraqi capital.<sup>24</sup> Despite initial resistance from Iraqi forces, American and coalition forces quickly broke through and took the city by April 9, 2003.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John Keegan, *The Iraq War*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 134.

<sup>24</sup> Bing West and Ray L. Smith, *The March Up*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Gideon Rose, *How Wars End*, 237.

As the AVF occupied Saddam's Ba'ath Party government buildings and ministries, the Iraqi population turned out in force to cheer the Americans and celebrate the end of Saddam's reign of terror. Scenes of excited Iraqis greeting the United States and its coalition partners as liberators was capped with the Americans helping the Iraqis topple Saddam Hussein's statue in Firdos Square in Baghdad.<sup>26</sup> Despite the initial celebrations, however, chaos, rioting, and violence broke out in the Iraqi capital and other major cities as freed Iraqi citizens began to loot government offices, public buildings, shops, banks, and local arsenals. Yet, the American and coalition forces did not prioritize establishing order by trying to restore governance, public services, and security. Instead, their main focus was the frantic search for Iraq's WMD facilities and arsenals since that was the *casus belli* for the U.S. invasion.

After several weeks of searching, it was becoming apparent that there was no evidence that Iraq possessed any WMDs. In a Gallup Poll conducted between June 9 and 10, 2003, of the 1,029 adults, aged 18 years and older, 44% were certain and 42% believed it was likely, but not certain, that Iraq had facilities to create WMDs before the war, while only 10% believed it was unlikely, but not certain and 3% were certain that Iraq did not have facilities to create WMDs before the war. Meanwhile, 67% of Americans believed that the Bush administration had not deliberately misled them about Iraq possessing WMDs, with 31% of respondents believing that it had.<sup>27</sup> As teams combed fruitlessly through Iraq for WMDs, the American civilian and military leadership lost a critical opportunity to prevent the country from collapsing into chaos. In addition, the deteriorating situation in Iraq since the U.S. invasion resulted in the American

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco*, 134.

<sup>27</sup> Frank Newport, "Americans Still Think Iraq Had Weapons of Mass Destruction Before the War," *Gallup News*, June 16, 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/8623/americans-still-think-iraq-had-weapons-mass-destruction-before-war.aspx> (accessed September 24, 2018).



people beginning to have doubts about the Iraq War. In a CNN poll of 1,003 adults conducted on July 1, 2003, only 56% of the respondents believed that the Iraq War was going well.<sup>28</sup>

### ***The Iraq War – Insurgency and State-Building***

Despite President Bush celebrating another lightning victory and concluding that major combat operations in Iraq were over, it became apparent that the Iraq War was entering a new, dangerous phase that would challenge U.S. civilian and military leaders for several years. With the sudden collapse of the Saddam regime, a power vacuum emerged that Iraqis floundered to fill.<sup>29</sup> As a result, chaos and violence broke out allowing hostile nonstate actors, such as Al-Qaeda, to exploit the disorder in order to strengthen and expand their presence. In addition, the collapse of the Saddam regime created conditions in which long-controlled ethnic groups threatened to tear the country apart as Kurdish, Sunni, and Shia tribes began to form militias and consolidate their control over Iraq's land and other resources.<sup>30</sup>

When it became apparent that no evidence of an active WMD program had been found, the mistakes of the Bush administration turned its focus to trying to pull the AVF out of Iraq as quickly as possible. As violence increased throughout the summer of 2003, it became apparent that despite Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's argument that attacks against American and coalition forces were being conducted by "dead enders," the AVF faced a growing insurgency that became increasingly sophisticated in its attacks, using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs), mortar and rocket attacks, sniper fire, and complex ambushes. As American casualties mounted between 2003 and

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<sup>28</sup> Cable News Network. "Poll: Americans less positive on Iraq," *CNN*, July 1, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/06/30/sprj.irq.iraq.poll/> (accessed September 24, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq*. (New York: Random House, 2008), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Ricks, *The Generals*, 430.

2006, public opinion began to turn against the war.<sup>31</sup> Iraqi casualties also skyrocketed, due to a combination of local violence and civilians getting caught in friendly fire.

The seriousness of the insurgency became more urgent when Al-Qaeda under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi took advantage of the security environment to launch specifically coordinated terrorist attacks to cause division and intrastate warfare among the Kurdish, Sunnis, and Shia tribes. In addition, al-Zarqawi targeted foreign contractors, coalition forces, and the post-Saddam Iraqi government to delegitimize American authority in the country, while elevating Al-Qaeda's power and popularity with the Iraqi population.<sup>32</sup> Attacks on isolated coalition outposts, beheadings of foreign contractors, and bombings of mosques and government offices shook the foundations of a united Iraq to the extent that it was only a matter of time before the country collapsed into sectarian civil war. In a desperate attempt to bring the country back under control, the AVF fought a series of major battles against the insurgency in Al Anbar province, engaging in some of the most intense urban combat since the Vietnam War. Throughout 2004, the Battle of Fallujah raged and culminated when almost the entire 1st Marine Division was sent in to storm the city, taking over a month to clear and secure it.<sup>33</sup> Throughout 2006, U.S. Marines were sent to prevent Ramadi, the capital of Al Anbar Province, from falling to the insurgency in a series of battles that resulted in heavy casualties.<sup>34</sup>

In the U.S., the popularity of the Iraq War continued to decline. As news agencies covered the chaos and violence in Iraq, popular support for the war fell in the polls. Support for the war dropped noticeably after the capture of Saddam Hussein on December 13, 2003, when it

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<sup>31</sup> Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Joby Warrick, *Black Flags*, 157 – 158.

<sup>33</sup> Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*. (New York: Random House, 2005), 322 – 323.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006 – 2008*. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 66.

became apparent that despite the overthrow and capture of Saddam and the lack of WMDs the purpose of the AVF in Iraq had shifted to a massive state-building endeavor. Meanwhile, the military confronted an insurgency that had grown increasingly violent and was sufficiently powerful to tie down large numbers of American forces. By March 2005, 51% of those polled responded that it hadn't been a mistake to send troops to Iraq, with 46% of respondents believing it had been a mistake. The public was also split over support for the Iraq War: 47% favored the U.S. war with Iraq, and 47% opposed it. When asked who was "winning" the Iraq War, an almost even split again emerged: 45% of respondents believed it was the United States and its allies, 7% stated it was the insurgents, and 48% believed neither side was winning. Finally, 52% of respondents said that things in Iraq were going very to moderately well, with 45% saying it was going very to moderately badly.<sup>35</sup>

### ***The Iraq War – Surge and Public Opinion***

As the AVF battled a growing insurgency, American civilian and military leaders tried desperately to hasten the establishment of a new Iraqi government. With the establishment of the Iraqi Transitional Government and later a permanent government, public support for the Iraq War dropped further. Throughout 2006, the AVF fought against Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Al-Qaeda's attempt to trigger a sectarian civil war in Iraq, especially between the Sunnis and Shia tribes. To make matters worse, a Sunni boycott of the Iraqi elections left the tribe isolated and without a voice in the new Iraqi government. As a result, the Shia dominated the Iraqi government and began to vote for actions and programs that further pushed the Sunnis away from supporting a united Iraqi government and toward taking up arms in support of the

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph Carroll, "Support for Iraq War Remains Divided," *Gallup News*, March 24, 2005, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/15367/support-iraq-war-remains-divided.aspx> (accessed September 29, 2018).

insurgency.<sup>36</sup> Battles continued in Al Anbar Province and in Baghdad, as the AVF worked with the new Iraqi Security Forces to strengthen control over the country.

Further worsening the situation, the Hadith Massacre echoed the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam. Additionally, prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib and other American-operated detainment facilities combined with increased civilian deaths caused by American forces fueled the insurgency and hurt support at home.<sup>37</sup> A Gallup poll of 1,002 adults conducted between June 9 and 11, 2006 revealed that the American public was finally turning against President Bush's decision to invade Iraq: 51% believed that it had been a mistake to send troops into Iraq, while 46% believed it was not a mistake. Forty-eight percent indicated they believed that with the change in mission in Iraq, American troops should stay "as long as it took," with 46% responding that the United States "should leave immediately."<sup>38</sup>

In the United States, although antiwar protests failed to attract active nationwide support along the same scale and scope as during the Vietnam War, it did attract the American public's attention to the Iraq War. Anti-war organizations such as Code Pink, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER), and United for Peace and Justice pushed for significant changes in U.S. policy in Iraq. Although anti-war marches in places such as Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Los Angeles demonstrated that thousands could be drawn together to bring notice to failing U.S. efforts, compared to Vietnam, fewer had direct ties to the war in Iraq. No WMDs were found, and the end of the Saddam regime destabilized Iraq and the Middle East, resulting in years of open-ended conflict with an insurgency that fed itself with countless isolated acts of violence, mistakes, and needless suffering. Based on Gallup polls, Americans were finally

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<sup>36</sup> Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe*, 118 – 119.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco*, 290.

<sup>38</sup> Frank Newport, "American Public Opinion on Iraq: Five Conclusions," *Gallup News*, June 20, 2006, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/23374/american-public-opinion-iraq-five-conclusions.aspx> (accessed September 30, 2018).

seeing the Iraq War in a negative light and realized that the AVF in Iraq was suffering terrible casualties in a conflict that went beyond its original mission of searching and destroying WMDs.

Frustrated with President Bush's handling of Iraq, the American public made its displeasure known during the midterm elections in November 2006 when it voted the Democrats in control of Congress. Many believed that by voting for the Democrats into Congress, it would push the presidency to accelerate the withdrawal of the AVF from Iraq. Pressure from the American public in the midterm elections worked when on January 10, 2007, President Bush ordered a "surge" of large numbers of U.S. troops into Iraq for a limited time in a final attempt to destroy the insurgency and save the country from collapse before beginning the withdrawal of the AVF.

Based in part on the assessment and advice of General David Petraeus, the new Commander of Multi-National Force – Iraq, President Bush argued in his speech, "In these dangerous times, the United States is blessed to have extraordinary and selfless men and women willing to step forward and defend us. These young Americans understand that our cause in Iraq is noble and necessary, and that the advance of freedom is the calling of our time."<sup>39</sup> With thousands of additional troops, President Bush announced that General Petraeus would conduct a "clear, hold, and build" strategy in which American soldiers and Marines would clear out insurgent-controlled areas of Iraq, provide security in order to allow Iraqi forces to take over, and under the coalition's guidance, allow the Iraqi government to reestablish state services.

During the surge, casualties increased dramatically in the first half of 2007, but gradually dwindled by the end of the year when it became apparent that Iraq was being pacified and turned

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<sup>39</sup> CQ Transcripts Wire, "President Bush Addresses Nation on Iraq War," *Washington Post*, January 10, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011002208.html> (accessed September 30, 2018).

over to the Iraqi government.<sup>40</sup> The Petraeus-led campaign turned out to be a success. With the AVF's efforts came the growing support of the Iraqi people as U.S. and coalition forces began to work with Iraqis by supporting positive movements such as the Al Anbar Awakening that ultimately resulted in Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Al-Qaeda organization being destroyed and driven out of the country.<sup>41</sup> By the time President Barack Obama came to power, the stage was set for the gradual withdrawal of American forces in Iraq.

Although the surge was acclaimed as a success and Operation Iraqi Freedom officially concluded on December 18, 2011 with the withdrawal of the last combat troops, the new Iraqi government still needed U.S. support. During the establishment of the Iraqi Armed Forces, the AVF provided training and advisors to help the Iraqi military maintain order as well as essential logistics and combat service support. With the withdrawal of American combat units, however, Iraq soon faced a new threat with the rise of ISIL. A jihadist militant group that grew from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Al-Qaeda in Iraq, ISIL sought safety in Syria during the surge and afterwards bided its time as U.S. forces withdrew. With the Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil War, ISIL quickly exploited the power vacuum in Syria, as well as the inexperience of the Iraqi armed forces, to capture huge tracts of territory from both nations, thus carving out its own proto-state.<sup>42</sup>

With war against ISIL becoming a threat to the new Iraqi government, the Obama administration did not deploy the AVF in large numbers to support the Iraqi armed forces. This was a new conflict with the rise of an extremist proto-state that threatened to destabilize the Middle East. The conflict not only encompassed several Middle Eastern states, but also involved

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<sup>40</sup> Bradley T. Gericke, *David Petraeus*, 154.

<sup>41</sup> Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 105 – 106.

<sup>42</sup> Joby Warrick, *Black Flags*, 251 – 252.

several third party countries including Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. While the U.S. would also participate, its actions were limited and could no longer enjoy the freedom of movement it once did in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The American public did not want to get involved in another Middle Eastern conflict based on its reaction to the Iraq War from 2003 to 2010. The American public made its voice heard during the Iraq conflict when it realized that U.S. involvement began to drift beyond the original parameters of its mission of finding and destroying Iraq's WMDs. Realizing that the U.S. invasion resulted in no WMDs being found, public support for the conflict quickly began to turn against President Bush when he attempted to use the AVF in a massive counterinsurgency and state building program. This meant that President Bush was on the time clock to leave behind a tenable Iraqi government in order to salvage an unnecessary conflict that had little connection to the Global War on Terror.

Although Bush barely managed to save Iraq from collapse, he suffered the consequences like Truman and Johnson for involving the country in an unnecessary war even without the use of conscripted forces. Although the AVF was supposed help minimize the American public's concerns about the United States getting involved in various conflicts, the reaction from the Iraq War proved not to be the case. This was seen with the public's response when it became apparent that the invasion of Iraq was not only a mistake, but needlessly placed U.S. service members into harm's way. In the end, the American public took action to correct President Bush's mistakes by electing political leaders that promised to not only responsibly pull the AVF out of Iraq, but also ensure better accountability in the use of military force in future conflicts.

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