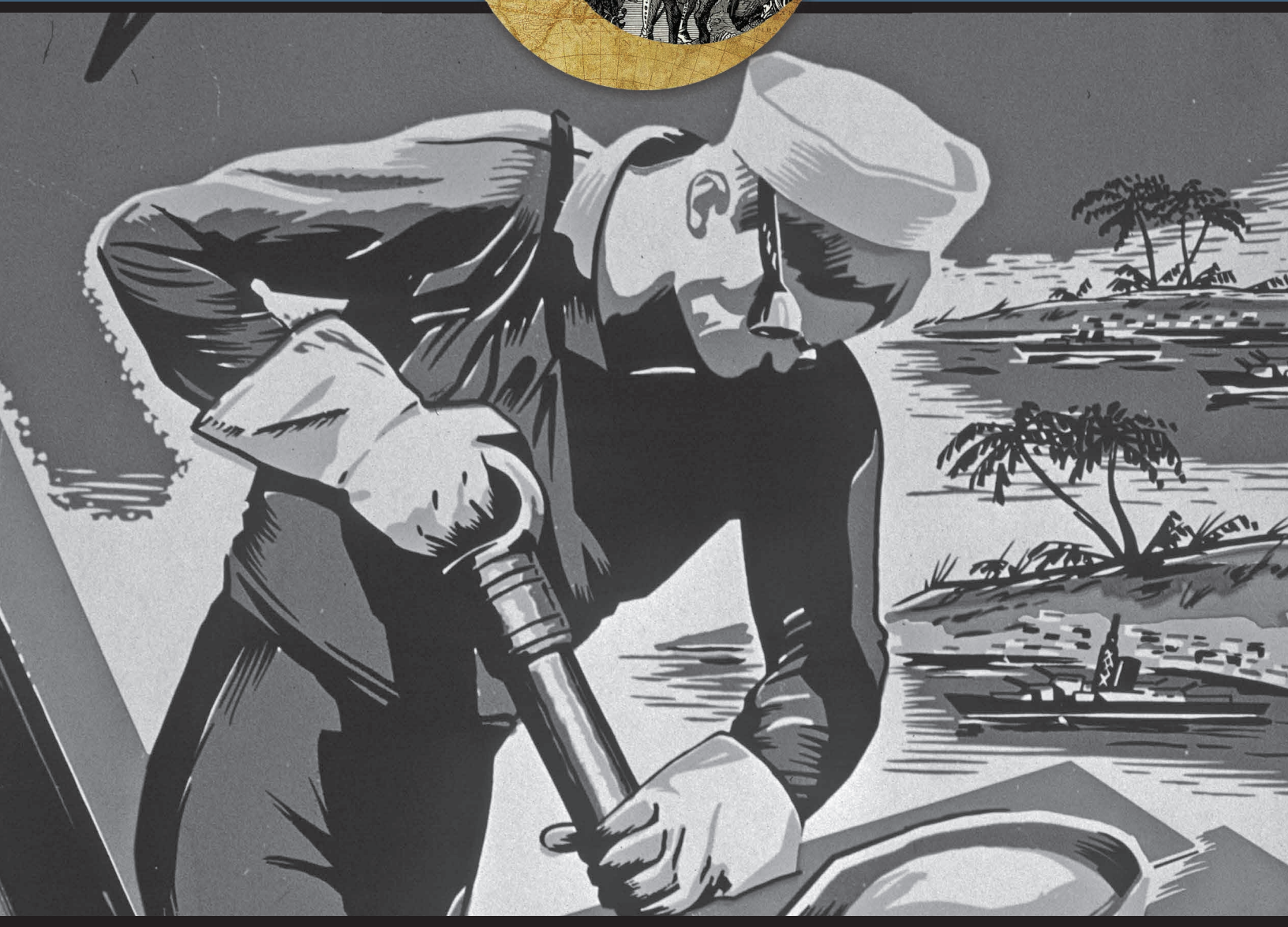
ISSUE 96

STRATEGIKA

Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

MARCH 2025



MILITARY RECRUITMENT

IN THIS ISSUE

OWEN WEST • KEVIN WALLSTEN • CHRIS GIBSON • PETER R. MANSOOR

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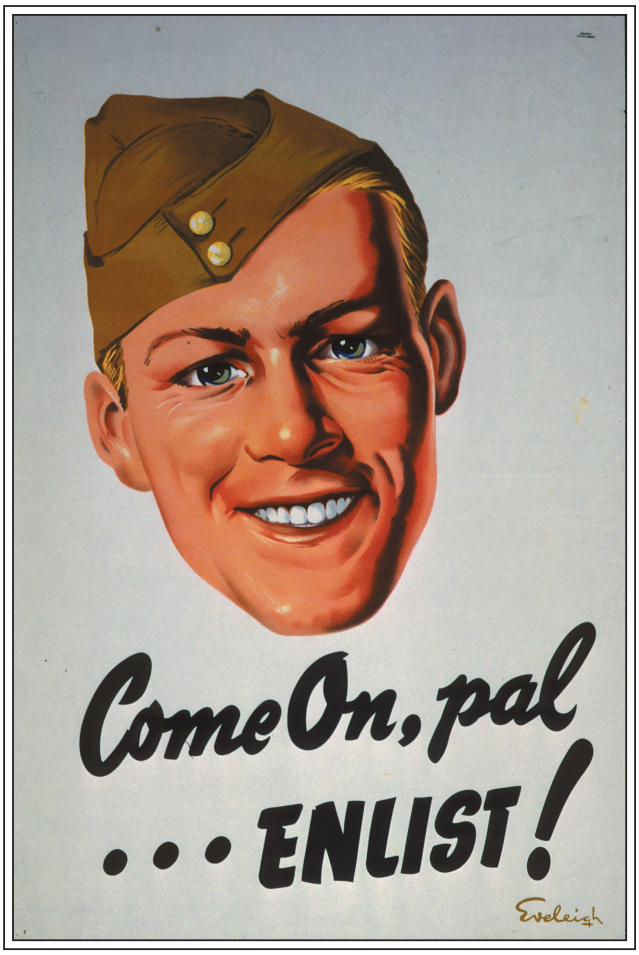
ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

Documenting the wartime viewpoints and diverse political sentiments of the twentieth century, the Hoover Institution Library & Archives Poster Collection has more than one hundred thousand posters from around the world and continues to grow. Thirty-three thousand are available online. Posters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia/Soviet Union, and France predominate, though posters from more than eighty countries are included.

A Cultural Decline in Defending America

By Owen West and Kevin Wallsten



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In 1964, 75% of the public held a very favorable view of the military and its leaders. That dropped to 24% when Saigon fell in 1975, surged to 80% after 9/11, and plunged to 60% last year. This indicates institutional confidence is ephemeral, tied to politics and performance. Unfortunately, our military relies more on values than confidence to maintain its all-volunteer force (AVF). Its performance one way or another has done little to arrest the long-term cultural decline in youth compelled to defend America.

Before Vietnam, military service enjoyed broad prestige. Four hundred thousand youths joined the military in 1964—more than 15% of all 19-year-old men—for a very skimpy paycheck. Only a quarter of recruits were drafted. The majority of enlistees had volunteered for a military that enjoyed societal approval but paid a pittance. The social upheaval during the Vietnam War caused the White House and Congress to enthusiastically do away with drafting soldiers altogether, converting to the AVF in 1973. The economist Milton Friedman argued that better pay would attract recruits who would otherwise seek employment. Congress approved a healthy raise, and enlistments immediately increased.

For fifty years this model worked. Volunteers entered our military during recessions and booms, military disasters and swift victories, periods of flashy popularity and morose perception. When unemployment fell, Congress increased pay. During wartime surges in Iraq and Afghanistan, standards were lowered slightly, then raised when troops returned home. Even when entrance standards dipped, the enlisted force remained far more educated than it had been before Vietnam, with high school graduation rates above 90%, compared to 50% in 1964.

Throughout this period, society grew more progressive and the cultural benefits of military service faded. Recruiters tended toward Red states that contributed proportionately more volunteers than did Blue states. Having a relative who had served years ago influenced the younger generation. After post-9/11 patriotism faded, 80% of recruits were sourced from military families where service remained ingrained. The military was a family business.

It wasn't a growth business, though. American military volunteerism had been declining for decades, masked by changes in population, composition, and compensation. The U.S. population grew by 75% from 1964 to 2024, but recruiting needs plunged from 400,000 enlistees to 150,000. The percentage of women enlistees steadily grew from less than 1% to 18% of the force, obscuring growing disinterest among single men. Service motivation increasingly gave way to compensation. Enlisted soldiers in 1964 were paid in the lower third compared to their peers in the private sector. Today our enlisted servicemembers are in the 83rd percentile of comparable civilian pay, not including potential college and VA benefits.

Crisis

As long as demand for troops was shrinking, the Pentagon could deal with small supply shocks. The AVF steady state, however, was interrupted in 2021. With little warning, the National Guard fell 8,000 recruits short of its end-strength goal. In 2022, the volunteer deficit sharply worsened. The Army fell 15,000 troops short, an astonishing 25% gap unseen in the history of the AVF. In 2023, The military combined fell short by 41,000 recruits. The timing was puzzling. When volunteerism hit the wall, the country had few troops deployed in combat and pay was at the highs. The Pentagon referred vaguely to a broad "recruiting crisis," meaning enlistments had declined across all demographic groups.

The Pentagon was not being entirely accurate. The military has a "white male recruitment crisis." Since 2013, male enlistments in the Army have fallen 35%, dropping from 58,000 new recruits in 2013 to just 37,700 in 2023. From 2018 to 2023, the number of white recruits in the Army fell from 44,042 to just 25,070. No other demographic group experienced a comparable decline. Sensing a sudden disinterest among white males, the Marines boosted their longstanding Latino overrepresentation to over 30% of accessions to make mission.

What changed? First, the recent progressive movement has profoundly affected young, white Democratic men. For decades, recruiting polls have shown scant difference among young males. As recently as 2015, 19% of young, white Democratic men wanted to serve, compared to 20% of Blacks, Latinos and white Republicans. But by 2021, white Democrat male willingness to serve had plunged to 3%, four times lower than Black and Latino men, and eight times lower than white Republicans. The percentage of high school Democrats who say the military does a "good job" had similarly declined, from 84% in 2002 to 35% in 2023. According to Gallup, only 12% of Democrats aged 18 to 24 were "extremely proud" to be American, down from 54% in 2004. If you're not proud of your country, you won't fight for it. Institutional distrust—an inherent component of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)—drove a generation of white liberals away from the military.

Unfazed, uncomprehending, or unwilling to stand firm on martial values after the election of President Biden, the Pentagon changed its recruiting strategy in 2021 to diversify and grow its base. Advertisements emphasized individualism over assimilation, including DEI phraseology like "individual truth" and "authentic self," presumably to appeal to liberals. Official communications emphasizing duty, honor, and country were bracketed by drag queen digital takeovers, anime depicted the military as a refuge from childhood trauma, and bullets painted in rainbow pride colors. It was "a distinct departure" from traditional recruiting, according to the Army. The military's longstanding promise to strip recruits of societal values and reboot them with martial code was rejected as a relic. These efforts were supposed to attract minority groups. They did not. Desire to serve in the armed forces dropped between 2020 and 2023 among African American high school seniors (18% to 12%), Latino high school seniors (16% to 8%), and female high school seniors (12% to 7%).

Second, the Pentagon's emphasis upon DEI caused conservatives to withdraw. In 2020, 20% of high school Republican men said they wanted to serve, dropping to 15% in 2023—the lowest in forty years. In 2021,

65% of teens in military households said they wanted to serve. Only two years later, that figure had fallen to 32%. DEI efforts also alienated the military's main recruiting pipeline: veteran families. According to data from the 2019 Pew Military Survey and the 2024 Survey of Military Veterans, the percentage of conservative veterans who would advise a young family member to join the military plummeted from 88% in 2019 to only 53% in 2024. Conservative veterans in the survey cited the "military's DEI and other social policies" as a major factor in withholding their endorsement, far greater than concerns about wartime injuries, VA care, or pay.

The Pentagon worked itself into a cul-de-sac. It failed to recruit the progressives and it alienated the conservatives.

What Is to Be Done?

First, the uniformed military—the generals and admirals as the leaders—must reconcile the military meritocracy with efforts that broaden the pool and retain top talent, as Colin Powell did in the 1990s. They have evaded doing so. Advised by his generals, President Biden said last year that diversity was necessary "for all successful military operations." Conservative veterans resoundingly disagree. Which is it? Divisive DEI policy initiatives did not attract more diverse recruits, but they did temporarily drive away conservative veterans and their children.

President Trump will abolish DEI. The Reagan National Defense Surveys fielded in mid-November 2023 and mid-November 2024 already show a significant post-election uptick in service interest among Americans under 30. But the military has not acknowledged its fundamental recruiting error. We are in a period of cultural interregnum concerning who will defend America, or why. In three years, the military could as easily tip back to DEI, since it has not defined where it really stands or what it believes. The same is true of losing the war in Afghanistan; the military promised an explanation that never came. (Interestingly, veterans do not cite our performance there as a reason to recommend or withhold service recommendations.)

Second, the military must get serious about heeding its core constituency: the veterans whose endorsements are key to sourcing 80% of its volunteers. It must establish close ties with the veteran community. The Pentagon understands "influencers" are key recruit drivers, devoting a major poll to random adults who "influence youths ages 16–24." Few respondents are veterans, and there is no sensitivity analysis tying policy changes to precious service recommendations. We have to be willing to receive tough input from our veterans on new procedures. Congress can't throw more money at a recruiting problem the military refuses to analyze. Enlisting for the military already puts you in the top 20% of all young, comparable wage earners. Yet the DoD has fallen behind on manufacturing munitions to sufficiently arm them. Funded at a paltry 3% of GDP, the level we were at in 1940, our defense base appears increasingly weak to our adversaries, increasing the probability of war—and a draft.

Third, let's not delude ourselves about our imperiled national security. The oscillation between commanders-in-chief, from progressive Obama to conservative Trump to progressive Biden to conservative Trump, reflects a divisive country without a shared sense of values. We are not the country we were in 1964—or even 1994. No modern president has heartily called on American youth to join its military. The deepening cynicism of young people on the political left is a corrosive problem. On the right, there is a growing belief in isolationism, as if we can turn back the clock to the 19th century.

The historian Arnold J. Toynbee concluded: "Great civilizations are not murdered; they commit suicide." Eventually, civilizations lose their vigor, misspend their wealth, self-indulge, underfund their military forces, and are swept aside. Is America following that path? Our military reflects our culture. Until audited by a major war, we won't know whether our shrinking all-volunteer force—recruited for some mix of adventurism, military professionalism, patriotism, and pay—will overcome our quantifiable shortages of mass firepower. Do we have the right stuff to prevail?

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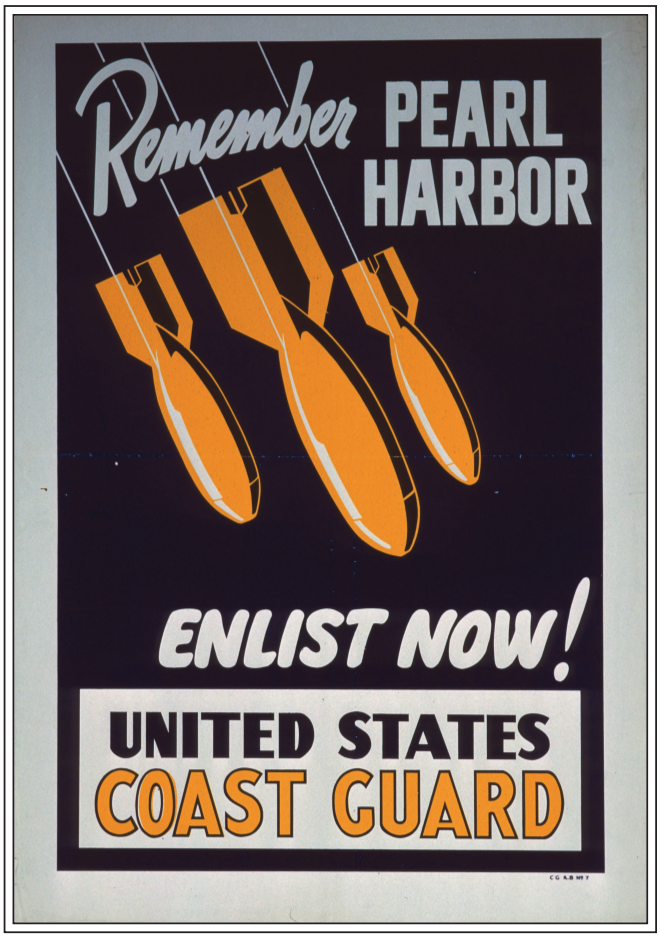
Saving Private Ryan

By Chris Gibson



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Since 1973, when the U.S. ended conscription, America has relied exclusively on voluntary recruitment to fill the ranks of our armed forces; and as we begin a new year, the current status of military recruitment paints a mixed picture. On the one hand, the results for fiscal year 2024 were encouraging, showing an uptick in recruiting, with a sizable 25,000 increase in volunteers from the previous year. That equated to over a 12% increase across the Department of Defense in 2024.

On the other hand, this figure somewhat distorts the reality that the dramatic shortfalls of 2022 and 2023 (where recruitment misses exceeded 40,000 in a single year) caused the Department of Defense to reduce end-strength authorizations well beyond what most leaders and analysts are comfortable with when considering all the potential threats and contingencies requiring force structure. This, in turn, led to *reduced recruitment goals* for 2024, which is at least part of the reason why nearly all service components met their yearly quotas last year. The reality is we are still struggling to recruit the numbers of young Americans necessary to fully man the all-volunteer force for the long haul, and if these trends are not reversed, we may need to consider reinstating the draft.

Considering the proud history of the U.S. armed forces since the Founding, and all the accolades and reputational gain bestowed upon veterans by many Americans, and the life skills, resiliency, and material benefits that accrue to veterans from their military service, these deeply concerning developments surrounding alarming recruitment shortfalls raise the haunting question: *What is going on?*

Several major factors account for these concerning trends. First, demographically, the declining birth rate in America equates to a lower denominator for the overall recruitment pool. Thus, even accessions at the same rates as previous generations will mean fewer recruits in the years to come. Simply put, these demographic challenges will require higher yields from the pool to achieve established goals, and there is no escaping that reality.

Second, among those in the current recruitment pool, in terms of physical, social, and intellectual prerequisites, fewer are eligible to enter military service. In 2020, for example, an eye-popping 77% of young Americans aged 17 to 24 did not meet the minimum qualifications for military service without a waiver. Although in recent years defense leaders have partially addressed this phenomenon by increasing eligibility waivers and, to a degree, lowering previous standards for military service (e.g., allowing more waivers for those with mental health challenges and lowering the standards on previous marijuana use and disqualifying body tattoos, which made more Americans *eligible* to serve), this trend is clearly a national security issue that should alarm all Americans as our potential adversaries are paying attention and noting this decline in our society at large.

On this score, some credit is due to our national defense leaders, as in recent years a new program designed to increase eligibility to serve has been established, and it has achieved promising results. These new *Future*

Soldier/Sailor Preparatory Courses, which have focused on physical fitness and intellectual aptitude (as measured by entry aptitude testing), have notably increased the numerator of those eligible for military service. These important programs should be sustained and strengthened in coming years. The same goes for the increased attention and resources given to this entire endeavor (e.g., more recruiters on the ground and enhanced transparency and accountability measures throughout the armed services to ensure recruitment goals are met) in the last few years since the devastating failures of 2022 and 2023. These must be sustained as well.

The third factor contributing to this trend is exogenous to the military but must be recognized and dealt with in policies and approaches. Generally, when job markets are especially strong (with corresponding low unemployment rates), these periods in the past have been associated with attendant military recruitment challenges. In recent years, this has been the case. Simply put, when Americans can't find jobs, they join the military in higher rates and vice versa. I address this matter at the end of the essay.

Fourth, to save money to allow for investments in other areas of the defense budget, in some cases economic incentives to join the military were curtailed or altered and these policy changes played a role in the downturn in recruitment a few years ago, although I disagree with those who point to this factor as the deciding one for the disturbing trends. Still, because of the recruitment failures of 2022 and 2023, most of these policies were reversed (for example, the college loan repayment program is now back in full measure), and this helped increase recruitment numbers in 2024. We might consider similar incentive programs for young Americans who didn't go to college. Perhaps we should consider car loan repayment for enlistment, for example.

Still, despite all these aforementioned factors adversely affecting the propensity to volunteer, and corresponding policy changes to address them, there is yet another factor that must be considered, and in my view, it is the most significant one as far as military recruitment is concerned. For a variety of reasons, *Gen Z does not value military service as much as previous generations*. Some of these reasons include the overall national trend of declining faith in leaders and institutions, which for Gen Z has been exacerbated by their disillusionment with the military's use in perceived endless (and pointless) wars of foreign occupation since 9/11, and heavy-handed deployment of troops during periods of domestic unrest since the Ferguson riots and national reactions to the death of George Floyd. Still others from longstanding traditional military families are turned off from volunteering by the recent Department of Defense policy focus on "wokeness" and political correctness. The reality is, for different reasons, mirroring larger issues of ideological polarization in America, the children of the left and right are less inspired to serve today.

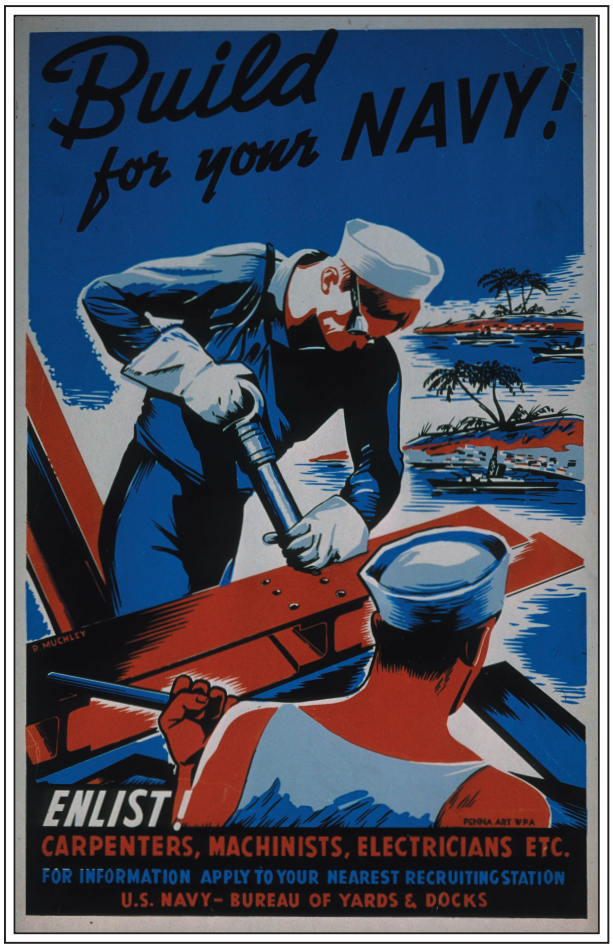
Exacerbating this trend, for too many of Gen Z, there is the misperception that military service is a detour in the "race of life." By joining the military, too many young folks today believe they will fall behind their peers and ultimately achieve less in life with nothing (or too little) to show for it, and this brings me to the real point of this essay. Strong, effective national leadership can, *and must*, address these false impressions. I wonder how many members of Gen Z know, for example, that before he earned his doctorate from Harvard and went on to serve as both national security advisor and secretary of state, making huge contributions to American foreign policy, Henry Kissinger was first a sergeant in the U.S. Army serving with a front-line infantry division during World War II? At the end of his long and very distinguished life, Kissinger was honored with burial in the Arlington National Cemetery.

Or, how many young folks today know that 31 of our previous presidents served in the military? Or that countless business, academic, religious, and community leaders served in uniform long before rising to prominence in their respective professional lives? Military service is not a distraction or side-tracking, but rather an enhancement to life potential. Moreover, and importantly, it is also a meaningful way to serve others and the greater good of society. Military service provides much-needed perspective, life skills, and emotional maturity, positively altering the way we perceive and process life in a free society. Over the years since the Founding, military service has strengthened our national social fabric and helped coalesce and fortify our national spirit, helping to catapult America to global superpower status and the envy of the modern world.

As I close this essay, my mind drifts to the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. In the scene at the end of the film, Ryan, after enduring World War II and going on to live a full life, while walking through the Normandy cemetery, turns to his family emotionally and seeks their reassurances that he has lived a good life so as to be worthy of those precious post-war years he enjoyed, which came from the sacrifices of those whom he fought with as a young man, those who gave the last full measure of devotion for Ryan and all Americans in the just cause for freedom.

All those of the Greatest Generation who served in uniform, and those who came before and after them, represent the best of what America has to offer. These stories must be told to Gen Z. *If we want to remedy the military recruitment challenges, we will need to convince today's young Americans that they are part of something special and that now is their time to step forward to protect this cherished way of life, even if only for a few years*. Time in the military for citizens is more than worth it; it's life-defining and good . . . and necessary for a free people. More than any other policy that addresses this concerning trend of recruitment shortfalls, including smart and deserving economic incentives for service, this inspiration to serve must be imparted if we are to survive and flourish in the 21st century. We should do so without delay.

Chris Gibson is a writer and analyst. He is author of two books, *Rally Point* and *Securing the State*, and numerous scholarly journal articles, book chapters, opinion pieces, and book reviews. He served recently as the twelfth president of Siena College and previously as a distinguished visiting professor at Williams College and as a member of Congress (NY-19). He is a decorated combat veteran of the U.S. Army, where he rose to the rank of colonel and brigade command in the 82nd Airborne Division before retiring. While in the military, he served four combat tours in Iraq; with the NATO peace enforcement mission in Kosovo from 2001 to 2002; and with the UN humanitarian service mission to Haiti in 2010. Among his military awards and decorations are four Bronze Star Medals, the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantryman's Badge with Star, the Master Parachutist Badge, and the Ranger Tab. Gibson also had tours teaching at West Point and served as a Hoover Institution national security affairs fellow from 2006 to 2007. He holds a PhD in government from Cornell University.



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Military Recruiting Shortfalls—a Recurring Challenge

By Peter R. Mansoor

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic all but halted in-person recruiting in America's high schools, the U.S. military has fallen short of its recruiting goals. The U.S. Army missed its FY22 recruiting goal by 25 percent, and its FY23 recruiting goal by 10 percent. The Army requires roughly 65,000 new recruits each year, but it has strained to acquire that many in a tight job market. The Air Force and Navy have suffered similar shortfalls. FY24 witnessed a rebound, with the armed forces recruiting 12.5 percent more personnel (roughly 25,000 more recruits) than the previous year. No matter how one parses the numbers, recruiting is still tight. In the past few years, only the U.S. Marine Corps and the tiny Space Force have consistently met their recruiting needs.

Ever since the inception of the all-volunteer military in 1973, recruitment has risen and fallen in conjunction with civilian employment. When economic activity dipped, young men and women could find employment at decent wages by joining the armed services. As wages stagnated in the 1980s and 1990s, military wages compared favorably with civilian jobs and recruiting remained relatively constant. Young Americans serving a tour of duty could acquire job skills and save money for college, helped by the GI Bill. After 2008, educational benefits increased significantly, allowing veterans to attend up to four years of college essentially for free.

America's strong economy has disincentivized enlistment in the armed forces in recent years. The nation's unemployment rate dipped below 4 percent in 2018 and has remained below that level, with the exception of the period of economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, ever since. Compounding this trend, the percentage of young men and women eligible to join the military has fallen to an all-time low. With lower birthrates, the youth population is declining. The drop in births caused by the Great Recession is starting to hit home, with a ten percent reduction in eligible young men and women turning 18 years of age beginning in 2026. In this smaller pool of potential recruits, only 23 percent aged 17 to 25 are eligible to enlist in the military without a waiver. High school dropouts, mental health challenges, drug use, criminal records, obesity, and medical issues have all had an impact on the pool of eligible recruits.

In the 1970s and 1980s when faced with recruiting shortfalls, the military services would resort to admitting recruits without high school diplomas or those who scored low on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, the standard test used by the military to measure a potential recruit's aptitude in math, verbal, science, and technical skills. The services have been reluctant to again resort to such measures, as the propensity of enlisted personnel to complete their enlistment is directly tied to recruit quality. Poor performing soldiers also aren't up to the challenge of operating today's increasingly high-tech equipment.

Increasingly, the military services are offering ineligible recruits prep courses to get them in shape physically and academically, allowing them time to lose weight, improve their physical fitness, and improve their English language abilities, among other enhancements. About a quarter of the Army's recruits this past year went through the soldier prep program.

But deeper cultural issues are also at play. Fewer Americans today view a tour in the military as a rite of passage or as a debt owed to the nation. Young men and women who have grown up during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have also witnessed the results of the deadly side of combat and are reluctant to potentially put their lives at risk by joining the military. The percentage of Americans who would encourage someone to join the military has declined from 70 percent in 2018 to just 51 percent today. By 2022, just 12 percent of American youth had a parent who served in the military, one of the biggest inducements to joining the service. Most recruits come from military families, making the military today increasingly a family business. This is dangerous for American society in the long run. Political allegations that the military has gone "woke" have influenced parents, coaches, pastors, and other influencers to become lukewarm about military service. As confidence in the military declines, so does the willingness of young people to serve.

POLL: What are the causes of, and remedies for, the current dramatic shortfalls in U.S. military recruitment?

- ☐ U.S. fertility rates are now well below 2.0, so there are simply fewer people to recruit.
- ☐ Increased drug use, gang affiliations, and obesity have diminished the pool of fit recruits.
- ☐ Draconian COVID vaccination mandates led to massive retirements and discouraged future recruitment.
- ☐ Potential recruits felt that woke DEI protocols had replaced meritocracy in recruitment and promotions.
- ☐ Pentagon inferences that white middle class soldiers are racists/ragers/supremacists have alienated them.
- ☐ Recent military disasters convinced soldiers that their commanders may be incompetent or insensitive to losses.

The Marines have been able to sustain their recruitment by portraying the Corps as an elite band of warriors. This works for the Corps, which has fewer than 180,000 personnel, but it will not solve the larger challenge of recruiting for the other services, particularly the 460,000-strong U.S. Army. Recruits who value the warrior ethos naturally gravitate toward the Marines and Special Forces. The other services let recruits know they will be part of a team that embraces an ethical warrior culture that will defend the nation against its enemies, but transmitting that message will not fill the ranks. The most effective advertising slogan in the Army's history was "Be All You Can Be," a slogan it has resurrected. One thing the Marines do is put a great deal of emphasis on recruiting by putting their strongest personnel into recruiting positions, something the other services should copy.

There is no magic "silver bullet" to fix the military's recruiting woes. Higher pay and bonuses will help, but the military is competing in this regard with civilian businesses and industry, which are also offering incentives to attract workers in a tight labor market. The military could work with Congress to offer citizenship to immigrants who serve for a certain number of years in the military, which would help. The U.S. population is composed of 13.5 percent immigrants, but only 4 percent of the military is composed of non-U.S. citizens. Initiatives to work with the nation's youth to improve their physical and mental abilities and committing more and high-quality personnel to the recruiting mission are already underway.

Finally, reinstituting the draft is an option, but absent an existential national security crisis, doing so is politically unpalatable. The shortfall in recruiting is relatively small compared with each draft-eligible year group, meaning the drafting of personnel to fill the shortages would be seen as highly unfair and inequitable to those drafted. The armed services do not want to go back to the days of the draftee military, with its discipline and morale challenges. Absent a clear and present danger to the nation, the draft will remain dormant. It is instead incumbent upon the leaders of the armed services to work with the administration and Congress to enact policies that will overcome their current recruiting challenges.

Peter R. Mansoor, U.S. Army colonel (retired), is the General Raymond E. Mason Jr. Chair of Military History at the Ohio State University. A 1982 distinguished graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he earned his doctorate from Ohio State. He assumed his current position after a twenty-six-year career in the U.S. Army that included two combat tours, the first as a brigade commander in Baghdad and his final duty as executive officer to General David Petraeus, commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq. His latest works are *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (Yale University Press, 2013), a history of the surge in Iraq in 2007–8; and *Grand Strategy and Military Alliances* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) and *The Culture of Military Organizations* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), both coedited with Williamson Murray.

Discussion Questions

1. Do shortfalls in military recruitment transcend the U.S. and thus are characteristic of all affluent Western nations in general?
2. Are recruitment difficulties merely a transitory phenomenon that will self-correct, or indicative of fundamental challenges?
3. Will AI, robotics, and drones provide an eventual solution to Western militaries' manpower shortages?
4. Do increasing one-child families discourage the military recruitment of young men and women?
5. Do the new high-profile political activism and DEI mandates of the Pentagon discourage enlistment?



IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Peace in Ukraine

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of "War, Revolution, and Peace." Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: "The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man's endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life." From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the "Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict" has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution's dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

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