

# Conscription in the Afghan Army

Compulsory Service versus an All Volunteer Force

Jerry Meyerle, Nilanthi Samaranayake, Mike Markowitz, Lonn Waters,  
Hilary Zarin, Brian Ellison, Chris Jehn, Bill Rosenau



CRM D0024840.A2/Final  
April 2011

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For questions about this study, contact the lead author, Dr Jerry Meyerle, at [meyerlg@cna.org](mailto:meyerlg@cna.org) or 703-824-2632. Cover photo shows Afghan soldiers in Kapisa province, courtesy of US Marine Corps.

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April 2011



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# Preface

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In a widely publicized speech last year, Afghan President Hamid Karzai raised the possibility of a return to conscription in the Afghan army – as a way to forge national unity and reduce costs. At present, Afghanistan has a professional, all volunteer force.

This monograph evaluates the potential benefits and costs of a shift to conscription in Afghanistan. Is conscription advisable in Afghanistan, or is the current volunteer force a better option? If conscription were instituted, what forms should it take?

This monograph may be of interest to anyone concerned with the development and sustainment of the Afghan army, conscription versus voluntary military recruitment in less developed societies, or nation-building and stability operations. The paper was produced by analysts in CNA's Strategic Studies Division.

Research was conducted over a five-month period from October 2010 through March 2011, including an extended trip to several sites in Kabul and southern Afghanistan. The authors wish to thank the many US, NATO, and Afghan service members who spoke with the authors and provided valuable data.



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# Summary

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According to many observers, the core problem in Afghanistan is that it is not a nation, but a smattering of disconnected peoples with little sense of loyalty to a national government. In early 2010, Afghan President Hamid Karzai raised the possibility of instituting conscription – defined as compulsory military service – as a means to bring the country together and forge a sense of nationalism.

This paper explores the trade-offs of conscription versus an all volunteer force in Afghanistan. The main question is whether instituting conscription in the Afghan army is advisable or not. The Afghan military today is an all volunteer force.

This study concludes that conscription is not the best option for Afghanistan. Manpower needs do not require it, and the Afghan government lacks sufficient capacity and legitimacy to implement it effectively. It is highly likely that a draft would further divide the country and alienate the population in the very areas where the insurgency is strongest. Conscription would vitiate the effectiveness of the army while yielding few rewards.

A professional, all volunteer force is better suited to Afghanistan's unique conditions. A professional army will be necessary to defeat the insurgency and stabilize the country, which is the army's most important mission. A capable, cohesive, and professional army is vital for the continued viability of Afghanistan's national government.

If the Afghan government decides to move ahead with conscription regardless, the US and NATO should insist on building political consensus beforehand, especially in less stable areas. The army should remain a mostly volunteer force, well below 50 percent conscript. Professionalism must be maintained; developing good leaders will become even more important. Conscripts should be paid a decent salary and provided with an education and other opportunities useful in civilian life. Press gang tactics should be avoided at all costs.

## The history of conscription in Afghanistan

Since the late 19th century, efforts to compel men to serve in the Afghan army have been hobbled by a weak central government and powerful tribes, among other things. From 1880 to 1901, the government negotiated with tribal leaders who provided conscripts. Throughout the early 20th century, the government tried to institute modern forms of conscription that cut out tribal middlemen, but this was extremely

unpopular, especially in the south and east, and met with frequent and intense resistance. Corruption, defections, and open revolts were common.

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the army relied heavily on conscription – mainly press ganging (i.e., random sweeps through populated areas to grab young men of fighting age). The practice met with widespread popular unrest. Tens of thousands of conscripts – sometimes entire units – defected with their weapons and joined the insurgency.

During the civil war in the 1990s, many armed factions pressed young men into combat. The Taliban army that pushed into Afghanistan in 1994 relied mainly on volunteers. Yet, after defeats in the north in 1997, the Taliban turned increasingly to conscription. The policy met with substantial resistance, including open revolts in Kandahar. The Taliban today is a mainly volunteer force. Recruits join for many reasons, including money, prestige, and grievances against the government.

## **The debate over conscription in Afghanistan today**

The proponents of conscription in Afghanistan argue that it may be a way to generate additional manpower while saving money (conscripts need not be paid a full salary). It may also help forge a sense of nationalism in young conscripts from different places. Conscription may be a way to bring in under-represented groups that have shown little willingness to join, especially the educated elite and southern Pashtuns.

Those in favor of maintaining the current all volunteer force note that the army has been meeting its manpower goals through voluntary, incentives-based recruitment. If there is no shortage of able-bodied volunteers, including among the Pashtuns of the east and north, why force people to join? A conscript army would likely be less disciplined and effective. Stability operations, the Afghan army's most important mission, require highly professional forces.

Supporters of the current all volunteer force note that conscription has a poor record in Afghanistan and is likely to cause substantial resistance, strengthen the Taliban, and further divide the country. The process is likely to be riddled with corruption and quite ineffective, not to mention unpopular. Instituting conscription effectively requires a relatively developed state apparatus and rule of law, as well as a population that is firmly behind the war effort. Afghanistan has neither. In addition, conscription may save money on salaries, but would introduce new training, enforcement, and other costs.



## **Case studies of developing countries with and without conscription**

A number of Middle Eastern countries – Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, and Yemen are covered in this report – have instituted conscription as a means to generate large armies and expand the state. Those countries that did so effectively had relatively developed centralized governments and highly mobilized populations. In less-developed countries, corruption has been endemic in the conscription process; the elite have mostly escaped the draft.

India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are examples of developing countries that have built and maintained volunteer forces while fighting numerous insurgencies within their borders. India and Pakistan have two of the largest and most professional armies in the world. They have built these armies by making the military a viable career path; building a sophisticated system of recruitment that targets certain demographics while expanding recruitment among under-represented communities; maintaining a capable and professional officer corps; and by managing ethnic differences within the armed forces.

The Pakistan army has improved its ethnic balance through targeted recruiting and is quick to act against divisions within its ranks. The Indian army is a secular institution that avows respect for all communities and prohibits the discussion of ethnic differences. Both countries have a strong all-volunteer tradition inherited from the British Indian army.

## **Analytic approach**

Research for this monograph draws on a variety of sources, including extensive interviews in Afghanistan, data on manpower and cost implications, assessments and reports on the Afghan army, public opinion polling data, and academic books and articles.

The study begins with an overview of the literature on conscription versus voluntary recruitment. Part Two analyzes four case studies of conscription armies in the Middle East (Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, and Yemen), and three cases of South Asian militaries with all volunteer forces (Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka).

Part Three traces the history of conscription in Afghanistan dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Part Four looks at the tradeoffs of conscription versus voluntary recruitment in Afghanistan today, in light of the issues raised in the general literature covered in Part One. The final chapter lays out the study's findings and offers some recommendations.



# Part One: Conscription Armies versus All Volunteer Forces

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## A brief history of conscription

Mass conscription was first instituted by Napoleon in 1798 shortly after the French Revolution as a way to generate manpower for the conquest of Europe. It was the first time in history that an entire population was mobilized for war. This led to fundamental changes between the state and society, as well as warfare itself. Unlike earlier armies, Napoleon's was made up of "citizen soldiers" loyal to the state.<sup>1</sup> Earlier armies had relied mostly on foreign mercenaries or feudal levies raised by powerful landowners; their discipline, loyalty, and military effectiveness were poor by modern standards.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1513, the Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli had decried the use of mercenaries and called for armies made up of citizens with a stake in the national defense.<sup>3</sup>

The total mobilization of French society allowed Napoleon to build an army of unprecedented size. When he ran out of volunteers, he instituted universal conscription.<sup>4</sup> The size and fighting power of post-revolutionary France persuaded other major powers to follow suit – first Prussia, then Russia, then Meiji Japan.<sup>5</sup> They built armies of unprecedented size, leading to major wars of increasing magnitude, culminating in WWI and WWII.<sup>6</sup> One of the main factors behind the scale of warfare in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was that for the first time in history entire populations were mobilized behind the war effort. These wars resulted in unprecedented carnage, but also drove

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Alder, *Engineering the Revolution: Arms and Enlightenment in France, 1763-1815* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Panu Poutvaara and Andreas Wagener, "The Political Economy of Conscription", Discussion Paper Series, Institute for the Study of Labor, September 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter 13.

<sup>4</sup> Erik Zurcher, "Conscription and Resistance. The Historical Context", in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775-1925* (IB Tauris, 1999), Chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Krebs, "A School for the Nation?: How Military Service Does Not Build Nations, and How it Might", *International Security*, 28:4, Spring 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Poutvaara and Wagener 2009.

the development of modern nation-states.<sup>7</sup> According to the sociologist Charles Tilly, “war made the state, and the state made war.”<sup>8</sup>

After the retreat of the colonial powers after the Second World War, many former colonies instituted conscription as a means to build new armies, expand the reach of the state, and instill nationalism in populations for whom loyalty to the state and nation was an unfamiliar concept.<sup>9</sup> For many leaders of former colonies the army was the most organized and powerful institution in society; in many cases, it was the only national institution. As a result, many new leaders looked on the army as a potential “school for the nation”. Bringing large portions of the male population into this institution provided the opportunity to instill ideas of nationalism and civil order.

Conscription was the dominant form of military recruitment during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>10</sup> America and Britain, where liberal democratic traditions were strongest, were more wary of conscription than mainland Europe, Russia, or Japan. With the exception of the 1950s and 1960s (the US ended conscription in 1973, Britain in 1963), the US and Britain instituted conscription only during times of major war.<sup>11</sup> After WWII, as the threat of major war declined, a growing number of developed countries shifted toward smaller, professional forces made up of volunteers committed to the defense of the state.<sup>12</sup> France, where conscription was first instituted, shifted to an all volunteer force in the mid-1990s.<sup>13</sup> Many countries that maintain conscription today (Germany and Taiwan, for example) have phased it back – by cutting the number of conscripts, shortening their required service time, and other measures. Most countries that remain committed to conscription – such as Israel, Egypt, and South Korea – face serious threats from hostile neighbors. For these countries, the threat of a major war remains.

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<sup>7</sup> See Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> Zurcher 1999, Chapter 1.

<sup>10</sup> Zurcher 1999, Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Levi, “The Institution of Conscription”, *Social Science History*, 20:1, Spring 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Poutvaara and Wagener, 2009

<sup>13</sup> Anna Leander, “Drafting Community: The Integrative Role of Conscription in an Age of Globalization”, paper prepared for workshop on conscription, Lysebu, April 12-14, 2001.

## The advantages of conscription\*

Conscription originally came about as a means to generate mass amounts of manpower for large-scale wars.<sup>14</sup> For major wars in which the survival of the nation was at stake, conscription proved extremely effective. When the entire fighting-age male population must be mobilized for war, it is not possible to rely entirely on a volunteer system. The same is true when the risks of service during wartime greatly outweigh monetary and other incentives. Many proponents of all volunteer forces admit that in times of national emergency, conscription is necessary.<sup>15</sup>

Though conscription's main purpose was to generate recruits, it also had many by-products frequently cited by those arguing in favor of peacetime conscription. One of these was that compulsory military service has contributed to the forging of national identities, especially during wartime. Universal military service brought young men from diverse backgrounds and areas of the country together in a single place. They lived and served together in defense of the state. Historically, service in the army broke down many parochial loyalties and helped build a sense of nationalism. As a result, the army has often been referred to as the "school of the nation."<sup>16</sup>

Another byproduct of universal conscription was that it tended to bring society and the military closer together. Many proponents of the draft argue that professional armies made up of volunteers are more isolated from society and vice versa. As a result, the population, as well as the country's leaders, have less understanding of the military and its affairs. An army made up of self-selecting military professionals can be deployed with less effect on society at large than a conscript army drawn from all segments of the population. The idea is that if anyone in the country can be called upon to fight, then the population as a whole will be more emotionally involved in the nation's wars and more supportive of those who serve. Some have also argued that conscript armies are less prone to military coups.<sup>17</sup>

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\* In this paper, conscription is defined as compulsory military service, to be distinguished from a system of purely voluntary recruitment. Conscript armies are defined as militaries with some proportion of recruits who were compelled to serve against their will (all conscript armies have some proportion of volunteers, usually commissioned and non-commissioned officers). All volunteer forces are defined as militaries composed entirely of volunteers. The terms professional army and all volunteer force will be used interchangeably.

<sup>14</sup> Poutvaara and Wagener, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> David R Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal, "Change in Military Organization", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol 9, 1983. Milton Friedman, "Why Not a Volunteer Army?", *The New Individualist Review*, 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Leander 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Leander, 2001.

Proponents of the draft argue that universal military service instills a sense of obligation and a stronger feeling of citizenship.<sup>18</sup> Requiring all young men to share in the obligation to defend the state reaffirms what it means to be a citizen.<sup>19</sup> It also puts all citizens on the same level, because all are required to serve.<sup>20</sup> Supporters of a return to conscription in the US point to the widespread culture of service and strong sense of obligation that existed among the American population in the 1940s and 50s.<sup>21</sup> They argue that these values have declined since the repeal of the draft in the early 1970s.

Universal military service is also a means to force into military service members of under-represented groups – such as the wealthiest segment of the population, or certain social groups that demonstrate a lack of interest in the armed forces.<sup>22</sup> It may also provide an avenue for integrating minority populations into state institutions. Critics of the all volunteer force in the US maintain that the American military is not representative of society as a whole – that the elite are under-represented, and that minorities and people from the southern states are over-represented.<sup>23</sup>

In less-developed societies, conscription has served as a tool to expand the reach of the central government. There are few actions that demonstrate the power of the central state more than its ability to compel men from all areas of the country to fight in the armed forces. The institution of conscription forces a government to identify its fighting-age male population through surveys of the populace, to select them for service through the establishment of local draft boards, and to arrest those who refuse to comply.<sup>24</sup> Governments also have the ability to retain former conscripts in the reserves.

Finally, conscription may save the government money on personnel costs – because conscripts tend to be paid less than volunteers. The extent of the savings depends on the salaries of conscripts, their share of the overall force, and whether additional draftees must be added to a conscript army to make up for a reduction in experienced volunteers.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mitchell Belfer, “Conscription and European Security: A Theoretical First-Step”, *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, 1:1, June 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Segal and Segal, 1983.

<sup>20</sup> Krebs, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> William Galston, “Thinking about the draft”, *The Public Interest*, Winter 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Burk 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Galson 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Zurcher 1999.

<sup>25</sup> For more on this, see Government Accountability Office, “Military Draft: Potential Impacts and Other Issues,” March 1988.

## The advantages of all volunteer forces

Proponents of professional armies made up of volunteers – referred to as an all volunteer force (AVF) by most military manpower analysts – argue that volunteer armies are more effective on the battlefield. Turnover is lower among volunteers, which translates into a more experienced force. Most draftees are required to serve two years or less; relatively few reenlist. In the US army today, the average time in service is about 4½ years. Motivation, morale, and discipline tend to be higher among volunteers compared to conscripts.<sup>26</sup> Proponents of the AVF in the US military note that today's force is far more experienced, motivated, disciplined, and committed than the draft army during Vietnam. It is also considered the most effective fighting force the world has ever seen.<sup>27</sup>

Volunteer armies tend to be smaller, better trained, and more professional. Most of today's wars call for forces capable of unconventional missions, such as counterinsurgency and stability operations. In order to operate effectively among civilian populations, soldiers must be highly trained and motivated. Conscripts have a poor record in counterinsurgency and stability operations. The conscript-based French army did not do well in Algeria or Vietnam. The same can be said of the Russian army in Afghanistan and Chechnya. America's all volunteer force is much better at counterinsurgency than the draft army of the 1960s and early 1970s. Even conventional conflicts have become more complex and reliant on technology, which requires more highly trained personnel.

Volunteer armies are more efficient in their use of human resources. Drafted soldiers cost little compared to volunteers. The conscript armies of Europe were notoriously wasteful of human life, in part because it came so cheaply. Many economists and manpower analysts have argued that getting people for free tends to encourage waste and inefficiency.<sup>28</sup> In addition, more experienced volunteers tend to make better use of the material resources at their disposal.

It can be argued that relying on an all volunteer force yields many of the advantages ascribed to conscription armies. For example, many proponents of the AVF in the US insist that it is at least as representative as the draft army during Vietnam. The top echelons of society are under-represented in today's force, but the same was true in Vietnam. Minorities are over-represented in today's force, but they were during Vietnam as well (and were disproportionately targeted for the draft). On average, the US

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<sup>26</sup> John T Warner, "Economics and the All Volunteer Force", paper presented at American Economic Association Meeting, 5 Jan 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All Volunteer Force* (RAND Corporation: 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Milton Friedman was the first among many economists to make this argument during the debates leading up to the all volunteer force in the US. See Friedman 1961.

Army today is better educated than society as a whole and scores higher on aptitude tests.<sup>29</sup>

A case can be made that a volunteer force is at least as equitable as a conscript army during peacetime when not all are called upon to serve. The perception that conscription is a more fair form of recruitment arose from the system of universal military service during WWII – when nearly every able-bodied man fought in the armed forces. During WWII, the US military had nearly 12 million men under arms. To draft the same proportion of men today would require the US to maintain a 30-million man military. In peacetime, when it is neither possible nor desirable to maintain such large military forces, conscription raises the thorny dilemma of “who serves when not all serve.” Unless all men are conscripted, some will be forced into service and others not, leaving a fraction of the population to protect the country. Many economists argue that choosing some but not others for compulsory service is inherently unfair (and an unnecessary infringement on individual liberty if available and qualified volunteers are turned away); incentivizing men to join voluntarily is more equitable.<sup>30</sup>

Depending on the assumptions one makes, volunteer armies may be less costly to the government and to society as a whole. Conscription may save the government money on salaries, but it introduces other costs that may outweigh the savings on payroll. For example, draft armies have a higher turnover rate, which translates into higher training costs. Conscription requires an extensive administrative machinery to identify draftees and compel them to join. Most importantly, conscription imposes opportunity costs on those drafted and on the economy as a whole. Some argue that conscription is a form of tax that shifts the costs of military service from all citizens to each new conscript.<sup>31</sup> In a volunteer system, taxes from the general population pay the salaries of new recruits. In a draft army, it is young conscripts who pay the price – in the form of foregone wages and other benefits they would otherwise earn in civilian life. Conscription also takes young men out of the civilian workforce and potentially away from occupations better suited to their particular abilities. The idea is that conscription allocates labor inefficiently; the market does better.<sup>32</sup>

A number of historians and political scientists have argued that successful conscription requires legitimacy and a strong state.<sup>33</sup> Governments with little popular support and weak state institutions tend to face widespread resistance and evasion when attempting to draft fighting-age males. All but the most powerful totalitarian states cannot coerce their young men to serve in the absence of national consensus. Even with substantial public support, conscription requires an extensive administrative appara-

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<sup>29</sup> Rostker, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Jehn, “Conscription”, in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Jehn 2008; Friedman 1961.

<sup>32</sup> Warner 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Levi 1996; Zurcher 1999, Chapter 1; Michael Barnett, *Military Power, State, and Society in Egypt and Israel* (Princeton University Press, 1992).



tus – to survey the eligible male population, identify potential draftees, and compel them to join. Volunteer armies, on the other hand, are less invasive; they rely on individual incentives rather than compulsion and do not require popular support or a large administrative machinery.

Supporters of all-volunteer forces argue that voluntary recruitment is more conducive to the principle of individual liberty that underpins most modern democratic systems. In the US and Britain, where liberal democratic principles are strongest, conscription was limited to times of national emergency (a brief period after WWII excepted). Forcing men to serve against their will could be justified only under extraordinary conditions.

Many critics of conscription have argued that the sociological effects often attributed to compulsory military service – such as forging national unity or bringing the army and society together – were due to the wars that required conscription in the first place, not to the draft itself. Conscription in peacetime, they argue, would not have the same effect.<sup>34</sup> The historical records suggest that conscription alone does not forge nations. Rather, it is major wars and revolutions that mobilize populations behind their governments and make conscription possible and desirable. It was WWII that unified America and instilled in its population a sense of service. The draft during Vietnam divided the nation and caused tensions between the military and society.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the fact that many countries continue to rely on conscription, most studies based on extensive research tend to favor reliance on professional, all-volunteer forces – at least in peacetime (to include limited and unconventional wars). Few arguments in favor of peacetime conscription appear to be based on substantial research. The consensus in favor of professional armies is particularly pronounced in the debate over the draft versus the all volunteer force in the US.<sup>36</sup> The same is true, though to a lesser extent, among European scholars.

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<sup>34</sup> Herman Beukema, “Social and Political Aspects of Conscription: Europe’s Experience”, *Military Affairs*, 5:1, Spring 1941. Poutvaara and Wagener, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Burk 2001.

<sup>36</sup> For a survey of these studies in the US, see Rostker 2006.



## Part Two: Case Studies of Developing Countries with and without Conscription

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Most published studies on conscription are based on the armies and societies of developed western nations. They are not entirely relevant to Afghanistan. This chapter examines four Muslim countries in the Middle East that have adopted conscription (Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, and Yemen), and three countries in South Asia that have all volunteer forces (Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka).

### Islamic countries with conscription

Like Afghanistan, the Muslim countries of the Middle East have struggled to reconcile religious injunctions and tribal warrior traditions with the need to build modern armies and nation-states. A number of countries in the Middle East have turned toward conscription as a way to build and maintain large land armies, forge a sense of nationalism, and expand the reach of the state.

#### Egypt

Currently in Egypt, conscription is regulated by the 1980 Military and National Service Act, which makes service compulsory for men ages 18 to 30. In addition to the armed forces, conscripts serve in the national police, the prison guard service and in military industries, which make up a large sector of the economy (this may change with the new regime that came to power in February 2011).<sup>37</sup>

Of Egypt's roughly 340,000 active soldiers, about 65 percent are conscripts. Egyptian conscripts serve between 18 and 36 months. College graduates are supposed to serve for one year, high school graduates for two years, and others for three years. Refusal or evasion is punishable by up to one year in prison. Because many young Egyptian men work abroad for extended periods, it is not uncommon to reach the age of 30 without serving. These expatriates can pay a fine (\$580 in 2004) to avoid compulsory service. Dual citizens and only sons or breadwinners are exempted.

There appears to be substantial corruption in Egypt's draft system. Most young men from families with money or influence are able to buy their way out or exploit loop-

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<sup>37</sup> "Young, jobless and looking for trouble," *The Economist*. 3 February 2011.

holes in the law, so that the draft falls mainly to the lower and middle classes.<sup>38</sup> Well-connected conscripts can arrange for paperwork that makes it look as if they have served when in fact they have not.<sup>39</sup> There is no provision for conscientious objection or alternative service. Conscripts belonging to the Coptic Christian minority are singled out for abuse in the military, according to some human rights groups.<sup>40</sup> Members of Islamist militant groups are routinely rejected for military service.<sup>41</sup> Many commentators have pointed to the largely conscript makeup of the Egyptian army as a factor in the army's unwillingness to open fire on demonstrators in early 2011.<sup>42</sup>

During the French occupation of Egypt in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Egyptians were exposed to a modern conscript army for the first time. Reformist rulers of Egypt like Muhammad Ali (1805-1848) under Ottoman and later British influence attempted to duplicate the French model with little success. There was substantial resistance to conscription among the Egyptian peasantry. Many rural Egyptians fled their villages to avoid the draft. Some went as far afield as Syria, others maimed themselves so as to be unsuitable for conscription.<sup>43</sup>

Since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century much of Egypt's educated elite have opted out or served very short terms. The elite have proved essential to funding the military and stabilizing various regimes, and so were rarely pressed into military service. Attempts to conscript the upper classes were possible only during a brief period in the late 1960s and early 70s when the population was mobilized for war.

In 1952, a group of reformist military officers led by Gamal Abdel Nasser took power in a coup. The old conscript army was rebuilt with Soviet weapons, doctrine and training. It proved largely ineffective in the 1956 Suez crisis, during interventions in Yemen during the 1960s, and in the 1967 war with Israel in which the Egyptian army was defeated in six days.<sup>44</sup> During the 1950s, the country's leadership relied heavily on the

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<sup>38</sup> Refugee Review Tribunal EGY35028, Australia, 18 June 2009

<sup>39</sup> "Notes on compulsory army service in Egypt" <http://baheyeldin.com/egypt/notes-on-compulsory-army-service-in-egypt.html?page=8> Accessed 16 March 2011

<sup>40</sup> "Forced Islamization of Christian Conscripts in the Egyptian Army." <http://www.aina.org/news/20091012150443.htm>

<sup>41</sup> Data from War Resisters International Egypt country page, <http://www.wri-irg.org/co/rtba/egypt.htm> and the web site of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4b6fe1cf5.pdf> accessed 8 March 2011

<sup>42</sup> For example "Egypt Protests: Army Rules Out the Use of Force." <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12330169>

<sup>43</sup> Cleveland, William L, *A History of the Modern Middle East*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009)

<sup>44</sup> Reasons for this failure are reviewed in Kenneth Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness 1948-91*. (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2002) and Anthony Cordesman and A.R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume I: The Arab Israeli Conflicts 1973-1989* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1990)

military to help develop state institutions and transform Egypt. Yet, the government remained weak at the local level.<sup>45</sup>

After Israel defeated Egypt in the 1967 war, the Egyptian leadership decided its military did not have enough educated personnel to counter Israel's highly advanced armed forces. The war mobilized the population like never before, allowing the government to target the educated elite for conscription and bring in more men from the middle classes. Some 35,000 college graduates were added to the conscription pool after 1969, providing the army with a pool of technical expertise that it had never had before. By 1973, the Egyptian army had grown to some 1.2 million men.<sup>46</sup>

By 1973, however, there was growing opposition against the government's expanded conscription policies – including violent protests by students and military officers. Critics demanded that the government either go to war with Israel or scale back the draft. The country's leadership began to look on universal military service during peacetime as a potential cause of domestic instability. The government demobilized many of its conscripts, most of them educated personnel, and scaled back the obligations to young men in the upper and middle classes. Thereupon, conscription in Egypt reverted back to what it was before 1967.<sup>47</sup>

Since at least the 1950s, there has been a strong political consensus in support of conscription in Egypt, as long as it mainly targets the lower and middle classes. The threat of major war is part of the country's strategic culture. The Egyptian military has suffered numerous defeats since WWII – during the Suez crisis in 1956, and against Israel in the 1967 and 1973 wars. The outcome of these conflicts and the looming prospect of a return to war were what made conscription possible in Egypt, in conjunction with the country's expansive administrative machinery – but not without substantial corruption.

## Turkey

Perhaps more than any other military today, Turkey's conscript army is viewed as a "school of the nation." The founders of modern Turkey were reformist military officers trained in western-style academies set up by the Ottoman sultans during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was in these academies that young men received a modern education. After WWI, a movement led by the reformist officer Kemal Ataturk did away with the Ottoman sultanate and established a secular state based on modern principles of government. After WWII, the Turkish military intervened several times to overthrow

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<sup>45</sup> Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, (Princeton University Press, 1988), Chapter 5.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War: Military Power, State, and Society in Egypt and Israel*, (Princeton University Press: 1992), Chapter 4.

<sup>47</sup> Barnett 1992, Chapter 4.

governments that challenged the country's founding ideology of secular Turkish nationalism.<sup>48</sup>

Of the 402,000 active duty troops in the Turkish army, 80 percent are conscripts who serve from six to fifteen months. College graduates serve shorter terms (six months), enlisted men 12 months, and reservists 15 months. The six-month service requirement for college graduates is among the shortest periods of service of any military in the world – barely enough time to go through basic training. Those who pursue higher education can defer service in the army. Draftees in Turkey may also serve in the paramilitary forces.

Penalties for draft evasion and desertion are harsh: up to ten years in military prison for self-inflicted injury or using false documents. Monitoring of draft-eligible young men is strict; registration of conscripts is one of the most effective government functions in Turkey, and some 60,000 evaders are arrested annually.<sup>49</sup> There is considerable discussion and debate over reducing the length of compulsory service and making terms of service more equitable, but not about the practice itself. It is a crime in Turkey to speak publicly against the army or conscription or to “undermine the Turkish people’s zeal towards the military.”<sup>50</sup>

Turkey has a highly developed government and expansive bureaucracy that reaches all the way to the local level. It operates a network of government schools and universities across the country from which young men are conscripted into military service. Since the founding of modern Turkey in 1923, there has been substantial popular support for conscription, and for the military generally. Many companies refuse to hire men who have not served in the military. Many traditional families will not allow their daughters to marry men who have not served.<sup>51</sup> Critics of the military and compulsory service have become more outspoken in recent years, but the system remains strong.

Turkey’s conscript-based army has intervened in politics numerous times, and has overthrown democratically elected governments. A common argument in favor of conscription is that it may protect against military coups. The idea is that an army based on universal service where all are required to serve will not intervene to overthrow governments elected by the people. This is clearly not the case in Turkey. It is likely that how an army recruits its rank-and-file – i.e., whether it relies on conscription or volunteers – has little effect on the propensity of the military to intervene in politics. Coups are instigated by career officers at the higher echelons of command (with few exceptions, senior officers are volunteers who agreed to reenlist; this is true

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<sup>48</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, (Routledge, 1993), Chapter 1.

<sup>49</sup> War Resisters International, Turkey country page.

<sup>50</sup> The Turkish Penal Code, Article 301.

<sup>51</sup> Ayse Gul Altinay, *The Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

in conscript as well as professional armies), and have more to do with the relationship between military and civilian leaders – and the strength of civilian institutions relative to the military – than the manner of recruitment across the force.

## Algeria

As in Turkey, conscription in Algeria is intended not only to generate manpower, but to train and educate youth from different parts of the country and to inculcate them with a sense of nationalism and public service. Since 2006, however, the Algerian government has taken steps to develop a more professional, volunteer-based force and eventually suspend conscription altogether.

Of 110,000 personnel in the Algerian army, approximately 75,000 are conscripts who serve for about 18-months. After completion of service there is a five-year reserve commitment.<sup>52</sup> Men eligible for the draft may not leave the country legally without special permission. There is no provision for conscientious objectors or alternative service, but about 40 percent of potential conscripts receive some sort of waiver or exemption; deferments are allowed for higher education.<sup>53</sup> Men who have not served are barred from state jobs. Conscripts are paid well over the minimum wage.<sup>54</sup>

Conscription in Algeria dates back to 1969, following Israel's defeat of the Arab armies in the 1967 War. The Algerian government at that time was a semi-authoritarian revolutionary regime that enjoyed widespread popular support. Its leaders were the same people who had fought to free the country from French occupation following a bloody guerrilla war in the 1950s and early '60s.

In 1991, after a brief flirtation with elections, there was an uprising by Islamists demanding a greater share of power. From 1991 to 2002, the country's mainly conscript army was enmeshed in a brutal civil war during which more than 100,000 people died. The government maintains large paramilitary forces to fight the insurgents – including a national police, a secret police, and local militias.<sup>55</sup>

The Algerian military conscripted young men from some of the same areas that provided recruits to the insurgents. Militant groups were known to target the families of conscripts. The Algerian military ultimately crushed the insurgency, but it took 11 years and left 100,000 dead. Given the lack of information available, it is difficult to say how well Algeria's conscript army performed during this period. The fact that Algeria has been preparing in recent years to phase out the draft suggests that the civil

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<sup>52</sup> US Citizenship & Immigration Service, Resource Information Center. Algeria country page.

<sup>53</sup> Jane's World Armies: Algeria.

<sup>54</sup> US Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Background Note, Algeria. 17 February 2011, available at [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

<sup>55</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *The North African Military Balance*, (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010).

war of the 1990s cast doubt on the ability of the country's conscript army to conduct counterinsurgency operations.

## Yemen

Like Algeria, Yemen is a one-party state with a history of tribal insurrections and other violent unrest. Compared to Algeria, Yemen's administrative apparatus is far less developed and is plagued by corruption; much of the population is illiterate and unemployed. The reach of the government does not extend into many areas of the country. Fiercely independent and well-armed tribes occupy the more mountainous areas. In these respects, Yemen is a lot like Afghanistan.

As a result of these difficult conditions, Yemen's system of conscription is informal and piecemeal. The government must negotiate with the tribes to secure manpower for the army. Many recruits are simply press-ganged into service; many of them are minors. Conscription has a checkered history in Yemen. The practice was ended in 2001, but revived again in 2007, more as a jobs program than a serious effort at mobilization.<sup>56</sup> Living conditions for conscripts are poor, and desertions are increasingly common. It is not unusual for soldiers and officers to sell weapons and equipment issued to them.<sup>57</sup> The army also faces problems of loyalty among conscripts taken from the restive south.<sup>58</sup>

Enforcement of conscription, like many state functions in Yemen, appears to be informal and haphazard. During the 1994 civil war there were many reports of forced recruitment, particularly of children. People were forcibly recruited because of their tribal or political affiliation or for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.<sup>59</sup> According to human-rights organizations, boys under 18 are kidnapped and forcibly recruited into the army. President Saleh is reportedly "proud of once being a child soldier himself, which he often refers to in public."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Yemen: Information on conscription in the law and practice", 1 January 1995. War Resisters' International, "Country Report and Updates: Yemen", 26 May 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Salomoni, Barak et. al. *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen*. MG-962. RAND (2010)

<sup>58</sup> W. Terrill. *The Conflicts in Yemen and US National Security*. (US Army. Strategic Studies Institute. 2011)

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.wri-irg.org/programmes/world\\_survey/country\\_report/en/Yemen](http://www.wri-irg.org/programmes/world_survey/country_report/en/Yemen)

<sup>60</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. "Yemen: Follow-up to YEM35342.E of 28 August 2000 on forcible recruitment in the army...", 19 October 2010.



## South Asian countries with all volunteer armies

This section looks at three South Asian militaries with all volunteer forces: Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka. Given Afghanistan's location in South Asia, these cases are particularly relevant. Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka are examples of countries that have maintained professional armies while fighting large-scale insurgencies within their borders. All three have long histories of ethnic divisions and have come up with ways to manage these tensions in the armed forces.

### Pakistan

The experience of Pakistan is crucial, since Afghanistan and Pakistan share many common characteristics, including a large population of Pashtuns (there are more Pashtuns in Pakistan than in Afghanistan, and many serve in the army) and problems recruiting among the restive border tribes. Pakistan has confronted many of the same challenges that the Afghan army faces today.

Pakistan has maintained an all-volunteer force since the country's founding in 1947. The constitution gives the government the power to institute a draft, but Pakistan's leadership has never seriously considered the option – despite losing two major wars with India in 1965 and 1971. Pakistan has maintained one of the largest and most professional armies in the developing world purely through voluntary recruitment. Most Pakistanis look on service in the military as prestigious and remunerative.

Pakistan has managed to do so in part because it has a large population (187 million), and in part because the army enjoys considerable popular support. According to an April 2010 Pew poll, 84% of the Pakistani public has a good opinion of the military.<sup>61</sup> The Pakistani army also has a strong proclivity toward professional volunteers, something it inherited from the British. The army benefits from the existence of certain core demographics – communities with a long history of military service going back generations – that serve as a reliable source of quality manpower. The British cultivated these communities during the colonial era for precisely this purpose, and the Pakistani military has maintained these while cultivating new ones in the decades since.

The Pakistani army has managed to grow its military and expand its recruitment base, while fighting numerous insurgencies in different areas of the country. For example, the military has continued to recruit in the tribal areas near the border with Afghanistan, despite the presence of numerous anti-state militant groups. Mehsuds, Khattaks, and other restive frontier tribes have been well-represented in the army, including some who attained general officer rank. The number of officers from the tribal areas

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<sup>61</sup> Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, "Concern about Extremist Threat Slips in Pakistan: America's Image Remains Poor," July 29, 2010, p. 34-35.

rose from 63 during the period 1970–89 to 147 in the 1990s. The number of enlisted soldiers from the tribal areas also increased greatly during this period.<sup>62</sup>

Pakistan also has a large paramilitary force known as the Frontier Corps, which is recruited locally from the areas along the Afghan border and commanded by Pakistani army officers. The force has great potential, but has been under-resourced relative to the regular army. Despite low pay, poor equipment, harsh conditions, and high risk, the Frontier Corps has managed to fill its ranks with locals recruited on a voluntary basis.<sup>63</sup>

From the 1950s through 1980s, the Pakistani army was dominated by recruits from the Punjab. This ethnic imbalance hurt the reputation of the army and may have contributed to the break away of East Pakistan in 1971, as well as various ethnic-based insurgencies. The most serious revolts – in Baluchistan and Sindh in the 1970s through the 1990s – occurred in provinces with very low recruitment into the army. These conflicts forced the army to improve its ethnic balance through targeted recruitment efforts. Beginning in the 1990s, the army made substantial progress expanding its recruitment base among the enlisted ranks, and to a lesser extent in the officer corps.<sup>64</sup> Ethnic composition levels of the army as a whole, as well as the officer corps, have begun to reflect the national average.

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<sup>62</sup> Shuja Nawaz, “Learning by Doing: The Pakistan Army's Experience with Counterinsurgency,” The Atlantic Council, February 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Nawaz 2011.

<sup>64</sup> Pakistan Army, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate, “Information Brief,” September 2007; C. Christine Fair and Shuja Nawaz, “The Changing Pakistan Officer Corps,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, February 2011, p.79.

### The Pakistani Army: Composition of the Army by Province

	1947	2001	2007	2011 Goal	<i>General Public (1998)</i>
Punjab	77%	71%	57%	54%	56%
NWFP	19.5%	13.5%	no data	14.5%	13%
Sindh	2.2%	15%	no data	17%	22%
Balochistan	.1%	0	3.2%	4%	5%
Data source	Cohen 1984	ISPR 2007	ISPR 2007	ISPR 2007	1998 Census

Sources: Data from Pakistan Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate, “Information Brief,” in Sher Baz Khan story in *Dawn*, September 14, 2007; Stephen Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, 1984, p.44; 1998 Pakistan Census: <http://www.census.gov.pk/Statistics.htm>.

Note: Figures are by province, not ethnic group. No data available for Sindh and NWFP in 2007.

Methods to ensure greater ethnic representation in the Pakistani army include a quota system and affirmative action measures – both of which have improved the representativeness of the Pakistani army. Since the 1990s, the level of the once over-represented Punjabis has declined to mirror the national average, while there are more Baluchis and Sindhis in the army now. Affirmative action measures also supplement the training of recruits who might not have as many advantages as, for example, an urban Punjabi recruit with access to better health care and nutrition may have had. The army also conducts mobile recruitment drives into remote and under-represented areas.<sup>65</sup> Academic and testing requirements are slightly less to accommodate more Sindhi and Baluchi representation in the army.<sup>66</sup> Additional technological training is also given. Also, those who have not had fathers or grandfathers in the military are given preference in some cases to increase the national representativeness of the army.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Pakistani military officer, March 2011, Washington DC.

<sup>66</sup> C. Christine Fair and Shuja Nawaz, “The Changing Pakistan Officer Corps,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, February 2011, p.70 and <http://www.joinpakarmy.gov.pk>.

### The Pakistani Army: Recruitment of Officers by Province

	1974	2001	2005	<i>General Public</i>
Punjab	81%	37%	59%	56%
NWFP	10%	13%	22%	13%
Sindh	2%	5%	9%	22%
Balochistan	1%	1%	5%	5%
Data source	Fair and Nawaz 2010			<i>1998 Census</i>

Sources: C. Christine Fair and Shuja Nawaz, “The Changing Pakistan Officer Corps,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, February 2011, p.85; Pakistan Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate, 2007 Information Brief; Stephen Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, 1984; 1998 Pakistan Census, <http://www.census.gov.pk/Statistics.htm>.

Note: Some recruitment percentages are estimates taken from a line chart. Figures are by province, not ethnic group.

These measures illustrate the importance that Pakistan places on the cohesion and professionalism of its army. The military leadership must constantly weigh building a more diverse army against the threat of fissures in the ranks. Pakistan is a diverse and highly fractured society; these divisions pose a constant threat to the integrity of the armed forces. Notwithstanding the high number of applicants, the army’s overwhelming preoccupation with maintaining the institution’s cohesion and professionalism may partly explain its distaste for the idea of conscription.

The case of Pakistan’s all volunteer force demonstrates that a poor country with an unstable political system and deep internal cleavages can raise and maintain a professional force while fighting insurgencies within its borders. The legitimacy of the army and its reputation as a professional institution have served the organization well when it comes to recruitment – though its failure to recruit among certain communities has harmed its reputation. A voluntary recruitment system seems to be best suited to Pakistan, considering its shaky state apparatus and serious internal divisions. Pakistan’s military leaders, ever wary of divisions within the army and keen to maintain its institutional integrity, have shied away from conscription as a means to generate manpower or build national unity.

## India

Like Pakistan, India has no tradition of conscription. The Indian and Pakistani militaries were created out of the British Indian army, which had a strong professional ethos. India has managed to unify its population behind a stable democratic political system, without the benefit of universal military service. Despite India's extremely diverse population and numerous ethnic-based insurgencies, the Indian army has managed to recruit soldiers from all over the country – though some communities are better represented than others – while minimizing fissures in the ranks.

The Indian army has managed to do this in part through a strong secular tradition based on the principle of respect for all ethnic groups and religions represented in the army.<sup>67</sup> Religious and ethnic tensions have caused large-scale violence at various times during the country's history. At times, these conflicts have infected the army. For example, during the insurgency in the Punjab, some 2,000 Sikh soldiers mutinied after an army assault in 1984 on the Sikh holy shrine, the Golden Temple. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was subsequently assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards. Nonetheless, Sikhs from the Punjab continued to join the army, with most mutineers accepted back into their units.<sup>68</sup> Clearly, despite many upheavals, the Indian army has managed to minimize fissures within its ranks by maintaining its national and secular ethos.

Perhaps one reason the Indian army has been able to contain ethnic conflict is that, unlike in Pakistan, no single ethnic group dominates either the officer corps or the other ranks.<sup>69</sup> It should still be noted that some groups, such as Sikhs, are over-represented, while others, such as Muslims, are under-represented.

Nevertheless, the Indian army has taken steps over the years to address issues involving better representation of minorities. Pradeep Barua calls it a “slow but steady policy” of integrating ethnic groups into the army.<sup>70</sup> As data about the ethnic and religious composition of soldiers is tightly guarded by the army, data at the state level is the only systematic way to gauge changes in representation over time. Data from the 1960s and 1990s shows a significant decline in the proportion of soldiers from the Punjab, reflecting their once prominent “martial race” status in the military. While the

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<sup>67</sup> Amit Ahuja, “Soldier and Society: Managing Diversity in a Multiethnic Army,” Working Paper Delivered at the Asia Policy Assembly, *National Asia Research Program*, NBR/Woodrow Wilson Center, June 17–18, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Omar Khalidi, “Ethnic Group Recruitment in the Indian Army: The Contrasting Cases of Sikhs, Muslims, Gurkhas and Others,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (Winter, 2001-2002), pp. 529-552 (537).

<sup>69</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, “Ethnic Conflict in the Military of Developing Nations: A Comparative Analysis of India and Nigeria,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 1 Fall 1992, pp.123-137 (131).

<sup>70</sup> Barua, 1992, p.131.

levels of Punjabis are still higher than their roughly 2% proportion of the population, it appears as if the quota system has helped the army to better mirror the diversity of the national population since the 1960s.

### The Indian Army: Composition of the Army by State

	1965-1966	1996-1997	2001 Census
Uttar Pradesh	18.1%	20.6%	16.16%
Rajasthan	7.2%	7.9%	5.49%
Punjab	<b>31.6%</b>	7.6%	2.37%
Maharashtra	7.0%	7.3%	9.42%
Bihar	5.4%	7.0%	8.07%
West Bengal	2.8%	5.7%	7.79%
Haryana	n/a	5.1%	2.06%
Andhra Pradesh	4.0%	4.9%	7.41%
Tamil Nadu	5.4%	4.9%	6.07%
Himachal Pradesh	1.4%	4.4%	0.59%
Jammu & Kashmir	2.0%	3.7%	0.99%
Karnataka	3.5%	3.7%	5.14%
Kerala	4.6%	3.1%	3.10%
Madhya Pradesh	1.9%	3.0%	5.87%

Sources: Army data from Omar Khalidi, "Ethnic Group Recruitment in the Indian Army: The Contrasting Cases of Sikhs, Muslims, Gurkhas and Others," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (Winter, 2001-2002), p. 541; population data from Census of India, 2001.

The Indian army's secular ethos and penchant for casting a wide net for recruits has served the institution well. The Indian army's embrace of minority cultures, customs, and language has helped to overcome the potential for ethnic conflict. Problems over ethnicity have occasionally affected the army. Yet, the perception of the army as a national enterprise, in which no one group appears to dominate, has allowed the Indian army to withstand repeated crises over ethnicity and religion.

### Sri Lanka

Like Pakistan and India, there is no history of conscription in Sri Lanka. Until May 2009, the government had been fighting a large-scale insurgency in the north and east for 26 years. The Tamil Tigers were one of the most well-organized and militarily effective insurgent groups in the world. With Sinhalese citizens constituting a sizable

majority of the country's population, largely homogenous Sinhalese units were deployed in Tamil areas.<sup>71</sup> Proponents of this approach have argued that sending Tamil soldiers to fight against members of their own ethnic group could have caused mutinies within Tamil units. The government believed it could better count on the loyalty of non-Tamil soldiers. Yet, doing so had political costs when it came to forging a lasting peace with the Tamil minority.

Sri Lanka has been able to build a capable all volunteer force, despite having a slightly higher percentage of its fighting-age male population already on active duty compared to Afghanistan (in Sri Lanka, 2.93 percent of the fighting-age male population is on active duty, compared to 2.53 percent in Afghanistan).<sup>72</sup> Recruitment into the Sri Lankan army has jumped in recent years, after dramatic gains against the Tamil Tigers. Recruitment increased from about 3,000 per year in the 1990s to 32,000 in 2007.<sup>73</sup> The army was able to prevail despite incurring major casualties in the officer corps and other ranks. A reported 1,500 sergeants and corporals were commissioned as officers to meet such shortages.<sup>74</sup>

Sri Lanka's campaign against Tamil insurgents was extremely brutal, with alleged war crimes committed on both sides.<sup>75</sup> The Sri Lankan military eventually crushed the Tamil Tigers, killing their leaders and dismantling the movement. Yet, the perception that the army represented a single ethnic group – the Sinhalese – continues to bedevil Sri Lanka's effort to unify its population after the civil war.

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<sup>71</sup> Ahmed Hashim, *A Bright Shining COIN: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the LTTE*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

<sup>72</sup> Assumes a 171,000 target Afghan army. Calculations based on data from the International Institute For Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, 2010; and CIA, *The World Factbook*.

<sup>73</sup> Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, "Strategic Analysis of Sri Lankan Military's Counter-Insurgency Operations," *Future Directions International*, February 12, 2010, p.5.

<sup>74</sup> DeSilva-Ranasinghe, 2010, p.5.

<sup>75</sup> Jon Lee Anderson, "Death of the Tiger: Sri Lanka's Brutal Victory over Its Tamil Insurgents," *The New Yorker*, January 17, 2011.





# Part Three: The History of Conscription in Afghanistan

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Afghan rulers have experimented with different forms of conscription since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with mixed results. Efforts to compel men to serve in the Afghan army have been hobbled by weak governments and powerful tribes, among other things. Afghanistan's past experiences with the practice are essential to understanding how it might play out in the future. This chapter looks at the history of conscription before 1979, during the Soviet occupation during the 1980s, and under Taliban rule in the late 1990s. The last section explores insurgent recruitment since 2002.

## Pre-1979 under different Afghan kings

Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Afghan rulers introduced conscription to address challenges of manpower within the army and to unify the country's fractious social groups and regions. Because the Afghan state was weak and the tribes strong, Afghan rulers had to negotiate with the tribes to secure manpower for the army.

When Afghan rulers attempted to implement modern forms of compulsory military service, they met with open revolt, particularly among the more independent-minded tribes. This resistance was most intense when the government failed to negotiate with the tribes.

The Afghan king Abdur al-Rahman Khan (1880-1901) first implemented conscription in Afghanistan in 1895. It was called *hasht nafari*, or "one man out of eight".<sup>76</sup> In this system, the government negotiated with the tribes to secure conscripts.<sup>77</sup> Tribal leaders often selected sub-standard recruits, usually the least wanted among the tribe.<sup>78</sup> Enforcement barely extended beyond Kabul.<sup>79</sup>

King Amanullah (1919-29) was the first ruler in Afghanistan to introduce a conscription system that was compulsory, universal, and rigidly enforced without making con-

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<sup>76</sup> Jalali, 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Maryland and Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005).

<sup>78</sup> Cronin, 2011, p. 59.

<sup>79</sup> Cronin, 2011, p. 55.

cessions to the tribes.<sup>80</sup> He attempted to eliminate all tribal elements of *hasht nafari*, finding them antithetical to his objective of creating a reformed, modern national army loyal to the state.<sup>81</sup>

In 1923, Amanullah instituted the “Conscription and Identity Card Act”, in which all men were required to register for military service and to obtain a government identity card (*tashkira*) so that individuals could be tracked.<sup>82</sup> A strictly enforced draft known as *peshk* was instituted in districts and tribal territories, in which names were written on paper and drawn from the broad population of eligible men.<sup>83</sup> Amanullah hoped that these reforms would improve the quality of the force by eliminating tribal middlemen, who were loath to lose their strongest and most influential men to the draft. Amanullah also believed that a compulsory system was more fiscally responsible and less vulnerable to corruption because it was universal and transparent.

Conscription failed to be fully implemented during the reign of Amanullah because of its profound unpopularity among rural populations, particularly the borderland Pashtun tribes.<sup>84</sup> Bribery, blackmail, and corruption persisted in the recruitment boards.<sup>85</sup> Social tensions surfaced between existing officers and new conscripts. Officers attempted to humiliate members of rival tribes and relegate them to inferior positions. Tribal affiliation took precedence over military professionalism.<sup>86</sup>

Fissures emerged in the army that mirrored those in Afghan society writ large. The officer corps was dominated by Pashtuns, followed by Tajiks. Few Hazaras or Uzbeks served as officers. The officer corps showed some signs of patriotism. Yet, national identity did not resonate with rank-and-file conscripts, who remained loyal to their tribes.<sup>87</sup> Low pay and poor working conditions did not help either. Not only was pay substandard, but the tribe was expected to sustain the conscript’s family in his absence. Conscripts were often unable to send money home to their families.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Barfield 2010, p. 184. Barfield notes that several ethnic groups (the Barakzais, Mangals, Zadrans, and Ahmadzais) were politically exempt from military service prior to this point. Cronin, 2011, p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919-1929* (London and Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1973.

<sup>82</sup> Barfield, 2010, p. 184.

<sup>83</sup> Cronin, 2011, p. 59. Jalali, 2002, p. 74

<sup>84</sup> Jalali, 2002, p. 75.

<sup>85</sup> Cronin, 2011, p. 59.

<sup>86</sup> Giustozzi, Antonio. “Auxiliary Force or National Army? Afghanistan’s ‘ANA’ and the Counter-Insurgency Effort, 2002-2006.” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18:1 (2007), p. 46.

<sup>87</sup> This trend persisted through Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1990s (Giustozzi 2007, p. 46).

<sup>88</sup> Barfield 2010, p. 184.

By the late 1920s, Amanullah's aggressive reforms met with rampant hostility and sometimes open revolt.<sup>89</sup> Draft evasion was increasingly common. In 1928, thousands of conscripts mutinied, abandoned their posts, and defected with their weapons.<sup>90</sup> Mass desertions were increasingly common, especially during the harvest and when conscripts were ordered to fight against their fellow tribesmen. In 1929, Amanullah was ousted from power after a violent struggle and replaced with Nadir Khan, a leader who enjoyed greater support among the tribes.<sup>91</sup>

From 1939 to 1953, Muhammad Daud Khan, commander of the Kabul Army Corps under King Zahir Shah, resumed Amanullah's efforts to build a modern conscript army. Daud looked on secular Turkey as a model. Daud's efforts met with mixed results. As before, compulsory service proved divisive and controversial. Where the government attempted to force the tribes to comply, armed revolts were common – especially among Pashtun tribes in the south and east.<sup>92</sup> Bribery and corruption were common. By the 1950s, approximately half the military budget was lost to corruption and waste; meanwhile, the army was disintegrating.<sup>93</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Afghan army relied increasingly on the Soviet Union for training and organization. The army attempted to further modernize its conscription practices by cutting out tribal middlemen and taking men directly from the districts. These efforts met with growing resistance, leading up to the collapse of Afghanistan's communist government in 1979 and the Soviet invasion.

## The 1980s under Soviet occupation

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the Afghan army relied heavily on conscription. The Soviets hoped that a large conscript army would be able to prop up the regime and allow the USSR to withdraw its forces. The Moscow-backed Afghan government looked on conscription as a means to protect against coup attempts, stem the insurgency in the countryside, and to make up for high desertion rates.

The policy was largely a failure. The regime ultimately collapsed, conscripts fared poorly against the insurgents and often worked in league with the enemy, and the draft further increased desertion rates to crisis levels.

Conscription during the 1980s was extremely unpopular and heavily resisted by large segments of the population, especially the Pashtun tribes. Desertions were common.

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<sup>89</sup> Rhea Talley Stewart, *Fire in Afghanistan 1914-1929* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 210.

<sup>90</sup> Stewart, 1973.

<sup>91</sup> Cronin 2011, p. 61.

<sup>92</sup> Jalali, 2002, p. 77.

<sup>93</sup> Cronin, 2011.

In many cases entire units made up of conscripts defected to the insurgents, taking their weapons with them.<sup>94</sup> According to one resistance commander, “the army is like a room with two doors. You go in through one and leave through the other.”<sup>95</sup> The Soviet army was known to surround Afghan bases with mines – as much to prevent conscripts from deserting as to keep the insurgents out.

Conscription in the 1980s depended heavily on press gangs. Afghan and Soviet soldiers combed the streets of Kabul and other cities rounding up men of fighting age.<sup>96</sup> Army units also descended on villages at night, pressing young men into service.<sup>97</sup> It was common for the Afghan army to press gang men as young as 15 into the military. Men were required to carry documentation of their military status; those without documentation could be seized on the spot and inducted into the army.<sup>98</sup> Conscription was done mainly in the cities; drafting young men in rural areas – i.e., in most of the country – proved extremely difficult.

Draftees who completed their service were promised admission to university or grants to study abroad without examinations. Students drafted out of school were permitted to count time in military service toward their graduation.<sup>99</sup> Communist Party members could evade service for two years by working in the Communist Party or the government.

Over time, as the military’s need for manpower grew, the communist government revoked traditional exemptions for some tribes, such as the Shinwari, Mohmand, and Jaji. Eventually, the Afghan leadership called for the conscription of “sons and brothers of leadership cadres” whose evasion of military service through personal influence had been a major source of popular resentment. In the late 1980s, the government released thousands of political prisoners and conscripted them into the army. Deserters were repeatedly pardoned and urged to return to their units.<sup>100</sup>

Desertions in the early 1980s cut the Afghan army from 90,000 to 40,000. Throughout the 1980s, the Afghan army sustained desertion rates of 10,000 to 30,000 per year,

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<sup>94</sup> Mark Galeotti, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Union’s Last War*. (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 7.  
Barnett R. Rubin. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 120.

<sup>95</sup> William Branigin, “Afghanistan: Inside a Soviet War Zone,” *The Washington Post*, October 21, 1983.

<sup>96</sup> Rubin 1995, p. 141.

<sup>97</sup> M. Hassan Kakar. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 170-173.

<sup>98</sup> Rubin 1995, p. 132.

<sup>99</sup> Federal Broadcast Information Service/South Asia (FBIS/SA), October 28, 1980, p. C2-4

<sup>100</sup> Amnesty International, *Afghanistan: Unfair Trials by Special Tribunal*. (London: Amnesty International, 1991), p. 6.

leaving the army hovering between 30,000 and 40,000.<sup>101</sup> Desertions were more common in winter (when the barracks were cold), summer (when workers were needed for agriculture), when ordered into action against their kinship groups, and with the announcement of an impending operation. Desertions were less common when operating in areas dominated by another ethnic group.<sup>102</sup> Officers were less likely to desert than enlisted soldiers due in part to higher pay and other incentives. The same was true of the air force.<sup>103</sup>

When the army attempted to recall the reserves in 1980, some 100,000 men reportedly fled Kabul, and the capital city lost 20 percent of its population. Many fled to Pakistan or joined the insurgency. By mid-October 1980, the government was able to bring in only 5,000 men (roughly one percent of those eligible under the new regulations).<sup>104</sup>

Desertion rates in the army were so high that in some cases officers required conscripts to turn in weapons at the end of each day, unless they were heading out to conduct an operation.<sup>105</sup> As the war went on, it was common for entire units to desert with their weapons. Many deserting units executed their Soviet advisors. There were many reports of conscripts showing up for training just long enough to be issued Soviet-made weapons and ammunition, then leaving to join the insurgency.<sup>106</sup>

The army faced serious difficulties training new conscripts. Sixty to seventy percent were illiterate which hampered training, particularly for tank crews, artillerymen, maintenance technicians, and logisticians. The Soviets established short-term courses for training new officers, even if they lacked the proper qualifications. These officers were known to the public as “instant officers” and were notoriously ineffective. Most officers received only three months of training. The enlisted infantry received only a few weeks of training, sometimes less.<sup>107</sup>

The conscript army of the 1980s was desperately short of experienced personnel, due to high levels of desertion and a reliance on uncommitted, short-term conscripts. There were very few non-commissioned officers; most were promoted to officer rank after three years, in order to fill chronic shortages in the military’s leadership ranks. It was often the case that position and rank in the Afghan army depended on personal

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<sup>101</sup> Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*. (Durham, NC: Duke Press Policy Studies, 1983), p. 205.

<sup>102</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics, and Society in Afghanistan: 1978-1992*. (Washington: DC, Georgetown University Press, 2000), p. 84-85.

<sup>103</sup> Giustozzi 2000, 86. Cronin 2011, 72.

<sup>104</sup> M. Hassan Kakar. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 173

<sup>105</sup> Bradsher 1983, p. 207.

<sup>106</sup> Kakar 1995, p. 173.

<sup>107</sup> Cronin 2011; Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan* (Georgetown University Press, 2000), p. 111.

relationships rather than skill, experience, or training – which hampered the effectiveness of the military and its bureaucracy.<sup>108</sup>

The Soviets’ “scorched-earth” counterinsurgency strategy negatively shaped Afghan perceptions of conscription efforts. These tactics included indiscriminate use of heavy firepower (such as artillery, bombs, napalm, helicopter strafing), destroying entire villages and fields (in order to deny guerillas sanctuary and food), retributive mass killings and indiscriminate massacres of Afghan civilians while praying in mosques, performing wedding and funeral ceremonies, forming sizable groups for any social purpose, or engaging in the customs and conventions that constitute the Afghan social fabric. The Soviets also made heavy use of land mines (some disguised as rocks or toys) and chemical weapons.<sup>109</sup> Afghans called the Soviets *wahshi* or barbarians due to their brutal tactics, which were designed to eliminate the population’s ability and willingness to support the insurgency.<sup>110</sup>

Soviet attitudes and treatment of Afghan army personnel also affected conscription. The Soviets reportedly called Afghan personnel “monkeys”, and reserved the better weapons and supplies for Soviet units. Wounded Russian soldiers were evacuated first and taken to hospitals in Kabul, while Afghan soldiers had to make do with field hospitals in the provinces.<sup>111</sup>

The Afghan experience with conscription during the 1980s was extremely negative. The memory of this time is alive and well among much of the population. Few Afghans are old enough to remember what conscription was like before the Soviet occupation.

## The 1990s under the Taliban

During Afghanistan’s civil war in the 1990s, many armed factions forced young men and boys to fight. For many Afghans, it was the only way to survive, as joining a militia or warlord army was often the only way to secure life and property.

The Taliban army that pushed across Afghanistan in 1994 relied almost entirely on volunteers from madrassahs in Pakistan. But after failed attempts to conquer the

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<sup>108</sup> Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress, eds. and translators, *The Soviet Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, (Laurence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2002), p. 50.

<sup>109</sup> Artemy Kalinovsky, “The Blind Leading the Blind: Soviet Advisors, Counter-Insurgency and Nation-Building in Afghanistan,” Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, *Working Paper #60*, January 2010. Kakar 1995.

<sup>110</sup> Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War Against the Taliban*. (Philadelphia: Da Capo, 2002), p. 255.

<sup>111</sup> Brig.-Gen. Muhammad Nawaz (Agence France Press [AFP], January 11, 1983, in *FBIS/SA*, January 12, 1983, pp. C1-C2.

north in 1997 resulted in substantial Taliban casualties, the group began conscripting young men, especially in the southern provinces. The Taliban relied on press gangs and other informal methods. They also kidnapped children from schools and young men from mosques. Land-owning families were required to provide recruits or face punishment. In 1999, there were also reports of madrassahs in Pakistan sending busloads of students to the front as part of their studies.<sup>112</sup>

There was substantial popular resistance to the Taliban's conscription policies. For example, there was a violent revolt in Kandahar in 1997 against the conscription of young men, in which several Taliban recruiters were killed by villagers who refused to join the army. Tribal militias drove the Taliban out of some areas of Kandahar, after the Taliban threatened to kill those who refused to participate in the war.<sup>113</sup> In 2000, several hundred tribal leaders from the east protested against conscription. In Khost, there was an anti-conscription rally attended by over 2,000 people.<sup>114</sup>

Many Afghans fled the country during the late 1990s in order to avoid being drafted.<sup>115</sup> As more men were conscripted, the Taliban faced problems with desertion. Many deserters were executed.<sup>116</sup>

## 2002-present under US and NATO intervention

The Taliban today are able to generate sufficient manpower without conscription – despite enduring considerable casualties. Although recruiting through violence and intimidation has been reported, the evidence suggests that young men join the insurgency more or less voluntarily.<sup>117</sup> They sign up for multiple, sometimes overlapping economic, social, political, communal, and ideological reasons. Most young men who join are aware of the risks.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Jo Boydan et al, "Children Affected by Armed Conflict in South Asia", Refugee Studies Center Working Paper No. 7, January 2002. "Child Soldiers", CRC Country Brief, Pre-session working group 34<sup>th</sup> session, June 2003, p. 3. "Refusing to Bear Arms: Afghanistan", War Resisters' International Report, March 1998.

<sup>113</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, (IB Tauris, 2002), p. 103.

<sup>114</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, (IB Tauris, 2002), p. 100.

<sup>115</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Afghanistan: Conscription Practices After the Fall of the Taliban", 30 April 2002.

<sup>116</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, (IB Tauris, 2002), p. 103

<sup>117</sup> Matt Waldman, "Golden Surrender?" Afghanistan Analysts Network [AAN], April 2010.

<sup>118</sup> Tazreena Sajjad, "Peace at All Costs?" AREU, October 2010.

The Taliban draw from a vast pool of rural Pashtun recruits from southern and south-eastern Afghanistan – young men who are angry, poor, and bored. Fighting offers the prospect for material improvement, prestige, and social mobility, a powerful lure for young men at the bottom strata of rural life. Joining the insurgency offers the opportunity for food, clothing, and cash – although the extent to which salaries are paid remains a subject of debate.<sup>119</sup> Although it has been claimed that fighters receive salaries – the figure of \$150 per month has been mentioned widely – the evidence suggests that although combatants are paid on occasion, there is no system of regular remittances.<sup>120</sup>

Although the Taliban are overwhelmingly Pashtun, the movement recruits from marginalized elements from many tribes.<sup>121</sup> Recruiting themes vary from district to district and province to province, but there are common elements – such as opposition to foreign occupation and religious injunctions about Islam and Jihad.<sup>122</sup>

As in most insurgencies, the Taliban leadership is more politically and ideologically conscious than rank-and-file combatants. For low-level fighters, local and personalized grievances and ambitions are more significant motivations. That said, the simple message that young men have a religious obligation to drive out the infidels and their Afghan lackeys appears to resonate across all levels of the insurgency. Religious leaders, typically the most powerful shapers of local opinion in rural areas, play a critical role in spreading these ideas. Mosques and madrassahs serve as key venues for transmitting ideological and nationalist messages.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Anne Stenersen, *The Taliban Insurgency*, FFI, February 5, 2010.

<sup>120</sup> See for example Anand Gopal, “The Battle for Afghanistan: Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar,” Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, New America Foundation, November 2010, p. 28.

<sup>121</sup> Tribal Liaison Office, Afghanistan Border Districts Assessment, 2008. Thomas Ruttig, “How Tribal Are the Taliban?” AAN, July 2009.

<sup>122</sup> Ghulamreza Fazlinaiem and Nick Miszak, “Mullah Omar Wants You!” Middle East Institute, 2009

<sup>123</sup> DFID Understanding Afghanistan – Conflict Assessment, November 2008.



# Part Four: The Debate over Conscription in Afghanistan Today

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## The argument for conscription

Conscription may be a way to generate additional manpower if the size of the army is increased beyond 171,000. If it becomes necessary to grow the force significantly faster than at current rates, a draft may serve to generate a large number of recruits in a relatively short period of time. Bringing in additional conscripts may also be a way to make up for high attrition.

Some Afghan leaders maintain that conscription would reduce personnel costs, since draftees do not need to be paid as much as volunteers. If half of today's current force were made up of conscripts paid at half the rate of volunteers, that could save as much as \$50 to \$100 million per year in personnel costs. In FY 2011, salaries and other financial incentives made up about 13% of sustainment costs (roughly \$400 million out of \$3.1 billion).<sup>124</sup> If the United States and NATO cut back on their funding to the army, the potential savings on payroll costs may prove attractive to the Afghan leadership.

The main thrust of President Karzai's speech in February 2010 was that conscription could serve as a vehicle for national unity – as a “school of the nation” where young men from different backgrounds come together, get a modern education, and come away from the experience with a sense of nationalism and public service. A conscript army based on universal military service, so the argument goes, could serve as a bulwark of a national state – as it did in parts of Western Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Recent polling data suggests that there is some sense of civic obligation to the state among the Afghan public, and a belief that the army and police should be representative of the population. Most of those surveyed agreed that every able-bodied Afghan man has a responsibility to serve (88%), and that soldiers should be required to serve

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<sup>124</sup> For data on personnel costs as a share of total sustainment, see, “Justification for FY 2011 Overseas Contingency Operations Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF)”, Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2010.

anywhere in Afghanistan (73%). A similar majority of respondents say they would serve if required (71%). The results on more specific questions are mixed, however. For example, roughly half the respondents agreed that men should be chosen to serve based on a random lottery (51%).<sup>125</sup> See Appendix 1 at the end of this report for further analysis of polling data.

Conscription may be a way to make the Afghan army more representative. Though the military of late has been meeting its ethnic quotas, less than 5 percent of new recruits come from the southern tribes. Drafting southern Pashtuns into the army may be a way to address this problem. The Taliban has issued threats against those who join the army, as well as their families. Young men can make plenty of money working for the Taliban or drug traffickers. Compulsion may be the only way to recruit men from the south in substantial numbers. The mass of the insurgency is in the south. An army with more southern Pashtuns may be more accepted than soldiers from elsewhere.

Finally, compulsory military service may be a way to bring more educated personnel into the military. The military suffers from a huge shortage of educated people to serve as officers and to manage higher order functions such as logistics, administration, technology, and medicine. As the army grows and the coalition withdraws, the need for educated personnel in the armed forces will increase. Additionally, conscripting educated young men would force the urban elite to better share the burdens of national defense.

## **The argument for an all volunteer force**

The Afghan army has been meeting its manpower goals through voluntary, incentives-based recruitment. Pay reforms in 2009 and 2010 solved many earlier recruitment problems – suggesting that potential recruits respond well to incentives. If there is no shortage of able-bodied volunteers, why force people to join?

There is little to indicate that the Afghan army will not be able to continue to meet its recruitment targets into the future. As long as the army continues to develop as an institution – including its recruiting command – there is good reason for optimism when it comes to the availability of qualified volunteers.

If the size of the army were increased well above 171,000, then the availability of volunteers could be an issue. It is difficult to say, however, whether or to what extent this might be the case. With a 171,000-strong army, Afghanistan will have an above-average ratio of soldiers to eligible males. Yet, other under-developed countries have maintained voluntary forces with higher ratios. For example, Pakistan's ratio is about 20

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<sup>125</sup> Afghan National Development Poll, Wave 4, August 2010.

percent higher, if one counts the country's large reserve and paramilitary forces. Sri Lanka's is higher as well.

The primary mission of the Afghan army in the near future is to defeat the insurgency and stabilize the country. Counterinsurgency and stability operations require highly trained and motivated professionals. The US and other militaries around the world have learned that in order to operate among civilian populations, soldiers require a high level of training, motivation, and discipline. Conscript armies (including Afghanistan's during the 1980s) have a poor record when it comes to counterinsurgency. Allowing poorly paid conscripts to operate among the Afghan population would likely undermine the counterinsurgency effort and further divide the population.

Volunteer forces tend to be more effective, efficient, and disciplined. Lower turnover translates into a more experienced fighting force. Professional armies are less wasteful of human and material resources. Afghanistan's conscript armies in the 1980s and before were notoriously inefficient, disorganized, and ineffective. Today's all volunteer army, despite its many problems, is the best army that Afghanistan has had so far.

A professional army would be less politically controversial in Afghanistan than a conscript-based force. Voluntary recruitment is less invasive, and therefore less likely to spark resistance and strengthen the insurgency. Historically, those countries that successfully instituted universal military service were run by governments that enjoyed high levels of popular support. Weak states that tried conscription tended to face serious resistance and evasion. On the other hand, unstable regimes like Afghanistan's have built relatively capable professional forces with minimal controversy.

An all volunteer force is better suited to a weak state like Afghanistan. A volunteer army does not require a large administrative machinery to identify and locate conscripts, compel them to join, and track down and punish deserters. During Afghanistan's long and checkered experience with conscription, successive Afghan governments have been unable to implement the practice effectively. The Afghan state has lacked the capability to coerce young men into service absent substantial popular support. Efforts to coerce the tribes into providing adequate recruits tended to backfire. The fundamental problem is that Afghanistan is not a nation-state, and so does not have the authority or the capacity to compel its population to serve in the armed forces.

In order to effectively implement conscription, the government would need a reliable system for ascertaining the eligible fighting age male population, identifying potential conscripts, tracking them down, and compelling them to serve. No such system exists in Afghanistan. There have been some nascent efforts to create a national ID card program and a census, as well as other initiatives to collect information on the population – but these programs are just getting off the ground. The national ID card program and the traditional Afghan *tashkira* system (an old practice where Afghans register themselves at the district level) are not adequate, since not all Afghans are

required to have an ID or a *tashkira*. Most of those who seek official identification do so to secure jobs in the government and military, not those who are unwilling to join and would therefore need to be drafted.

Even if draftees could be identified, there is no rule of law system capable of tracking down and punishing draft dodgers. The police do not have the capacity and neither do the courts. In many areas of Afghanistan – particularly large parts of the south where resistance to conscription is likely to be greatest – there is no functioning court system.

The likely payroll savings from conscription would not be substantial, and much of these savings would be wiped out due to additional hidden costs. A conscription army made up of about half draftees and half volunteers (close to the average ratio for conscription worldwide) could save between \$50 to \$100 million a year, or less than 3 percent of the Afghan army's overall sustainment costs – depending on the salaries paid to draftees and the number of conscripts as a share of the total force. For example, if conscripts were paid half the current salary for enlisted recruits (as of November 2010, enlisted recruits received \$165 per month), and half of all soldiers were conscripts – that might save about \$50 million per year. If all soldiers were conscripts, the government might save about \$90 million. And if all soldiers were conscripts as well as about 25 percent of the officer corps, that might save as much as \$115 million.<sup>126</sup> For more detailed analysis on personnel costs, see Appendix 2 at the end of this report.

Conscription would introduce new costs that would wipe out much of these apparent savings. For example, in order to maintain an army with the same level of effectiveness, a conscript-based army would have to grow in size, further erasing much of the estimated cost savings. To achieve a force of equal capability, a force of conscripts may also require a greater number of non-commissioned officers and officers than a force of volunteers. That would lead to a more costly force, one where much of the supposed savings from conscription are absorbed by the necessary costs of more numerous and more experienced leaders. Research on the shift from conscription to the all volunteer force in the US suggests that draft-based armies are not significantly cheaper to maintain.

There are also many hidden costs that are more difficult to estimate. For example, with higher turnover comes higher training costs, less efficient use of resources, and greater disciplinary problems. If conscripts are not paid, it is likely that problems of corruption and waste will increase, which will lead to additional hidden costs. Con-

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<sup>126</sup> These calculations are based on salary tables for the Afghan army as of November 2010 and data on the proportion of different ranks within the army, collected during interviews in Kabul in November 2010. For the numbers on sustainment costs, see “Justification for FY 2011 Overseas Contingency Operations Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF), *Office of the Secretary of Defense*, February 2010.

scription is likely to cause attrition (especially desertions) to increase substantially, as was the case during the 1980s and under different Afghan kings before that. All these costs are difficult, if not impossible, to estimate – especially for a conscription program not yet established.

Finally, when it comes to representativeness, the Afghan army has made substantial progress in the last few years. It has been meeting its ethnic quotas through voluntary recruitment. Roughly 40 percent of new recruits are Pashtuns (though from the east and north).<sup>127</sup> There is disagreement within the government over how important it is to recruit from among the southern tribes. There is also serious doubt as to the feasibility of doing so, as long as the insurgency there remains strong and many tribes remain alienated from the government. The lack of recruitment in the south is due to underlying political and security problems. Once these problems are solved, it should be possible to recruit more soldiers from the southern provinces.

Conscription is something of a bad word among most Afghans – due to their very negative experiences with the practice in the 1980s and late 1990s. Only those over 50 are old enough to remember conscription prior to 1979 (Afghanistan's life expectancy is 44-years). Even prior to 1979, the record is mixed. There was much resistance to the practice among the Pashtun tribes in particular. It does not appear to have instilled nationalism in the public, unified the tribes, or built a strong state. Volunteer forces have a better record in Afghanistan. The anti-Soviet *Mujahideen* relied mainly on volunteers, and were popular and militarily effective. The Afghan army today is a better fighting force than the conscript armies of the past.

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<sup>127</sup> Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security: Afghan Army Growing, but Additional Trainers Needed; Long-term Costs Undetermined”, January 2011.



# Part Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

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## Is conscription advisable?

Conscription does not appear to be the best option for Afghanistan. The authors have reached this conclusion after looking at the scholarly literature on conscription versus voluntary recruitment, case studies from the Middle East and South Asia, the history of conscription in Afghanistan, and extensive interviews in Afghanistan.

A review of the literature on conscription versus all volunteer forces suggests that the net benefits of professional forces outweigh those of conscript armies when countries are not fully mobilized to fight a major war.

Our cases on Islamic countries with conscription contain some useful lessons if Afghanistan were to institute a draft. However, the conditions that enabled these countries to implement conscription are not present in Afghanistan. Egypt, Turkey, and Algeria had relatively legitimate national governments and far more developed state institutions. Yemen, the closest to Afghanistan in terms of political and administrative development, appears to have instituted some sort of informal draft, but only through use of press gangs. Conscription in Yemen is a far cry from the sort of universal military service that unites countries and serves as a school of the nation.

Our case studies on South Asian militaries with all volunteer forces suggest that underdeveloped countries can raise and maintain professional armies, and that these professional armies can contribute to the development of the state and nation and be well-regarded by the public. Like Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are riven by ethnic divisions. The professional armies they have maintained have prevailed numerous times against regional insurgencies that threatened to deteriorate into all-out civil war. India and Pakistan have managed to continue recruiting in the very areas where they have faced ongoing insurgencies – by offering young men from these areas attractive incentives to join the armed forces. Through targeted recruitment drives among under-represented demographic groups, the Indian and Pakistani militaries have managed to make their armies more representative, though problems remain. After victory in its civil war, Sri Lanka is beginning to understand the importance of increasing the representativeness of its armed forces with a new drive to recruit minority Tamils and Muslims into its Sinhalese-dominated army.

There is a real danger that the Afghan army could one day intervene in politics and overthrow civilian governments, as the Pakistani military has done many times. Conscription would do little to ameliorate this threat, however. The conscript-based Turkish army has launched many coups, as have other conscript armies. When it comes to the Afghan military's role in politics, the key factor will be the culture and composition of the officer corps (especially senior officers), the strength of civilian leaders and institutions relative to the army, and the existence of checks and balances to ensure civilian control over the military.

The history of conscription in Afghanistan suggests that compulsory service had a mixed record at the best of times, and a dreadful one during the worst of times. It does not appear that conscription contributed much to the development of a national state. On the contrary, it was often a cause of regional rebellions that served to further divide the nation. Resistance against conscription was common before 1979. During the 1980s, resistance was pervasive, and a major driver behind the insurgency. The more Afghan leaders tried to make conscription universal, the more intense were these rebellions. Afghanistan's conscript armies have been poorly organized, unprofessional, and largely ineffective. Military organizations that proved effective in Afghanistan (for example, various tribal militias, the *Mujahideen* groups during the 1980s, the Taliban before 1999, Afghanistan's all volunteer army today) have relied almost entirely on volunteers. Coming together voluntarily to fight foreign invaders and rival tribes is well entrenched in the culture of the Pashtuns, and to a lesser extent other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. On the other hand, compulsory service in a modern national army is not, and may be anathema to the culture of the Afghans, the Pashtuns in particular.

Research in Afghanistan in November and December of 2010 reinforces many of these conclusions. Afghan and US officials noted time and again that Afghanistan is meeting its manpower needs with an all volunteer force, and that pay reforms and other incentives have been largely successful at drawing in recruits from all the major ethnic groups, though the southern Pashtuns remain under-represented. Many of those interviewed noted that the Afghan government does not have the legitimacy or the administrative machinery to effectively implement a system of universal military service. Such a system would likely spark major resistance, particularly in the south and east where the insurgency is strongest.

Some have suggested that a draft may be a way to make up for soldiers lost to attrition. The problem, however, is that a draft in Afghanistan would in all likelihood cause a substantial increase in desertion rates and therefore make the attrition problem worse. During the 1980s, the Afghan army relied on conscription to make up for high levels of attrition. The policy did not work. Desertion rates during the 1980s were so high (10,000 to 30,000 per year) that the total strength of the army decreased by more than half in less than five years. Chances are conscription would increase desertion rates while vitiating the effectiveness of the army and damaging its reputation among the people. Rather than conscript more soldiers, it would be advisable to focus on re-



taining existing volunteers through additional pay reforms, improvements in working conditions and quality of life, making the army a viable career path, and other inducements. Such programs would not only increase retention, but improve the effectiveness and reputation of the armed forces.

US, NATO, and Afghan officers directly involved in the counterinsurgency effort were most vehement in their opposition to conscription, which they believed would undermine the professionalism of the army and hence its ability to engage in sophisticated population-centric operations. Defeating the insurgency and stabilizing the country are the army's two most important missions. An all volunteer force is more likely to be successful in this regard.

## **Recommendations**

Below are a number of recommendations should the Afghan government decide to move ahead with conscription regardless. Some of these recommendations are applicable to the current all volunteer force as well – that is, they ought to be considered even if conscription is not instituted.

The US and NATO should insist on building political consensus beforehand, especially in less stable areas such as Kandahar and Helmand. The historical record suggests that conscription cannot succeed without broad-based public support, especially in a country like Afghanistan where the government is weak and its reach extremely limited. Revolts by important tribes and other groups could prove disastrous at a time when the government is facing a major insurgency in the south and east. It is precisely in those areas where the insurgency is strongest, especially parts of Kandahar and Helmand, where revolts against conscription in the past were most common.

Conscription should remain limited, especially in less stable areas, until it is clear what the reaction will be among key segments of the population. The government should proceed slowly and cautiously, and avoid at all costs aggressive tactics such as press ganging. It is essential that the policy not be seen as oppressive or overtly coercive, lest it undermine the counterinsurgency effort and further divide and destabilize the country.

The army should remain a mostly volunteer force, well below 50 percent conscript. It is essential that the military retain its professionalism and prevent ethnic divisions if it is to prevail against the insurgency. Doing so will require greater attention to leadership development. Maintaining discipline and professionalism and preventing ethnic divisions among unwilling conscripts will put a greater burden on commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The army leadership cadre, which is just now beginning to develop, will require a great deal of support. A significantly larger NCO and officer corps may be required, as well as additional embedded advisers.

Some proponents of conscription have raised the very real possibility that a strong army could one day endanger civilian leaders and institutions. However, any serious threat in this regard would likely come from the officer corps, and have little to do with the manner of recruitment among the enlisted ranks. The principle of civilian control over the military must be taught in the military academies, and checks and balances created at the national level akin to those that exist in countries like the United States and India. Even more important will be to build strong civilian institutions capable of keeping the military in check if need be. Another option, apparently being considered by the Afghan leadership, is to keep the army small. Afghanistan may not need a large land army, especially if the US is willing to keep regional powers at bay. A substantial police and paramilitary capability may be enough to deal the insurgency and other internal threats, while minimizing the potential for military coups.

If conscription goes forward, it is likely that the threat of ethnic divisions within the army will become more acute. As US forces slowly leave, the pressures on the Afghan army will grow. If the insurgency gains in strength and the government in Kabul falters, the army could split along ethnic lines. If this happens, Afghanistan would likely sink back into civil war. It will be necessary to pay close attention to ethnic tensions in the army at all levels and find ways to counteract these tendencies. Afghanistan is a new nation; its people, by and large, remain loyal to their tribes and ethnic groups. The army will need a secular, multi-ethnic officer and NCO corps capable of ensuring unit cohesion, as well as extensive training and other team-building exercises aimed at forging a sense of national purpose among the rank and file.

Greater attention will have to be paid to the officer corps, to ensure that it overcomes ethnic divisions and roughly corresponds to the enlisted ranks. If the officer corps splits along ethnic lines, chances are the rest of the army will follow. The army may want to adopt a more secular ethos that espouses respect for all religious, ethnic, and tribal groups. The best model in this respect would be the Indian army, which does not suppress the religious or cultural identities of its soldiers (as Soviet-style secularism did in Afghanistan during the 1980s). Indian officers are required to study the religious and cultural practices of their troops as a way of embracing the diversity of the army, yet discussions of religious or ethnic differences are prohibited. These practices allow officers to lead troops from different ethnic groups – so that, for example, a Sikh officer can effectively command Hindu troops, while a Bengali officer can command a Gurkha battalion. National identity and loyalty are emphasized over religious, ethnic, or caste identities – yet there is no attempt to suppress these identities.

Conscripts should be paid a decent salary and be provided with practical training and other opportunities useful in civilian life. The average pay for conscripts around the world is about half the salary of a volunteer. Afghan conscripts should receive as close to the volunteer pay as is fiscally prudent. Conscripts should be treated like volunteers and provided with good living conditions and opportunities for advancement and specialized training. Given the fact that the Afghan government is politically and institutionally weak and faces a high risk of serious resistance to any conscription policy, it is advisable to rely as much as possible on incentives rather than disincentives. If

young men are required to serve, it should also be worth their while. If a draft is to help forge a sense of nationalism, it is essential that draftees come away from the experience with a positive attitude.

The same is true of the current all volunteer force. If most Afghans look on service in the army as a viable path to promotion, prestige, financial well-being, and other opportunities, then recruitment will be ensured into the long-term. This is an important lesson from the Pakistani and Indian militaries. There is a strong correlation between the quality and professionalism of an army and the tendency of young men to join willingly.

It would be advisable to expand literacy and other educational programs. At present, most recruits into Afghanistan's volunteer force are illiterate. It is likely that conscripts will be even more so. If mandatory service in the army is to contribute to the development of a nation-state, it is essential that recruits – voluntary and involuntary – receive a modern education. This is particularly important for officers and NCOs. Those countries such as Egypt and Turkey, where conscription appears to have contributed to the development of a modern state, placed particular emphasis on providing a modern education to their officers, and to a lesser extent enlisted soldiers.

Building a network of schools for potential recruits may be a way to ensure a reliable flow of recruits into Afghanistan's commissioned and non-commissioned officer corps. Pakistan's all volunteer force invests heavily in primary schools and cadet colleges (for high school age children) as a way to establish reliable pools of potential recruits and groom them for service from a young age, encourage respect for the military, and reach out to isolated communities.

If the Afghan government wants to save money, it may be advisable to reduce the size of the army and expand the country's paramilitary forces. Paramilitary forces require less expensive equipment and military training; it may also be possible to pay them less. Pakistan and India have large paramilitary forces that they rely on to deal with insurgencies and other domestic unrest. Pakistan's Frontier Corps is recruited locally from the border areas but is commanded by army officers on rotation, in order to maintain central control. Locally recruited paramilitaries have a better understanding of local customs and languages than do the regular army.

There should be a special program aimed at conscripting educated personnel who are not otherwise willing to join. Educated males should be drafted regardless of tribe, ethnicity, region, or political connections. The stated reason for this policy should be that educated people are needed to fill higher order functions. These personnel should be used effectively – that is, they should be placed in positions that best use their abilities. It would be advisable to give educated conscripts the option of joining voluntarily as officers or specialists as an alternative to being drafted into the enlisted ranks. If the educated elite are to be brought into the army, they must be used effectively, and in a way that strengthens the ties between the army and the country's small educated class.

If conscription is implemented, the process will introduce many new opportunities for corruption and extortion that will need to be countered. There is already substantial corruption in the army's personnel system – for example, in regard to decisions about deployments to safe versus dangerous areas, in promotions, and in other areas. Publicized lotteries and other measures have helped reduce this somewhat.

Similar programs will be required to prevent officials from using their power to decide who is conscripted and who is not in order to extort money, and to keep Afghans from wealthy or influential families from avoiding the draft or securing plush positions in the army. If the implementation of conscription comes to be seen as corrupt, easily avoided by those with money or influence, or as a tool for oppressing certain communities – it will meet with widespread resistance, further divide the country, and do little to forge a sense of nationalism.

# Appendix 1: Analysis of Data from the Afghan National Development Poll

To gauge the opinion of the Afghan public’s willingness to serve in the ANA, CNA wrote public opinion questions that were fielded in the August 2010 Afghan National Development Poll (ANDP).

Survey results suggest that many Afghans have a sense of civic obligation. The numbers also indicate a widespread desire to have a nationally representative army and police (see the tables on this page and below).

It is unclear, however, whether or to what extent this extends to conscription. In fact, agreement with the statement “only volunteers should be required to serve” (see Question 10 in the table on this page) is somewhat higher than those agreeing that “the government in Kabul should require men to serve” (Question 4).

Opinion on serving in the ANA/ANP		
	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
	%	%
1.) Every able-bodied Afghan male has a responsibility to serve	88	8
2.) Men from every district should be represented	81	15
3.) The unemployed should be required to serve	69	27
4.) The government in Kabul should require men to serve	62	31
5.) Local elders should require men to serve	60	34
6.) Tribal leaders should require men to serve	59	35
7.) Provincial governors should require men to serve	59	35
8.) District sub-governors should require men to serve	58	36
9.) Men should be chosen at random through a lottery system	51	42
10.) Only volunteers should be required to serve	70	24

ANDP, Wave 4, August 2010. Items presented in order asked.

When asked about serving in the army and police, the top two items that receive overwhelming majorities are: “Every able-bodied Afghan male has a responsibility to serve” (Question 1) at 88%, and “Men from every district should be represented” at 81% (Question 2). When examining the statements by those who “completely agree,” these two items again received the highest percentages.

When asked about how men should serve, the top two responses were: “Men should be required to serve anywhere in Afghanistan” (Question 13) and “Men should be required to serve with anyone from Afghanistan” (Question 16), with roughly three-quarters of Afghans agreeing. In particular, these items also receive the highest “completely agree” responses at 53% and 52%, respectively.

Respondents were consistent in rejecting the notions that “Men should be required to serve only with men from their own ethnic group” (see Question 14). 57% disagree with this statement.

Yet, when the issue is framed with a bit more specificity and with potentially more relevance to the respondent – that men should serve via a lottery system (Question 9), for example – opinion is starkly divided (51% agree; 42% disagree). In particular, this item receives the lowest percentage of people who “completely agree” at just under 30%.

Still on balance, roughly half or more of the population completely or mostly agrees with various ways of requiring men to serve in the ANA and ANP (Questions 21-25, for example).

Opinion about serving in the army, the police, or the government is largely favorable. Roughly seven-in-ten respondents report having a “very favorable” or “somewhat favorable” view of serving in these three institutions. At nearly half, strong positive opinion is higher for the army and civilian government than for the police (39%, see Question 25).

<b>Opinion on how men should serve in ANA/ANP</b>		
	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
	%	%
<i>Men should be required to serve...</i>		
11.) Only in their mantaqa	51	44
12.) Only in their home province	52	44
13.) Anywhere in Afghanistan	73	23
14.) Only with men from their own ethnic group	36	57
15.) Only with men from their own locality	40	55
16.) With anyone from Afghanistan	74	22
<i>Service should last no more than...</i>		
17.) 6 months	45	46
18.) 1 year	50	42
19.) 2 years	51	41
20.) 5 years	48	41

ANDP, Wave 4, August 2010. Items presented in order asked.

<b>Opinion of serving in Afghanistan institutions</b>		
	<u>Total favorable</u>	<u>Very favorable</u>
	%	%
<i>Serving in the...</i>		
21.) ANA	74	48
22.) ANP	71	32
23.) Afghan government	71	47

ANDP, Wave 4, August 2010. Items presented in order asked.

Substantial majorities of the Afghan public state that they would serve in the army or the police if required, and they believe the men in their village or town would also serve if required (Questions 24-25). About seven in ten (71%) respondents report having each of these views, with nearly half the Afghan public strongly agreeing (48%).

Opinion on being required to serve in the ANA/ANP		
	<u>Total agree</u>	<u>Strongly agree</u>
	%	%
24.) I would serve if required	71	48
25.) Men in my locality would serve if required	71	39

ANDP, Wave 4, August 2010. Items presented in order asked.

**CNA’s questions fielded on ANDP survey:**

Q.1 As I read some statements about serving in the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), please tell me if you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with each one.

- a. Every able-bodied Afghan male has a responsibility to serve
- b. Men from every district should be represented
- c. The unemployed should be required to serve
- d. The government in Kabul should require men to serve
- e. Local elders should require men to serve
- f. Tribal leaders should require men to serve
- g. Provincial governors should require men to serve
- h. District sub-governors should require men to serve
- i. Men should be chosen at random through a lottery system
- j. Only volunteers should be required to serve

- 1 Completely agree
- 2 Mostly agree
- 3 Mostly disagree
- 4 Completely disagree
- 99 Refused/Don’t Know

Q.2 As I read some statements about how men should be expected to serve in the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), please tell me if you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with each one.

- a. Men should be required to serve only in their locality
- b. Men should be required to serve only in their home province
- c. Men should be required to serve anywhere in Afghanistan
- d. Men should be required to serve only with men from their own ethnic group
- e. Men should be required to serve only with men from their own locality
- f. Men should be required to serve with anyone from Afghanistan

- g. Service should last no more than 6 months
- h. Service should last no more than 1 year
- i. Service should last no more than 2 years
- j. Service should last no more than 5 years

- 1 Completely agree
- 2 Mostly agree
- 3 Mostly disagree
- 4 Completely disagree
- 99 Refused / do not know

Q.3 Based on what you have seen or heard, what is your impression of service in the following groups? Do you have a very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable view?

- a. Serving in the Afghan National Army (ANA)
- b. Serving in the Afghan National Police (ANP)
- c. Serving in the Afghan government

- 1 Very favorable
- 2 Somewhat favorable
- 3 Somewhat unfavorable
- 4 Very unfavorable
- 99 Refused / do not know

Q.4 Thinking about you and the people you know, do you strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about serving in the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP)?

- a. I would serve if required
- b. Men in my village or town would serve if required

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Disagree somewhat
- 4 Strongly disagree
- 99 Refused / do not know



## Appendix 2: Analysis of Cost Implications Regarding a Shift to Conscription

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To a first approximation, the annual budgetary savings from conscription in the Afghan army are simply the difference between the annual budgetary costs of the army's military payroll *without* conscription and the annual budgetary costs of that payroll *with* conscription.

To calculate the annual budgetary payroll costs of the army without conscription we assume a 171,000-personnel total force distributed among the rank/paygrade categories in column 1 of Table I (see table below) using data on salaries for different ranks as of November 2010. These are shown in columns 2 and 3 of Table I.<sup>128</sup> Because distributions among pay grades and ranks and level of experience within each category of personnel are not known, the average pays shown in column 4 were estimated by inspection of ANA salary tables. Applying the monthly pay rates (times 12 months) in column 4 to the strength numbers in column 3 yields the annual budgetary payroll costs shown in column 5. These are total payroll costs in the absence of conscription and are the baseline against which payroll costs with conscription can be compared. Not included here are incentive pays such as those paid to aviators or medical personnel. Incentive pay is estimated to be about 15 to 20 percent of total base pay, and thus could be expected to add about \$75 to \$100 million to the \$512 million for the baseline. Unless some of these specialist personnel are also conscripted and paid reduced incentives, that also reduces the percent savings shown in Table II (see table below).

Payroll costs with conscription would be a factor in assumptions about two characteristics of conscription policy. These are: whose pay is reduced (what categories of personnel are conscripted), and by how much (how much are conscripted personnel paid). If no personnel, regardless of whether conscripted, have reduced pay, conscription cannot save any money from the total payroll budget. We show three cases in this appendix, labeled Cases A, B, and C.

For Case A we assumed half of all soldiers were conscripts, paid \$82.50 per month, with the remainder being paid an average of \$200 per month. Soldiers in Trainees,

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<sup>128</sup> Data collected at NTM-A / CSTC-A in Kabul, November 2010.

Transients, Holdees, and Students (TTHS) status were assumed to be 90 percent conscripts paid at \$82.50 per month, while the remaining 10 percent were paid an average of \$180 per month. A scenario consistent with these assumptions would have conscripts serving a short initial enlistment of, say, two years in the lowest enlisted rank. Those that elect to continue army service after their initial term would serve in higher ranks at the higher pay rates shown in Table I. Case A leads to lower total budgetary costs of \$465 million, about 9 percent less than the baseline costs (see Table II below). Note that because incentive pays are not included in these calculations, the percent savings shown in Table II overstate the actual savings that would be realized.

For Case B, we assumed all soldiers are conscripts and that their pay is 50 percent of baseline pay (i.e., half the pay shown in Table I, Column 4, for an all volunteer force). This yields a total budgetary cost of \$422 million, compared to \$512 million for the baseline, a reduction (or budgetary “savings”) of \$90 million, or about 18 percent of the total baseline payroll.

For Case C, we assumed, as in Case B, all soldiers are conscripted at half pay *and* officers are conscripted for a short period of service such as two or three years. Thereafter officers are paid the same as volunteers. To estimate the actual payroll costs for officers, we assumed that conscripted officers represent 25 percent of the total officer corps and that they are paid one half of the pay of a 2nd Lieutenant with less than three years of service, or \$137.50 per month. We assumed the remaining 75 percent of the officer corps would earn an average of \$450 per month. For officers in TTHS status, we assumed 80 percent were conscripts in training paid \$137.50 per month, and the remaining officers were paid at an average rate of \$425 per month. Conscripting officers in addition to enlisted reduces the total payroll another \$24 million, for a total savings in salaries of \$114 million, or 22 percent of baseline payroll costs (i.e., of what it would cost to maintain an all volunteer force).

That said, conscripting officers, as in Case C, is probably unrealistic, as we are unaware of any modern precedents for conscripting officers. What may be more realistic is to take advantage of the fact that, given the choice, most people would prefer to serve as officers rather than as conscripted enlisted personnel. Given that preference, it might be possible to lower officer pay in the first few years of service without adversely affecting personnel quality. Thus, the estimates in Table II below may be viewed as an upper bound on the “savings” that could result from conscription for the Case C scenario.

The budgetary savings shown in Table II were called “a first approximation” because they do not reflect budgetary costs attributable to conscription. These could include enforcement costs (for draft dodgers and deserters, for example), disciplinary costs (due to insubordination and shirking, for example), and most notably, costs due to a different rank and experience mix for a conscript force. All these costs are difficult, if not impossible, to estimate, especially for a force and a conscription program not yet

established. This is particularly true for the costs associated with a different rank and experience mix associated with conscription.

In the US experience, for example, today's military personnel on average are more senior in rank and have greater years of service than their counterparts in the US draft-era force of the 1960s. That makes today's military personnel more expensive per capita than those of 50 years ago. But that apparent increase in cost has bought a force that is more disciplined, professional, and capable than the draft-era force it replaced. To achieve a force of equal capability, a force of conscripts may require a proportionately greater number of NCOs and officers than a force of volunteers. That would lead to a more costly force, one where much of the supposed savings from conscription are absorbed by the necessary costs of more numerous and more experienced leadership.

Lastly, as noted above, the "savings" shown in Table II do not reflect any consideration of incentive pays. While some specialists may be drafted and paid at reduced rates, on balance the inclusion of specialty pays can be expected to reduce the *percent* savings shown in Table II, while perhaps increasing the *absolute* "savings." If no personnel receiving incentive pays were conscripted and incentive pays represent another \$100 million (about 20 percent of base pay), Case A "savings" would be less than 8 percent and Case C "savings" less than 20 percent.

The simple lesson to be drawn from the rough calculations described here is that budgetary savings of 10-20 percent (or about \$50 million to \$100 million per year for an Afghan army of 171,000) may be achieved by resorting to conscription. But these apparent savings may be illusory or temporary, absorbed by greater costs due to greater end strength (required to offset reduced capability of the 171,000-personnel force), greater training costs (due to greater turnover among a first-term force of conscripts), a richer mix of NCOs and officers (to provide leadership to a conscript force), and enforcement costs.

**CAVEATS:** The calculations shown here depend on two key sets of assumptions; the results would change as these assumptions change. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the broad implications of these calculations would change.

*The distribution of personnel across the six categories shown in Table I, column 1:* The distribution used here are based on proportions of different ranks within the army as of November 2010. If the distribution changes, that obviously changes the total payroll costs. If the proportion changes in favor (or against) categories in which conscripts will be used, that could also change the total savings from conscription. For example, if a greater fraction of the force were soldiers, then the "savings" from conscription would rise, other things equal.

*Average pay attributed to each personnel category:* Because the distribution of personnel across pay grades and experience is not available, average pays were estimated by

inspection. As for the case above, using more accurate pay information might affect total payroll costs as well as estimated “savings” from conscription.

**Table I. Total Payroll Costs for a 171,000-Personnel Force**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Rank/Paygrade	Proportions	Number	Average Monthly Pay	Total Payroll
Officers	0.14196	24,275	\$425	\$123,808,316
NCOs	0.30660	52,429	\$275	\$173,014,380
Soldiers	0.39144	66,936	\$180	\$144,582,278
Total Operational Strength	0.84000	143,640		
Officer TTHS	0.03264	5,581	\$325	\$27,767,616
NCO TTHS	0.02608	4,460	\$250	\$13,379,040
Soldiers TTHS	0.10128	17,319	\$170	\$35,330,515
Total TTHS	0.16	27,360	\$425	
TOTAL Strength		171,000		\$511,877,146

**Table II. Total Payroll Costs, With and Without Conscription (in millions)**

	Baseline (No Conscription)	Case A, With Conscription	Case B, With Conscription	Case C, With Conscription
Total Payroll Costs	\$512	\$465	\$422	\$398
% of Baseline		91%	82%	78%



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## **Interviews conducted in Afghanistan**

In November and December 2010, the lead author conducted interviews in Kabul at Camp Eggers, Camp Julian, the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC), the ANA Recruiting Command (ANAREC), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the US Embassy, and the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD); and in Helmand province in southern Afghanistan at Camp Shorabak and Camp Leatherneck. See full list below.

Chief Advisor to ANA Recruiting Command (ANAREC), NTM-A/CSTC-A, Camp Eggers, 17 Nov 2010

Chief, Education Division, CJ-7, NTM-A/CSTC-A, Camp Eggers, 18 Nov 2010

Chief of Assessments, CJ-5, Camp Eggers, 19 Nov 2010

Former Advisor to Chief of Recruiting, Afghan National Police, Camp Eggers, 19 Nov 2010

Director, Intelligence Training & Advisory Group (INTAG), Camp Eggers, 21 Nov 2010

Members of INTAG team, Camp Eggers, 21 Nov 2010

Director, Task Force Biometrics, CJIATF 435, Camp Phoenix, 23 Nov 2010

Advisor to ANA Chief of the General Staff, Camp Eggers, 23 Nov 2010

Chief, MoD/ANA Financial Reform Office, NTM-A/CSTC-A, Camp Eggers, 24 Nov 2010

Chief, CJ-2, Camp Eggers, 25 Nov 2010

State Department Representative, Garmshir District Support Team, 25 Nov 2010

Advisor to the MoD Director of Personnel, Camp Eggers, 26 Nov 2010

Chief, ANA/MoD Legal Development and Legislative Affairs, Camp Eggers, 26 Nov 2010

Director, Anti-corruption Task Force, Camp Eggers, 27 Nov 2010

Commanding Officer, Regional Support Command West, 27 Nov 2010

Operations Analyst, CJ-7, Camp Eggers, 27 Nov 2010

Director of Personnel, MoD, Afghan Ministry of Defense, 28 Nov 2010

Chief of Recruiting, ANA Recruiting Command (ANAREC), ANAREC Headquarters, 28 Nov 2010

Chief of Logistics, ANA Recruiting Command (ANAREC), ANAREC Headquarters, 28 Nov 2010

Chief, CJ-7, Camp Eggers, 29 Nov 2010

Deputy, Counterinsurgency Advise and Assist Team, ISAF, 29 Nov 2010

Advisor to the vice chief of the ANA general staff, Camp Eggers, 29 Nov 2010

Comptroller, CJ-8, Camp Eggers, 29 Nov 2010

Political Counselor, US Embassy, 29 Nov 2010

Operations Analyst, CJ-7, Camp Eggers, 30 Nov 2010

Commander, Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC), KMTC, 30 Nov 2010

Advisors to the Commander, Kabul Military Training Center, KMTC, 30 Nov 2010

Chief of Staff, ANA 215<sup>th</sup> Corps, Camp Shorabak, 02 Dec 2010

Executive Officer, ANA 215<sup>th</sup> Corps Embedded Advisor Team, Camp Shorabak, 02 Dec 2010

Ist Marine Expeditionary Force Forward, ANSF Development Cell, Camp Leatherneck, 03 Dec 2010

Members of 215<sup>th</sup> Corps Embedded Advisor Team, Camp Shorabak, 03 Dec 2010

Advisor to 215<sup>th</sup> Corps Inspector General, Camp Shorabak, 03 Dec 2010



