

America's Youth Holds Military in High Esteem

DURING THE LAST FOUR DECADES, the federal government -along with many institutions throughout society - has experienced a sharp decline in trust among the American people. Yet, despite this drop in public support for many societal institutions, certain organizations - like the U.S. military - enjoy strong public confidence. To find out why, Kennedy School Professor David King, along with historian Zachary Karabell, conducted a study, whose findings were released last fall. In an interview with Update, King discusses some of the survey's results.

Q Where does public trust in regard to the government stand today?

Trust in the federal government was in a free fall from 1964 to 1980. The government's image recovered through the mid 1980s, declined again in the mid 1990s, and there is now a slight rebound in trust, so there's been an overall decline. But there are elements of government, such as the military, that have gained in public support or have at least maintained their levels.

Q What did you expect to find?

We expected that organizations that had become more effective or efficient in the performance of their jobs would have been reward-ed. But the evidence doesn't bear this out, because most aspects of the federal government - federal, state, and local - have become more cost effective and efficient, but they have for the most part declined in public esteem. Most of the organizations that are thought to be "political" have declined in public confidence and that includes the White House, the Congress, and the Executive Branch. In the eyes of the American public, the military is for the --most pmt seen-a& "depolticized." The percentage of Americans saying they had a great deal of confidence in the military went from 27 percent in 1971 to 43 percent to 1998. It stands in marked contrast, not only with the federal government, but also with most organizations in American society.

Q How has the military managed to avoid this decline in confidence?

We began with performance and professionalism, and in both concepts we tried to be as inclusive as possible. We looked at the performance of the military, which clearly has improved since the end of Vietnam and most markedly since the hostage rescue failure in 1980. The Gulf War is the biggest improvement or success. The increase in performance is also partly due to a change in military doctrine on how wars are fought. The military was also internally reformed. A package of reforms known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act made the line of command easier to understand.

Q Do these factors alone account for the military's strong public image?

No. The story actually begins in the late 1960s, early 1970s when the military was

coming out of real defeat in Vietnam. The military had almost nowhere to go but up. We found three important parts to this story beyond what we'd already discovered. The first factor was the end of the draft and the establishment of the all-volunteer force. The second factor was the use of advertising, and the third was the rise of the children of the baby boomers and the effects of advertising and the all-volunteer force specifically on them.

In 1974, the all-volunteer force came in and the military had to go out and recruit the way it never had before. Internally it began to have to think of itself not as a place of training and national service as much as a university. In order to get recruits, the military began multiple waves of advertising. 'Be All You Can Be,' which was commercially aired throughout the country beginning in 1981 was very successful. Military personnel also began working aggressively with Hollywood. Contrast the image of the military in "Apocalypse Now" with the image of the military in "An Officer and a Gentleman." In fact, enlistments skyrocketed in the weeks after "Top Gun" with Tom Cruise was released. In television, too, the military was active in helping to advise screenwriters. Such shows as "Major Dad" and "JAG" have helped reinforce the image of the military in the eyes of the public.

One of the reasons all this advertising worked so well was because these children were children of baby boomers and not the baby boomers themselves. A good image to have in mind - it's another pop culture image - is from the television show "Family Ties." Alex P. Keaton's parents were 1960s radicals who had grownup and were trying to survive in the 1980s and early 1990s. Alex P. Keaton, played by Michael J. Fox, didn't fit their stereotypes of what they wanted their son to be. He wore a suit and tie, liked Ronald Reagan and George Bush, and was bit of an embarrassment. Well, that actually reflected much of America. There were a lot of, Alex P. Keaton's and Alice R Keaton's running around America consciously rejecting the anti-authoritarianism of their parents. When that was combined with the advertising and the great success of the Gulf War, it created a spike in public esteem among the youngest generation.

Q Do you think this positive view of the military by the American people will continue?

Confidence in the military has remained roughly the same overtime and it seems it will continue through this young generation. The image to have here is that as time swallows the older generations who lived through World War I and II, they are being replaced by these young Americans who are as positive, or more positive, than their great grandparents and grandparents. The real bubble is the baby boomers. Although we went into this project looking at such factors as performance, the most convincing explanation for this trust is the role of advertising. It's high confidence, but it's not necessarily based on experience, and that may be the weak link. We don't yet know how fickle the younger generations will be towards the military. When it comes to true losses and real challenges for their own generation, maybe the media images will be as flimsy as film and they may revert to their parents' images.

Q & A



Securing the World's Nuclear Materials

Although the end of the Cold War has reduced the risk of a nuclear war that could destroy all civilization, it has greatly increased the risk that a single nuclear weapon in the hands of a terrorist or a rogue state could destroy a major city. This risk has been exacerbated by the weakened controls in the former Soviet states, where at some sites, nuclear guards have left their posts to forage in the woods for food and nuclear materials are stored in gymnasium-type lockers with simple padlocks.

A new study, "Managing the Global Nuclear Materials Threat: Policy Recommendations" released by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, outlines a plan for reducing this risk. Graham Allison, director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and Matthew Bunn, assistant director of the center's Science, Technology, and Public Policy Program, played a central part in crafting the report, chaired by former Senator Sam Nunn.

Bunn argues that the costs of needed action are tiny in comparison to costs of failure to act.

"For the cost of one B-2 bomber, we might get all the excess bomb uranium in Russia blended to a form that could never again be used in weapons within a few years," said Bunn. "At the pace we are currently planning to fund security upgrades for these dangerous sites, it would take 15 years just to get the most urgent fixes in place. We just can't afford to wait that long."

To address this urgent threat to U.S. security, the report recommends several steps. First, that the next U.S. president appoint a senior, full-time point person with direct access to the president to deal with these issues. Next, that the United States purchase from the Russians more highly enriched uranium and plutonium -essential ingredients for making nuclear weapons. And finally, that the United States provide funding to improve security for existing stockpiles. The report also calls on European and Asian nations to contribute to this effort.

A summary of the report is available at.

<http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/BCSIA/Library.nsf/pubs/nuclearthreat>.

What Americans Think

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One of the NPR/Kaiser/Harvard team surveys revealed, for example, that more than half of those interviewed think they are paying more into social security than they will ever receive, despite the fact that this is not likely to be true. The majority of Americans also believe that the number of people over 65 living in poverty has increased, even though fewer older Americans are living in poverty today.

"It also makes it clear that the experts are out of step in some of their assumptions," wrote Rivlin, "and these disjoints cast doubt on whether a Social Security bill has any chance of passing in the 106th Congress."

For polling results, visit the Kaiser Family Foundation's Website at www.kff.org or NPR's at www.npr.org.

Time and Time Again

By Monica Toft

In the latest contest between Moscow and the Chechens, time is on the Chechen side. Whereas Moscow has declared this most recent conflagration "the Second Chechen War," the Chechens consider it just another battle in a 300-year-old war. Time and time again Moscow has declared victory. Time and time again the Chechens have refused to yield. To understand this conflict and why Moscow is likely to lose, we need to consider how each side perceives the timeline and the most recent events.

Ever since Moscow moved south to establish its empire in the late 18th century, the Chechens have resisted Russian domination, annexation, assimilation, and deportation. It's a shame that Russians fail to appreciate their own history. In the 19th century, it took Moscow 50 years to quell the Caucasus. This project cost three times more than a million Russian soldiers and resulted in the deforestation of Chechnya's birch forests and the death by exposure or malnutrition of many of its people, including the ancestors of many of the Chechens fighting today. The 20th century brought fighting practically every decade until 1944, when the Chechens were accused of collaborating with the Germans. Josef Stalin declared them traitors and had them deported, en masse. This deportation resulted in the death of one-fifth of Chechens. There public was dissolved, and on paper at least, the Chechens as a people ceased to exist. This was not to last however. In 1956, in an effort to undo some of Stalin's excesses, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev rehabilitated the Chechens. As soon as it became possible, Chechens began moving back to what they perceived to be their homeland. This repatriation was all the more remarkable because it was

done without any support from the state, which specifically forbade the right to return and the restitution of property. The 1944 deportation was not the first, but it was the most extensive and brutal.

It is no wonder therefore that when the Soviet Union collapsed and presented the Chechen people with an opportunity to achieve independence, the Chechens willingly took it. In the 19th century they were deported. In the 20th century they were deported. If history is any guide, a victory by Moscow would almost certainly result in a deportation in the 21st century.

But Moscow cannot win this war for three reasons. First, its military has lost its ability to learn from its mistakes. Time and time again, it hurls untrained and poorly led soldiers into ambushes. Second, for the first time in its history, Russia faces counterinsurgency fight as a democracy. This means the Russian people will know the cost of blood and treasure they are asked to pay, and they will have to live with the cost to Russia's honor for the constant and brutal depredations against Chechen non-combatants. Third, if neither the autocratic Tsar Nicholas I nor the brutal Soviet dictator Stalin could "solve" the Chechen "problem," what makes Vladimir Putin, putative leader of the "Sick Man of New Europe," think he can?

In this most recent chapter of the long book of Russian and Chechen woe, both time and the weight of history are clearly on the side of the Chechen people.

Monica Toft, an assistant professor of public policy and former Russian voice intercept in the U.S. Army, is currently finishing a book manuscript tentatively called *The Geography of Ethnic Conflict*.