



Elmar Sulk is Program Manager at the Washington D.C. office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

AN ANCHOR IN SOCIETY

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOLDIERS AND THE MILITARY IN THE USA

Elmar Sulk

On the last Tuesday in January this year, Army Ranger Cory Remsburg – along with President Barack Obama – was the U.S. citizen who was attracting the most media attention. Right from the start of the State of the Union Address, in which the U.S. President gives his annual report to a joint session of Congress (also broadcast live on TV), the cameras were constantly returning to Remsburg. He and his father were given the place of honor next to First Lady Michelle Obama. The soldier was seriously wounded in Afghanistan on 1 October 2009. Since then he has been working hard on his recovery. Last year was the first time that he was able to return to his home in Arizona. Remsburg was one of the people on whom the President bestowed particular praise in the course of his address. He honored the service of the veterans and drew a comparison with the USA: "Cory is here tonight. And like the Army he loves, like the America he serves, Sergeant First Class Cory Remsburg never gives up, and he does not quit."¹

This was a demonstration of the great respect that is afforded to soldiers in American society. The message of 28 January was clear: the Army and society stand together. It triggered the longest applause of the evening, right across party lines, and was the emotional highlight of Barack Obama's speech. Apart from a short period during the Vietnam War and its aftermath, the American people have always supported their soldiers, who volunteer to take up arms and make great sacrifices in the service of their country

1 | The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address", press release, 28 Jan 2014, <http://whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

and its involvement as a global power in the many trouble spots around the world. Conversely, the Army is strongly anchored in society. It is an institution which knows its place within a democracy where elected politicians decide about military operations and withdrawals.

THE MILITARY CONTINUES TO ENJOY HIGH LEVELS OF RESPECT

One reason for the close ties between the military and society is that the vicissitudes of the American people have been linked to the functioning of their armed forces since the birth of the United States – from the War of Independence, to the War of 1812 against the British, to the conflicts of the 20th century. In the past, wars have been decisive moments for this still-young nation, and they remain so in the people's culture of remembrance. In a country of immigration, the U.S. Army provides a path to integration and social advancement. The latest State of the Union Address and its protagonist Cory Remsburg have highlighted three ways in which U.S. society – including politicians – approaches the military factor during certain key moments such as Memorial Day or Veteran's Day.

In a country of immigration, the U.S. Army provides a path to integration and social advancement.

- Soldiers who pay a high price while serving their nation and defending its freedom. In Remsburg's case, this was his tenth foreign deployment.²
- The elected representatives who recognise this service call the soldiers "heroes" and decorate them accordingly.
- The head of state who turns the spotlight on these soldiers as representatives of all U.S. troops and thus, establishing a link to the destiny of the nation.³

2 | The emotionally-charged word "freedom" is used time and again when it is necessary to defend military operations. For Cory Remsburg, the word appeared in two of his deployments: Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Cf. The Price of Freedom Gala, "JCS Heroes. SFC Cory Remsburg", http://priceoffreedomgala.org/jcsheroes_sfccr.php (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

3 | An excellent overview of America's early military operations and the challenges that began before the Declaration of Independence in 1776 is provided by Eliot A. Cohen, *Conquered into Liberty*, New York, Free Press, 2011, 307-342. The author was a Counselor to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The military is not visible everywhere in the country and it has been many years since every family included serving soldiers. Moreover, how specific regions are represented in the armed forces varies. A study by the Heritage Foundation found that 40 per cent of new recruits come from the Southern states, but hardly any from the Northeast.⁴ There are currently some 1.4 million Americans serving as active duty soldiers or reservists. The Army has nearly 514,000 soldiers, the Air Force 329,000, the Navy and Coastguard 364,000 and the Marine Corps 191,000.⁵ In addition, the Department of Defense uses many civilian contractors, such as in industry and education, who are directly or indirectly involved in providing equipment or in warfare itself. In some areas, entire sectors of industry are dependent on investment in military establishments, such as the naval base in San Diego in California or the Norfolk Naval Base with its aircraft carriers in Virginia.



The history of military in the U.S. is also a history of national identity. Commemorations, as seen here on Memorial Day at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., are firmly anchored in society. | Source: Cherie A. Thurlby, U.S. Department of Defense ©©.

4 | Minorities are not significantly represented and only eleven per cent of recruits come from the poorest fifth of the population. Cf. Shanea Watkins and James Sherk, "Who Serves in the U.S. Military? The Demographics of Enlisted Troops and Officers", The Heritage Foundation, 21 Aug 2008, <http://heritage.org/research/reports/2008/08/who-serves-in-the-us-military-the-demographics-of-enlisted-troops-and-officers> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

5 | Cf. figures from the U.S. Department of Defense, as at 30 Jun 2014, https://dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/getfile.do?fileNm=ms1_1406.pdf&filePathNm=milTop (accessed 21 Aug 2014).

However, these figures show only a fraction of each age group opt for a military career. The draft was abolished years ago in the wake of the Vietnam War,⁶ meaning that many families are now no longer directly affected by conflicts. Nevertheless, there has been little change in the way the military is anchored politically and culturally in society and in the respect that it is afforded. This is clearly demonstrated at the USA's top sporting events. For example, a military choir accompanied the singing of the national anthem at this year's Super Bowl, the NFL final. A little later, the game kicked off to massive applause as Army helicopters flew over the stadium. This respect is also reflected in advertising. Budweiser screened a commercial during the Super Bowl that showed soldiers returning from deployment. With 100 million viewers in the USA and with a 30-second commercial costing in excess of four million dollars, we can assume the company knew exactly how to address its customers. In short, soldiers are lauded as heroes, serve as screens for projecting other messages and are generally held in high regard, even if this is often of a rhetorical nature.

Soldiers are lauded as heroes, serve as screens for projecting other messages and are generally held in high regard.

Conversely, most soldiers believe their deployment is meaningful. They see themselves as serving a country which is often not the land of their or their parents' birth, a country they defend as immigrants and on the basis of personal ideals. Marine Corporal William Carpenter recently stated the following at a medal ceremony: "As the president put the medal around my neck, I felt the history and the weight of a nation."⁷ This feeling seems to be shared by many serving soldiers and veterans and is backed up by polls carried out by Pew Research. The USA has been involved in many long and difficult missions for decades, and particularly since the 9/11 terror attacks. The outcome of such operations is often not assured. Despite this, Americans treat their troops with great respect: in May 2013, 91 per cent of respondents said they were proud of the U.S.

6 | Cf. Selective Service System, "Background of Selective Service", <http://www.sss.gov/backgr.htm> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

7 | Quoted from Elena Schneider, "Marine Cpl. William Kyle Carpenter Receives Medal of Honor", *The New York Times*, 19 Jun 2014, <http://nyti.ms/USks8d> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

soldiers who have served since 11 September, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. 76 per cent of respondents also said they had personally thanked soldiers for their service. The military also came out on top when Americans were asked which occupational group makes the greatest contribution to society’s well-being.⁸

Table 1
Image of Occupational Groups in the American Society (in per cent)

Question: How much do these occupational groups contribute to society’s well-being?

Occupational Group	A lot	Some	Not very much / Nothing
Military	78	15	5
Teachers	72	18	9
Medical doctors	66	24	8
Scientists	65	23	8
Engineers	63	26	7
Clergy	37	36	18
Artists	30	42	24
Journalists	28	42	27
Business execs	24	42	28
Lawyers	18	43	34

Source: Pew Research Center, n. 8.

However, when asked about specific military operations, approval ratings fall sharply. In February of this year, only around half of the population still agreed with military deployment in Afghanistan, compared to two-thirds in 2008. 75 per cent of Americans supported the troop withdrawal from Iraq in 2011. And the American public

8 | This survey was also carried out in 2013. Cf. “Public Esteem for Military Still High”, Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life Project, 11 Jul 2013, <http://pewforum.org/2013/07/11/public-esteem-for-military-still-high> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

also believes the President is not obliged to send soldiers to other global trouble spots, as currently demonstrated by the examples of Ukraine and Syria. Indeed, the opposite is true: Americans expect their executive branch to concentrate on domestic issues and on “nation-building at home”, to quote the incisive words of columnist and author Thomas Friedman.⁹

More often the population expects their executive branch to concentrate on domestic issues and on “nation-building at home”.

The knowledge that the fate of a nation can depend on its military is echoed in the debate about the controversial prisoner exchange involving Bowe Bergdahl.¹⁰ Some observers, such as Republican Senator John McCain, have spoken out against this exchange, while it has been defended by others, such as the well-known conservative columnist David Brooks. He argues that the USA is less able than other nations to look back at a common history or a common ancestry; therefore it has to work much harder to build national solidarity. This results in more overt displays of patriotism: the plethora of flags; the daily recital of the pledge of allegiance in schools; the singing of the national anthem at public sports events – these are all a symbolic expression of this. According to Brooks, solidarity is an essential element of national defense. Men and women serve in the armed forces for a variety of reasons. One of the main motivations is the feeling that it is a privilege to be an American. So they want to repay this debt through their service. This is why politicians have a special responsibility to help these soldiers when they are in need.

9 | Cf. Thomas L. Friedman, “Anxious in America”, *The New York Times*, 29 Jun 2008, <http://nytimes.com/2008/06/29/opinion/29friedman.html> (accessed 31 Jul 2014). This ongoing topic of the work America needs to do at home has expanded to include areas such as education and training. See Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum, *That Used to Be Us. How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011, 53-152.

10 | Bowe Bergdahl was held captive by the Taliban in Afghanistan for almost five years. In May 2014 he was released as part of a prisoner exchange in which the USA freed five Taliban members. The circumstances under which Bergdahl was captured have become a subject of intense debate. It has been asked whether Bergdahl is a hero or whether he in fact deserted his unit before being taken captive. This has been the subject of a Pentagon investigation.

They have to be able to rely on the fact that society will do everything it can to bring them home safely.¹¹

David Brooks' opinion seems to tie in with the survey results. At the same time, it is obvious that the majority of the public does not approve of military deployment, even in war regions. As a result, society has to perform a balancing act, something that becomes a challenge in itself. The example of Vietnam has shown how a war-weary nation can turn against its politicians, but also against its homecoming soldiers, meaning that official action to care for and reintegrate these soldiers is put on the backburner.



National solidarity and patriotism: Pledging allegiance every morning in schools or singing the national anthem before public sports events are expressions of a much more present patriotism in the U.S. | Source: Sarah Browning, flickr ©119.

THE WIDENING MILITARY-CIVILIAN GAP

For some time now, the numbers of people in the USA who have no family links to members of the armed forces have been increasing. I recently attended a boy scouts' event and asked several fathers whether they had served in the military over the last 25 years. Those who had were few and far between. 77 per cent of adults over 50 say they have or have had a relative serving in the armed forces. This drops to 57 per cent among the 30 to 49 age group

11 | Cf. David Brooks, "President Obama Was Right", *The New York Times*, 5 Jun 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1kFjZj7> (accessed 31 Jul 2014). Cf. on the particular role played by soldiers as representatives of their nation also: Raymond Aron, *Frieden und Krieg: Eine Theorie der Staatenwelt*, Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer, 1962, 14.

and to less than a third for 19 to 29 year-olds. These family connections tend to be concentrated in certain regions and certain families as there is a much greater probability that soldiers will also have relatives in the military.¹²

Table 2

**Attitudes toward the Military in U.S. Society
(in per cent)**

	Immediate family member has served	No immediate family member has served
Felt proud of those who served	94	87
Thanked someone for their service	81	67
Helped someone in military or their family	65	47

Source: Pew Research Center, n. 12.

In the 95th Congress of 1977/1978, 77 per cent of the members of the two chambers (Senate and House of Representatives) had a military background. Today, the fact that only one fifth of senators and representatives are veterans shows that support for soldiers before, during and after their service does not necessarily go without saying. In this regard, the historical narrative of the United States is also in a state of flux. On the one hand, Americans are proud of their first president, George Washington, a serving general. Surveys show he is considered to be the country's most eminent president. Americans are also proud of the fact that he quite literally fought for their nation's freedom. So the military's role in U.S. society was set at the time of the nation's birth. On the other hand, it is no longer a given that politicians themselves have a background of

12 | Cf. Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, "The Military-Civilian Gap: Fewer Family Connections", 23 Nov 2011, <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2011/11/23/the-military-civilian-gap-fewer-family-connections> (accessed 31 Jul 2014). Other polling organisations have produced similar findings to those of Pew Research. Studies have also shown that Americans who have relatives serving in the military have different attitudes towards issues such as patriotism and national security. It tends to make them more patriotic than the average American. This also shows how the fate of a nation is excessively elevated and interwoven with the fate of war in people's minds.

active service in the armed forces. Military service has also dwindled in importance as the springboard for a career in politics.¹³

Politicians repeatedly assure that the nation will do everything it can to help its military personnel to enjoy a fulfilling life.

Like every other nation, the USA has to deal with the issue of how society supports its military. Its politicians have to create a legal framework and provide the financial means for veterans to be cared for and to help soldiers regain a foothold in civilian life. They repeatedly assure that the nation will do everything it can to help its military personnel enjoy a fulfilling life. No president ever fails to thank the veterans, and Obama is no exception: "For their service and sacrifice, warm words of thanks from a grateful nation are more than warranted, but they aren't nearly enough. We also owe our veterans the care they were promised and the benefits that they have earned. We have a sacred trust with those who wear the uniform of the United States of America. It's a commitment that begins at enlistment, and it must never end. But we know that for too long, we've fallen short of meeting that commitment. Too many wounded warriors go without the care that they need. Too many veterans don't receive the support that they've earned. Too many who once wore our nation's uniform now sleep in our nation's streets."¹⁴

If this promise is to be kept, then existing programs for veterans and military personnel need to be subjected to ongoing review. Problems and irregularities must be identified and addressed, and at times there is a need to adapt the existing instruments. There are three ongoing debates in this respect. The first of these revolves around a sense of dissatisfaction with the work of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Secondly, there is the scandal about harassment and assaults within the military and the sharp

13 | History also illustrates the significance of a second former general who became president: Dwight D. Eisenhower. At the end of his term, he warned against the "military-industrial complex", believing that this was a threat to the processes of democracy.

14 | Barack Obama, 19 Mar 2009. Quoted from The White House, "Veterans and Military Families", <http://whitehouse.gov/issues/veterans> (accessed 31 Jul 2014). In his second inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln talked about the need to look after wounded warriors: "[...] to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

rise in reports of sexual assaults. The third issue concerns Defense Secretary Charles "Chuck" Hagel's proposals to reform the Army. These three examples illustrate the caution that is needed if a democratic society is to be in a position to support its military, which in turn is responsible for protecting and defending this society.

PROBLEMS IN THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The public reacted with embarrassment when a scandal broke out in May this year about medical care for veterans. It basically revolved around the fact that a great many veterans with physical and mental problems were facing long waits for treatment, resulting in delays in diagnosis and care. Media reports clearly showed how little society actually cares for veterans when it comes to taking concrete action. The establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs underscores the importance of these tasks. Democrats and Republicans came together to pledge immediate remedial action and a review of the programs. In the end, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki was forced to resign. A great deal of trust was frittered away during the weeks this scandal was playing out. Looking after veterans, particularly those who need medical care, is a major welfare issue. The veterans' healthcare system is one of the largest in the country, with an annual budget of over 57 billion dollars. 18,000 doctors look after 6.5 million patients each year in 151 hospitals and 820 clinics around the USA.¹⁵

The veterans' healthcare system is one of the largest in the USA, with an annual budget of over 57 billion dollars, 151 hospitals are available countrywide.

Providing soldiers with medical care after active deployment is one of the most pressing issues. If problems exist on the scale being reported, then this serves as a wake-up call for politicians, the military and the public at large. There has been particularly strong criticism of those responsible because, as reported by the Washington Post, these problems have been known for at least a decade. The basic thrust of the criticism is that it is unacceptable for a nation to wage costly wars such as those in Afghanistan

15 | Figures quoted from Robert Pear, "History and Context of an Embattled Department", *The New York Times*, 21 May 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1havDgN> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

and Iraq if it does not provide the means to adequately care for soldiers when they return home.¹⁶



After returning from a military tour, it is a challenge for families and the social environment to help the veterans to reintegrate into everyday life. Comprehensive aftercare is essential in treating both mental and physical injuries. | Source: Matt Jones, Pennsylvania National Guard, flickr (l.), D. Myles Cullen, U.S. Army, flickr (r.).

The treatment of veterans is currently a hot topic in the USA. The scandals affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs are evidence of how the country is finding it difficult to ensure every single soldier can enjoy a reasonable life after returning home. Critics accuse the Pentagon of only making available a fraction of its veterans' budget for the diagnosis and treatment of soldiers with psychological issues. Such problems have escalated beyond proportion, resulting in increasing numbers of suicides. According to a Pentagon report, many more soldiers than ever before are now being diagnosed with mental disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is beginning to dawn on the nation that it has to pay a high price for the wars that are waged in the name of its security. Opinions

16 | The failure of the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide veterans with the best possible care was revealed in May this year. The press seized on the problems and management errors that were prevalent in a number of rehabilitation centers. Alberto Cuadra provides a good overview of specific costs in his article "How the VA calculates monthly payments for wounded soldiers", *The Washington Post*, 20 May 2014, <http://wapo.st/1AMtq73> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

on the need for such wars are still divided.¹⁷ Along with their medical problems, scores of veterans also find themselves unemployed when they are discharged and many others are living on the brink of poverty. President George W. Bush's reformed GI Bill and the tax incentives for employers who take on veterans introduced by Obama have clearly not had the desired effect. Many veterans are still finding it difficult to return to civilian life. Soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have certainly not been subjected to the kind of exclusion that befell many Vietnam veterans. However, there is clear evidence of a certain degree of neglect, and reintegration remains an urgent political and social issue.

MISCONDUCT WITHIN THE MILITARY

In the military itself there have been many recent examples of misconduct against its members, which have damaged the public's faith in the institution. The German Bundeswehr's idea of a "citizen in uniform"

The idea of a "citizen in uniform" seems to be less prevalent in the American armed forces, a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces like in Germany is also unknown.

seems to be less prevalent in the American armed forces. Moreover, a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces like in Germany is also nonexistent. But at a time when reports of sexual harassment and assaults are on the increase and when such problems are being discussed with greater openness and sensitivity in the public sphere, Congress is called upon to view the issue with greater scrutiny and take legislative action. According to the figures from the 2013 fiscal year, the number of incidents of "sexual misconduct" in the Air Force alone – some of them violent – increased by 45 per cent compared to the previous year. The Associated Press reported that this figure rose as high as 86 per cent in the Marines, which considers itself to be the elite military corps.¹⁸

17 | Cf. Richard N. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2009. Haass is President of the Council on Foreign Relations. In this very readable study, he shows how the events of 9/11 led to a war in Iraq that did not coincide with the USA's interests.

18 | Cf. Lolita C. Baldor, "Military sex assault reports jump by 50 percent", Associated Press, 27 Dec 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/military-sex-assault-reports-jump-50-percent> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).



Internal reforms: Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, himself a Vietnam veteran, wants to reform the U.S. military. The keywords are structural cutbacks and modernizing the equipment. | Source: Glenn Fawcett, U.S. Department of Defense, flickr ©111111.

This led to a great deal of agitated activity in the Senate. Politicians realized that the military jurisdiction is in need of an overhaul because the Army is now an institution that is open to both sexes. First of all, the wall of silence surrounding these incidents must be broken down. There are also many reports that victims of such assaults have been bullied. The politicians' aim was to change this culture and legislate to introduce democratic safeguards in line with basic individual freedoms. The commanding officers are in the spotlight here, as it is their actions or willingness to turn a blind eye that have played a key role in a command structure that enjoys a certain degree of omnipotence. Senator Carl Levin (Democrat) from Michigan sums it up aptly: "[The] military culture has been slow to grasp the painful truth that even a successful professional can also be a sexual predator."¹⁹ In March, the U.S. Senate passed legislation which now has to be implemented. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's ongoing proposed legislation to remove sexual assault cases from the military chain of command failed to gain majority support, but Senator Claire McCaskill's bill was passed unanimously. It stipulates that the "good soldier defense" may no longer be used in prosecutions. So progress has been made with the introduction of measures

19 | The Senator's quote and background information: Donna Cassata, "Senate Overwhelmingly Backs Military Sexual Assault Bill", *The Huffington Post*, 10 Mar 2014, <http://huff.to/1p1Ux9c> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

that correspond to general democratic principles and that point the way forward.²⁰

THE PENTAGON BUDGET AND REORGANISATION OF THE MILITARY

For the time being, the spotlight has swung away from the debate about reorganising and shrinking the Army. A few months ago, before the Ukraine crisis brought these plans and ideas back into focus, Defense Secretary Hagel stepped before the press and revealed the proposals that he was planning to put before Congress. Adapting and reshaping were the key words in this respect. These are ongoing challenges if the military is to ensure it has an effective response to new and global challenges. Leaner and better equipped – this is how Hagel envisions the Army of the future. There is no escaping the fact that expensive wars and the world's largest arms budget have taken their toll since Congress approved its sequestration measures.²¹ Hagel announced that the total number of troops will drop to pre-9/11 levels. This will go hand-in-hand with investment in new technology as it is no longer a given that the USA has the edge in terms of weapons technology.²² Discussions are also ongoing about increasing military compensation. Although there are currently no proposals to shake up retirement benefits, it does seem that a rethink is underway. However the Defense Secretary's reforms play out, and however the government chooses to handle a skeptical public, this debate is like a stone which continues to make ripples once it has been thrown into the pond.

Leaner and better equipped – this is how Secretary of Defense Hagel envisions the Army of the future.

20 | For an assessment see Melinda Henneberger, "Sen. McCaskill's military sexual-assault bill is meatier than advertised", *The Washington Post*, 9 Mar 2014, <http://wapo.st/1xSNy3g> (accessed 31 Jul 2014). This analysis appeared two days before the bill was passed unanimously.

21 | Sequestration is a procedure whereby automatic cuts are made to the U.S. federal budget if national debt levels are exceeded. It came into effect in March 2013 and since then cuts have been made with very little flexibility. Only one or two programs are exempt, such as military pay and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

22 | The speech announcing the new budget on 24 Feb 2014 can be read here: Chuck Hagel, "Secretary of Defense Speech. FY15 Budget Preview", U.S. Department of Defense, <http://defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1831> (accessed 31 Jul 2014).

CONCLUSION

No institution is more important to American society than its military, even after 13 long years of conflict since Operation Enduring Freedom began in Afghanistan. No other vocation is afforded more respect than that of the serving soldier. And it is doubtful whether any other country is more proud of its soldiers, the defenders of freedom. The reverse is also true: it would be difficult to find an army anywhere else in the world that is more patriotic or more ingrained with national ideals than the U.S. military.

Yet despite their hero status, these soldiers face tremendous challenges upon returning home. As veterans, it is often difficult for them to regain a foothold in society and build new lives as civilians. It is something of a paradox that it is the members of the most respected occupational group who face such difficulties in the labor market. The country's lawmakers have made efforts to address this problem but there remains much to be done. The problems discussed here provide a pointer to what needs to happen in this ever-changing situation. The state needs to do more to ensure the military remains an attractive employer, particularly in terms of the period that follows active service. The first voices raised against Hagel's proposals came from veterans' associations and certain governors of states that are dependent on the arms industry and who rely on this industry to fill their campaign coffers. Serious reservations have also been expressed by senators who will fight to preserve every single barracks. Yet nothing will change the high status enjoyed by the Army: it remains a fixed anchor in society. Nevertheless, politicians need to take greater pains to explain to the public why their armed forces have to be deployed around the world and how the associated high levels of individual risk can be justified. This is the only way for society and the military to maintain their current high levels of mutual esteem.