

MISSION INJURY THE FORCE AFTER AFGHANISTAN

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When confronted with a perceived military mission failure like that in Afghanistan, service members may reflect upon the personal and family sacrifices committed in support of the mission and may no longer be willing to make the same sacrifices for future missions. This dynamic can be referred to as mission injury. This article applies a feminist analytical framework to the lived experiences of military personnel during the Global War on Terrorism and worldwide operations against terrorism that continued after 2013 to engage the structural dynamics of military life that shape mission injury. Mission injury may lead to retention and recruitment issues that weaken the nation's military force against future threats. To mitigate this risk, the US military should implement institutional changes to the structure of military life in order to alleviate the personal and family sacrifices required by US military service.

The fall of Afghanistan has delivered a period of reflection for US service members who participated in two decades of the Global War on Terrorism and subsequent continued global military operations against terrorists after 2013 (hereafter collectively referred to as the war on terror). The precipitous collapse of the Afghan government upon the withdrawal of US forces sent shock waves through the population of military members who spent time in the country, supported combat operations from afar, or participated in the Department of Defense's institutional processes to sustain combat operations and aspirational nation-building efforts.

Americans see many service members' reactions to visible indicators of US failure in Afghanistan, from the footage of local Afghans swarming the US embassy in Kabul to the chaos on overseas US military bases as military personnel supported refugees boarding the last aircraft departing the country. Yet Americans must also recognize the comorbid invisible wounds burdening many service members in the enduring aftermath of the fall of Afghanistan. These wounds, borne from the structural and institutional processes shaping every experience of service members' lives since 2001, have lain hidden under the tumult of conflict and combat. Moving forward, America ignores these invisible wounds at its peril.

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This article examines the mission injury many service members may now be confronting upon the collapse of Afghanistan. In recent years, scholars and the military have increasingly focused on the moral injury sustained during wartime efforts, yet little attention has been paid to why individuals might suddenly question their overall purpose in the military and its institutional demands.¹ Specifically, when confronted with a mission's perceived failure such as that in Afghanistan, service members may reflect upon their personal and family sacrifices and may no longer feel willing to make the same sacrifices for future missions. The US military must assess what impact this mission injury may have on future force readiness.

To engage this compelling problem, this article applies a feminist analytical framework to the everyday lived experiences of military personnel involved in the war on terror from 2001 to 2021.² Feminist analysis argues "the mundane matters."³ While traditional, Western international relations theory approaches to international security and power focus on state actors and international systems of order and control, feminist analysis engages and acknowledges the value of the everyday, lived experiences of individual actors.⁴

Exploring these quotidian dynamics reveals the burdens and costs that service members and their families bear as integral elements of military service. Usually lying beneath the surface, these burdens and costs have emerged and weigh heavily on many service members in this contemporary period of reflection following the fall of Afghanistan. As a result, service personnel may now question the mission of Operation Enduring Freedom and other war-on-terror military operations.

Mission injury's potential impact on the retention of military personnel requires an institutional response from the Department of Defense and US leaders. In a post-Afghanistan and post-COVID context, military members cannot be expected to subsume their mental health and work-life balance to the same degree they have over the past 20 years when members were compelled by ongoing, active operational campaigns overseas. Ultimately, the US military must conduct a holistic evaluation of the structural challenges attendant to military life in order to sustain a force poised to engage the national security threats of the future.

The United States must pay attention to the hidden burdens that shape military service, and it must redesign US military institutions to alleviate those burdens. Failure to do so risks losing the heart of a military force critical to supporting and defending US national interests in the decades to come.

1. Ian Fishback, "Necessity and Institutions in Self-Defense and War," in *The Ethics of Self-Defense*, ed. Christian Coon and Michael Weber (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

2. Sasha Roseneil, "The Coming of Age of Feminist Sociology: Some Issues of Practice and Theory for the Next Twenty Years," *British Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 2 (June 1995).

3. Cynthia Enloe, "The Mundane Matters," *International Political Sociology* 5, no. 4 (December 2011).

4. J. Ann Tickner, "What is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (March 2005).

A Theory of Mission Injury

The nation's military is navigating a period of reflection after the fall of Afghanistan, reflection that may result in mission injury for some service members. Mission injury arises from the questioning of a mission's worth in light of the personal and family sacrifices required to sustain that mission. Mission injury itself is the trauma that occurs when the military member determines these sacrifices were not worth the mission's outcome. The conceptual flow chart below outlines how mission injury might occur within a subset of the military population.

Of note, not every person has experienced the collapse of Afghanistan in the same way, and therefore not every service member may be experiencing mission injury. Yet among those who feel negatively affected by the collapse of Afghanistan, some may enter a period of reflection. This reflection may involve acknowledgment of moral injury, mission injury, or both, and either injury negatively impacts the strength of the nation's future military force. The solid arrows outline the mechanisms of mission injury central to this article (fig. 1).

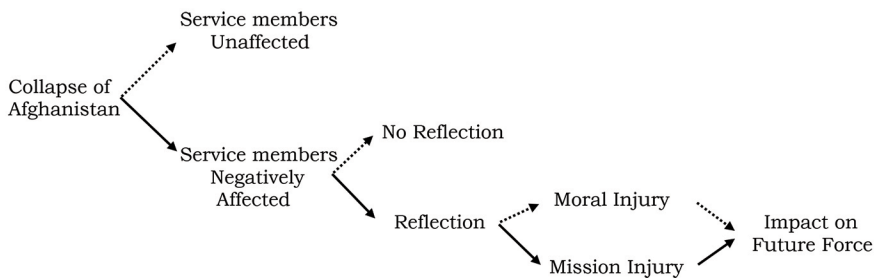


Figure 1. Mission injury mechanism

Importantly, mission injury is distinct from moral injury. Moral injury is “a particular type of trauma characterized by guilt, existential crisis, and loss of trust that may develop following a perceived moral violation.”⁵ Alternatively, mission injury is not tied to discrete, individual member actions but rather emerges from the member's evaluation of the strategic, institutional purpose of a military endeavor.

When service members view a mission as justified and valid, they tend to view sacrifices in support of that mission as necessary. Alternatively, when service members question the worthiness or potential success of a mission, as is the case for many concerning Afghanistan, they may become reluctant to make the sacrifices institutionally required for supporting that mission.⁶ If this occurs, then they may leave military

5. J. D. Jinkerson, “Defining and Assessing Moral Injury: A Syndrome Perspective,” *Traumatology* 22, no. 2 (2016): 122.

6. James Dobbins, “Afghanistan Was Lost Long Ago,” *The RAND Blog*, RAND Corporation, August 30, 2021, <https://www.rand.org/>.

service in pursuit of an institutional environment that does not demand such personal and family sacrifices, such as a career in the private sector.

This retention challenge may also cause recruitment issues if potential service members observe a personnel exodus and decide against joining the military as a result. As an institution, the Department of Defense can mitigate the risk to retention and recruitment posed by mission injury through restructuring the institutional dynamics of military life to accommodate the well-being of service members and their families.

What personal and family sacrifices contribute to the aforementioned mission injury process? The next section includes an imagined editorial letter that evokes the burdens of military life under current institutional dynamics to illustrate the experience of mission injury among some service members. In 1990, Cynthia Enloe asked “Where are the women?” to unearth the invisible yet constant work women perform in every context.⁷ This letter similarly employs a feminist analytical framework to reveal the hidden work and sacrifices attendant to military service during sustained war-on-terror combat operations from 2001 to 2021.

This letter explores the questions many service members are asking in the post-Afghanistan context in order to evaluate their personal and family sacrifices given the perceived failure of US efforts in Afghanistan.⁸ This dialogic approach follows J. Ann Tickner’s recommended feminist analytical methodology for “overcoming silences and miscommunications, thus beginning more constructive dialogues.”⁹ Ultimately, exploring the everyday, “intimate and structural dynamics” of military life in this manner not only offers opportunities to understand their impact on personnel bearing the weight of service but also equips the institution to offer solutions to the challenges inherent to those dynamics.¹⁰

Letter to the Editor: “When You Thank a Veteran, 2022”

Veterans Day was different this year. Normally, as veterans and service members we spend the day reflecting on our service and enjoying quality time with family and friends, but this year was different. Since the fall of Afghanistan, we are hurting—a deep, disorienting hurt we have not experienced in the 20 years since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001. When you extend your thanks to members of the US military,

7. Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

8. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *What We Need To Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, August 2021), <https://www.sigar.mil/>.

9. J. Ann Tickner, “You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (December 1997): 613.

10. Rachel Pain, “Everyday Terrorism: Connecting Domestic Violence and Global Terrorism,” *Progress in Human Geography* 38, no. 4 (2014): 531.

please know that we are working through two decades of memories and lived experiences hidden until now. And we are struggling.

Over the past 20 years, we have faced combat and war in the service of our nation. Some of us entered the fire directly, digging the dirt and sand from our fingernails and tasting the acrid tang of metal in the back of our mouths as we drove across the desert or flew over foreign lands. Others waged war from afar, watching distinct figures on screens explode into fireworks of white light at the press of a button from thousands of miles away. When our leaders realized the trauma and stress scarred us the same, we welcomed the offers of therapy dogs and wondered if anything would wipe from our psyches the memory of torn-open bodies and destroyed lives.

We built networks of support to ward off the strain and distress. And then we moved. We moved time after time—new relationships, schools, doctors, babysitters, veterinarians, and hair stylists. Time after time, spouses gave up their careers, and our kids tearfully left yet another group of friends. After a while we stopped planting roots, resigned to the upheaval, focusing on success at work, hoping our families were all the support we needed.

But then, in the disruptions and the moves, we lost not only our networks but also in many cases our very families. Years deployed or traveling on temporary duty and sending love through a screen meant that sometimes we returned home as different people, to different people, and earned separation, divorce, or estrangement as a prize.

And still we keep losing each other. There, colleagues and friends became victims of IEDs, crashes, and attacks. But here, somehow, the losses seem to hurt more. Have we failed when spouses, parents, or friends come home to discover the unimaginable? At home, we should not miss the signs, even though we know it is not in our power to save them. Time works against us. We advocate for counseling and mental health, but we crash into the unfounded yet pervasive stigma in the military against such services.

Yet through it all, we have persevered, believing in our mission and our nation. Trauma and disruption were part of the deal, and somehow it was worth it because our cause was just. Our leaders told us we were doing God's work, and we believed them. We had to. But now, we question. Was our sacrifice worth the cost? Did we miss our children's births and parents' deaths for nothing? Were we truly fighting the axis of evil, or were we causing its spread? We never had to ask ourselves these questions before, when we were defending our homeland from terror. But we ask them now. And we have no answers.

The cumulative burden of our service weighs heavy on us all. Despite the yellow ribbons and patriotic parades, the truth of two decades of war has been ours to see, not yours. And we would not wish that burden upon you. We chose this life so that you wouldn't have to. We just didn't know the full cost when we started this journey so long ago. So please forgive us if, when you thank us for our service, we are circumspect in our reply. We are hurting and tired. We feel sorrow for all we have seen and done. And for the first time, we wonder if we should have done it at all.

A Feminist Sociological Analysis

The imagined editorial letter above aims to capture the everyday challenges military members may have experienced over the past two decades, from visceral combat operations overseas to the quiet, daily struggles of sustaining personal relationships and local support networks at home.

This framework distinguishes the visible costs of military service during the war on terror from the invisible costs of the same. Visible costs are the commonly acknowledged challenges of military service, from overseas deployments to the geographically separated execution of combat operations.¹¹ The visible challenges to military service have long received institutional support, as they rightly should. For example, the growth of drone operations in the war on terror has generated important attention to the fact that “operators of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles within the military have increasingly been recognized as potential sufferers of immense stress and trauma as a result of the conditions they are exposed to.”¹²

In addition to these aspects, the US military and broader US society must also recognize the invisible negative outcomes that compose the structural dynamics attendant to military life: frequent moves, missed family and personal events due to deployments and temporary duty assignments, high divorce rates among military personnel, impediments to military spouses achieving career advancement or maintaining relationships, and persistent mental health struggles.¹³ These embedded challenges of military life introduce negative outcomes to mental health and resilience similar to the visible, combat-related experiences among military personnel.

Furthermore, with the collapse of Afghanistan some service members may be reflecting on these embedded challenges for the first time. With this reflection comes the question: were the costs to family, stability, and mental health justified if the mission ended in defeat? In the midst of combat operations it is often necessary to subsume concerns about work-life balance and family needs within the demand to embody the

11. Kristian Soby Kristensen, “Tourists or Vagabonds? Space and Time in the War on Terror,” *Alternatives* 33, no. 2 (2008); and Cherie Armour and Jana Ross, “The Health and Well-Being of Military Drone Operators and Intelligence Analysts: A Systematic Review,” *Military Psychology* 29, no. 2 (2017).

12. Jacob Holz, “Victimhood and Trauma within Drone Warfare,” *Critical Military Studies*, published ahead of print, July 29, 2021, 1, <https://doi.org/>.

13. Benjamin Karney and John S. Crown, *Families under Stress: An Assessment of Data, Theory, and Research on Marriage and Divorce in the Military* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007); Sebastian Negrusa, Birghita Negrusa, and James Hosek, “Gone to War: Have Deployments Increased Divorces?,” *Journal of Population Economics* 27, no. 2 (2014); Patricia K. Tong et al., *Enhancing Family Stability during a Permanent Change of Station: A Review of Disruptions and Policies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), <https://www.rand.org/>; and Terri Tanielian et al., *Invisible Wounds: Mental Health and Cognitive Care Needs of America’s Returning Veterans* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), <https://www.rand.org/>.

“warrior ethos.”¹⁴ Yet when the warrior mission ends, these concerns resurface, and the period of reflection begins.

This reflection may lead to mission injury, where service members question whether the failed military mission remains justified given the costs to personal and family health required to pursue this mission over two decades of war. Furthermore, this mission injury may result in service members unwilling to further sacrifice personal and family well-being for the sake of the mission, leading to retention issues within the military force. Moreover, reflecting upon the stability sacrificed in support of the military mission can lead to a negative evaluation of the military’s strategic mission itself and of the institution requiring these sacrifices.

Mission injury may involve moral injury, but it reaches beyond the individual level to include the systemic as well. Service members experiencing mission injury may reflect critically upon the institutions the military created to support and sustain the war on terror: what structures did the Defense Department build to sustain 20 years of combat, and were those systems just?¹⁵ In the midst of combat operations, service members might not consider these issues, particularly when the motivating cause for the operations remains untarnished. When the mission supported by the operations fails, however, the period of reflection unearths such concerns.

Mission Injury: An Example from the Intelligence Community

One example of potential mission injury involves processes of intelligence oversight. When supporting operational missions through the distributed common ground system, intelligence personnel follow specific procedures outlined in the 2018 Air Force Guidance Memorandum to Air Force Instruction 14-104, *Oversight of Intelligence Activities*.¹⁶ These procedures and the intelligence oversight program itself involve “a balancing of two fundamental interests: obtaining the intelligence information required to protect national security while protecting individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution and outlined within the laws of the United States.”¹⁷

Required to demonstrate understanding of this program when conducting missions, intelligence personnel could feel justified in their collection missions as long as they met oversight stipulations. Few questioned the legality of their operations as long

14. Christopher Coker, *The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror*, LSE International Studies series (London, UK: Routledge, 2007).

15. Tine Molendijk, Eric-Hans Kramer, and Désirée Verweij, “Moral Aspects of ‘Moral Injury’: Analyzing Conceptualizations on the Role of Morality in Military Trauma,” *Journal of Military Ethics* 17, no. 1 (2018).

16. “Air Force Distributed Common Ground System,” USAF (website), October 2015, <https://www.af.mil/>.

17. Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Guidance Memorandum to Air Force Instruction 14-104, *Oversight of Intelligence Activities* (Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force [DAF], October 4, 2018), 2, <https://irp.fas.org/>.

as they fell within oversight requirements, and as a result, operators' consciences remained clear.

Yet with the perceived failure of these missions in Afghanistan, service members may now question these oversight procedures. A closer examination of Air Force Instruction 14-104 reveals the approval authorities for intelligence oversight procedures are embedded within the Air Force chain of command. This makes sense given the general nature of bureaucratic processes, and there is certainly coordination with the appropriate federal legal offices as part of these procedures.

But the situation still raises interesting questions: if Air Force leadership were motivated to produce operational intelligence in support of the war on terror, and these same leadership structures governed the oversight procedures guiding this intelligence collection, then were these oversight stipulations truly setting boundaries? Or did Air Force leadership construct oversight processes that functioned to sanction the intelligence collection they deemed critical to conducting operations? If the service constructed its own checks and balances, were these safeguards anything more than panaceas to justify its actions in support of US national interests?

Given the perceived failure of US efforts in Afghanistan, the service members who conducted operations to support these efforts may now question the legal and ethical dynamics of their actions and the mission involved.¹⁸ At the same time, compounding this questioning, reflecting on the personal and family sacrifices required to pursue these failed efforts may lead to mission injury. Taken together, if unaddressed, this questioning about motives and sacrifices introduces fault lines in the foundation of the nation's military force.

Mitigating Mission Injury

Practices of rendition, indefinite detention in Guantanamo Bay, and National Security Agency surveillance overreach are significant black marks against US operations since 2001. The theoretical mission injury associated with the structural dynamics of military life presented here certainly falls beneath that extreme threshold.¹⁹ Yet if military leaders do not acknowledge and account for the potential damage that mission injury poses to the strength of force resilience today, the military risks a compromised force for future conflict.

When considering mission injury facing some service members in the aftermath of the fall of Afghanistan, the United States cannot simply transform the nature of war to erase the burden of service. After all, the role of the military is to manage and execute

18. Sarah Kreps and John Kaag, "The Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Contemporary Conflict: A Legal and Ethical Analysis," *Polity* 44, no. 2 (2012).

19. Margaret L. Satterthwaite, "Rendered Meaningless: Extraordinary Rendition and the Rule of Law," *George Washington Law Review* 75 (2007): 1333; Michael J. Strauss, *The Leasing of Guantanamo Bay* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2009); and Timothy H. Edgar, *Beyond Snowden: Privacy, Mass Surveillance, and the Struggle To Reform the NSA* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017).

violence on behalf of the state.²⁰ That mission will never cease. Instead, the military must mitigate the trade-offs that service members experience between preserving personal and family health and completing the military mission. If mission injury involves reflecting upon the sacrifices made at the altar of military life, then mitigating mission injury must involve alleviating or eliminating these sacrifices when they are not strictly necessary for accomplishing the military mission but are simply products of path-dependent institutional processes, where institutions reinforce established processes as a means to survive.²¹

The Department of Defense has already begun to acknowledge the demands of military life in an effort to alleviate some of these sacrifices.²² The 2022 National Defense Authorization Act contains provisions to support and sustain military spouse careers and to increase parental leave to 12 weeks for service members.²³ Department leadership is now more vocal on the critical role of mental health support for service members, and efforts to support military parents as they balance work with family are important steps in the right direction.²⁴

Even so, these initiatives represent piecemeal policy adjustments and often emerge as the hard-won outcomes of volunteer action instead of institutionally driven systemic changes, particularly since past efforts to revise the entirety of the military force structure—particularly the standards set for women—perished in the churn of bureaucratic power struggles.²⁵ When the military personnel system still revolves around antiquated models of the nuclear family functioning to support a male military member through the unpaid labor of a female spouse running the household, as echoed in long-standing policy preventing service academy cadets from maintaining dependents, the system still requires substantial changes to reflect the personal and family needs of contemporary military personnel.²⁶

20. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

21. James Mahoney, "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 4 (August 2000).

22. DAF, "Department of the Air Force: Fortify the Force" (Washington, DC: DAF, n.d.), accessed July 13, 2022, <https://www.afcmc.af.mil/>.

23. National Military Family Association (NMFA), "NDAA Breakdown for Military Families," NMFA (website), accessed December 28, 2021, <https://www.militaryfamily.org/>.

24. Zachary Vaughn, "Mental Health Is 'Health' Says SECDEF: AF Academy Tackles Suicide Prevention," US Air Force Academy (website), September 28, 2021, <https://www.usafa.af.mil/>; and Patricia Kime, "Defense Bill Lets Active-Duty Marine and Army Moms Defer Deployment for a Year after Birth," *Military Times*, December 18, 2019, <https://www.militarytimes.com/>.

25. Kelly Atkinson and Alea Nadeem, "Warrior Braids and the Air Force Women's Initiative Team—the Invisible Labor Behind Diversity, Inclusion, and Institutional Change," *Wild Blue Yonder*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/>; and Jonathan Guyer, "Burying the Evidence: How the Military Concealed Its Best Chance at Solving Its Sexual Assault Problem," *American Prospect*, November 18, 2021, <https://prospect.org/>.

26. Melissa Hemphill, "I Had to Relinquish Parental Rights, Then Adopt My Child to Stay in the Air Force Academy. The Rules Must Change," *Washington Post*, October 15, 2021.

To mitigate mission injury within this period of reflection, the nation and the Department of Defense must institute a comprehensive redesign of how military life is constructed in order to support and sustain a robust force postured for future conflict. Adopting a constructivist framework—which acknowledges the created nature of institutions—to engage organizational design empowers leaders to break free from path-dependent constraints and reform DoD institutions to accommodate contemporary goals and priorities for military members and their families.²⁷ Timing and sequence matter, and in the post-Afghanistan period, DoD leaders can capitalize on this critical juncture to redesign institutions to address mission injury and its negative ramifications.²⁸

Policy recommendations for incorporating these critical institutional changes are as follows. First, the Defense Department must continue to update its institutional processes in support of mental health services and family stability for all service members. From mental health support addressing issues of post-traumatic stress disorder and moral injury, to critical mental health initiatives supporting military couples and families, these efforts are crucial to health and wellness for service members facing the unique demands of military life.

Moreover, with reduced overseas operations for the first time since 2001, the military must consider jettisoning the archaic permanent-change-of-station cycle that disrupts service member lives every few years in favor of more stable, long-term assignment cycles that engender community connections and family cohesiveness.²⁹ Additionally, the Department of Defense must continue to increase access to child care for military families so that service members and their partners can excel in their careers buoyed by available child care services. These important structural changes will mitigate some costs to personal and family health caused by the current instability of military life.

Most importantly, DoD leadership must accept the reality that service members desire stability and support in their lives. Just as America embraced the requirement to support veterans and transitioning service members since 2001, the US military must pursue a similar institutional and cultural shift to bolster support services for those serving.³⁰ The military can no longer assume consistent retention in an all-volunteer force based upon value-driven motivation to serve in combat operations.³¹

27. Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995).

28. Orefeo Fioretos, "Historical Institutionalism in International Relations," *International Organization* 65, no. 2 (Spring 2011).

29. William M. Hix et al., *Personnel Turbulence: The Policy Determinants of Permanent Change of Station Moves* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1998).

30. Wesley H. McCormick et al., "Military Culture and Post-Military Transitioning among Veterans: A Qualitative Analysis," *Journal of Veterans Studies* 4, no. 2 (2019).

31. Karen K. De Angelis and David R. Segal, "Building and Maintaining a Post-9/11 All-Volunteer Military Force," in *The Impact of 9/11 on Politics and War*, ed. Matthew M. Morgan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Instead, the military must apply a constructivist approach to its institutional design, embrace the change agents operating within the system to improve the structure, and posture the force for the future fight.³²

On its own, the mission injury from the collapse of Afghanistan may not pose sustained challenges to military readiness. Coupled with the shock of a black swan pandemic, however, the consequences are more dire.³³ As tempting as it may be to bury its head in the bubble of COVID-induced retention rates, when the pandemic is finally past, the military may face an exodus of service members suffering from mission injury and seeking a more supportive work environment to enable personal and family balance.³⁴

The new blended retirement system may well accelerate this exodus as military personnel no longer need to dedicate 20 years of service to obtain retirement benefits, choosing instead to seek the flexibility that industries have adopted to combat pandemic restrictions.³⁵ Considering this contemporary context, military leaders must apply a strategic vision to gauge the long-term risks of mission injury on the strength of the US military force. Ultimately, the costs of Afghanistan's collapse to the well-being of service members cannot be ignored: when the mission no longer justifies the sacrifice, then the sacrifice must be mitigated in order to sustain the mission. **Æ**

32. Atkinson and Nadeem, "Warrior Braids"

33. Will Atkins, "Defense Policy Resilience in the Face of Black Swans and Grey Rhinos," in *American Defense Policy*, ed. Miriam Krieger et al., 9th ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021).

34. Ryan N. Strength, "How Are the Air Force Pilot Retention Measures Working in the Mobility Air Forces?" (graduate research paper, Air Force Institute of Technology, June 2020).

35. Beth J. Asch, *Setting Military Compensation to Support Recruitment, Retention, and Performance* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019).

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