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FROM COLLEGE TO CABINET

Women in National Security

Katherine Kidder, Amy Schafer,
Phillip Carter, and Andrew Swick

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Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the many individuals—men and women—whom we interviewed over the course of this study. Women who participated in interviews ranged from graduate students in top security studies and public policy programs to military members from junior officers through the ranks of flag and general officer; civilians serving on the National Security Council and in the Departments of Defense and State, in intelligence agencies and at USAID, as professional staff members on Capitol Hill, and, with prior experience in the government, in a range of private sector, think tank, and academic leadership roles. Further, we are grateful to the men who provided insights about broader workforce management in government and about their motivations for pursuing (or not pursuing) diversity within their teams, who have tirelessly mentored and advocated for women.

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Executive Summary

On January 20, 2017, a new administration took the helm in the United States. The new president faces a vast set of threats to U.S. national security, including potential challenges from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and dispersed forms of terrorism around the globe.¹

Thus, the president faces both the challenge and the opportunity of building his national security team from the top down. Individuals in positions such as those of Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, Director of National Intelligence, and Secretary of Homeland Security will play critical roles in the provision of U.S. national security. Equally important are key staff roles that support these positions throughout the national security apparatus. The new president will be well advised to think creatively about the most effective individuals to fill these roles.

Throughout history, the talent pool of women has been underutilized in the national security sector. Trends over the past 40 years—since the first classes of women were accepted to the nation’s military academies—show an increase in the representation of women in the military and throughout national security departments and agencies, including in the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, and, more recently, the Department of Homeland

However, opportunities exist to increase women’s representation and leadership throughout the national security sector. First, while issues of gender equality merit their own exploration, the discussion about the role of women in national security should focus on the effectiveness of diverse teams with clear, measurable metrics and outcomes. Second, in order to fully demonstrate the value of women in the national security apparatus, the departments, agencies, and the National Security Council staff must begin to keep better data on individual, team, and department performance, through which they can evaluate the impact of a variety of team compositions. Third, the national security apparatus can follow the lead of corporate America in finding workforce management practices such as job sharing and scheduling flexibility, which can mitigate retention issues—particularly for parents, though certainly not limited to them. Fourth, the creation of policies that enable more women to succeed in the national security sector does not mean that the national security sector is a zero-sum game in which women can only succeed at the expense of men. In fact, such policies should increase the quality of life—as well as the quality of employees—for everyone. And finally, the concept of mentorship and advocacy needs to be rethought in terms that make sense for career success in the national security field first, while also accounting for the role of gender.

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Security—but not necessarily at the top. In the post-9/11 world, women have made up a larger and more visible portion of the national security establishment, yet they remain in the minority of leadership positions.

There have been institutional challenges in recruiting and retaining women. Some on-ramps to the national security sector, such as the veterans’ preference policy for federal employment, may unintentionally skew opportunities away from women. The pace of national security careers, particularly those for political appointees, may not be conducive to the challenges of work-life balance or parenthood, at least as the structure of workflow and schedules currently exist. Further, the government is in competition with the private sector for talent.

Never has the exigency for placing the right talent in the right positions been more critical. It will require a national security workforce with a diverse set of skills and experiences. In order to access personnel of this caliber, more attention needs to be paid to the role of women in national security.

I. Introduction

Research establishes the value of diversity for institutional performance in both the public and private sectors. Private firms with greater gender diversity tend to perform better financially, particularly when they are engaged in innovation.² More diverse military organizations, including some of the nation's most elite forces engaged in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, perform better on the battlefield, in part because of the innovative approaches to problem-solving that more diverse teams bring. And yet despite this data, women remain underrepresented at the top echelons of the national security and private sectors.³ In part this relates to institutional barriers unique to the national security field, such as the historical emphasis on military service, which for decades has provided limited opportunity to women. The problem also partly relates to broader societal phenomena that women face, such as the intersection of family and work life and the role played by mentor/protégé networks.

While women are underrepresented at the top, they are present. In 2015, 2 of the 5 Under Secretaries of Defense, 1 of the 5 Principal Under Secretaries of Defense, and 2 of the 14 Assistant Secretaries of Defense were women. At the State Department, 1 of the 2 Deputy Secretaries of State, 4 of the 6 Under Secretaries of State, and 11 of the 26 Assistant Secretaries of State were women. Among all U.S. military generals and admirals, 7.1 percent are women.⁴ As a point of comparison, 5.4 percent of Fortune 500 (27 of 500) companies are led by female CEOs.⁵

The presence of women at the top—however limited—is a promising indication that there is a pathway for mobility. It also indicates a cultural acceptance of women in leadership positions—which has not always been the case within the national security community. But the low numbers of women in leadership positions, particularly given the growing number of women graduating from elite national security and policy programs, point

The presence of women at the top—however limited—is a promising indication.

to structural issues within the human capital pipeline of women in national security, whether at the moment of recruitment or related to retention. It could be that too few women are entering the national security sector, or perhaps they are not staying long enough to reach the top.

In recent years, the role of women in the workplace has received significant attention.⁶ Much of the literature has focused on careers in general, on women in technology, female entrepreneurs, or women in the private sector. Yet not enough attention has been paid to government, specifically to women in the national security field. This study aims to provide data demonstrating the current state of national security female employees, tracing their numbers from undergraduate and graduate programs through entry level and middle-management positions, and on through cabinet level positions. The goal is to explore the points at which their representation diminishes.

The main research questions that this study examines are as follows: What is the representation of women in the national security sector at the beginning of their careers? What is the representation of women in national security leadership positions? If there is a disparity between the two, where does the national security sector lose women in the process? What are some of the policies that can be adopted to retain or reintroduce women into the national security sector? What are the on-ramps and off-ramps over the course of a career?

Scoping, Methodology, and Framing

SCOPING

This report focuses on women in national security, including civil servants and political appointees. For the purposes of this study, the “national security sector” is defined as the major cabinet level departments and executive agencies, as well as the National Security Council staff, who implement and execute national security for the United States. The study focuses on the Department of Defense (DoD), the State Department, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the National Security Council (NSC), as well as the military services.⁷

To establish a clear scope of the study, elected positions are not taken into account, because a number of unique factors are at play in electoral politics in ways that do not necessarily apply to the broader national security community.⁸ However, the representation of women in the presidency or in Congress is significant in the development of policy and legislation and should be studied further. Women's roles at national security and defense think tanks and within the corporate aerospace and defense industry also generate thought leadership, technology, and guidance. Further, women play significant roles at such departments and agencies that support

the defense and national security apparatus, including the Department of Veterans Affairs. This study does not focus specifically on women in those positions, but it does account for them in some of the broader trends of women in the government.

METHODOLOGY

The study makes use of publicly available data on the representation of women in graduate programs, on-ramps to government service (including internships and fellowships), and the national security workforce. Where necessary and/or available, some data was obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests.

Additionally, CNAS researchers conducted interviews with several individuals in the national security sector—men and women alike—over the course of a year. Women who participated in interviews ranged from graduate students in top Security Studies and Public Policy programs; personnel in the military ranging from junior officers through the ranks of flag and general officer; civilians serving on the NSC staff and within the Departments of Defense and State, as well as within intelligence agencies and at USAID; professional staff members on Capitol Hill; and women with prior experience in the government who now serve in private sector, think tank, and academic leadership roles.

Further, CNAS conducted a survey of those in attendance at the 2016 CNAS Annual Conference. The audience included leaders from the DoD, Department of State, and other areas of the administration; defense industry leaders; national security think tanks; the press; and staff members from Capitol Hill.⁹

FRAMING

Existing research has approached the issue of women in government and national security from the perspective of gender equality and inclusion. While intrinsically valuable, the equality and inclusion framework does not necessarily resonate with those in the national security, defense, and military communities—*men and women alike*. But what *does* resonate with personnel working in this broad field are clear metrics defining increased effectiveness toward accomplishing the mission.¹⁰

While the impact of women’s representation and performance within the U.S. national security sector remains understudied, the well-established literature on women and peacekeeping and the ever-expanding field of business literature demonstrate that teams, companies, and countries yield vastly different outcomes when women’s representation increases.

The literature on women, peace, and security has demonstrated markedly different outcomes for conflict negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction when women are involved. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 explicitly calls for “reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.”¹¹ Women’s participation leads to an increased likelihood that issues of trafficking and sexual violence will be addressed in both the peacekeeping mission and post-conflict negotiations.¹² Within the peacekeeping mission, the presence of women also “positively affects aspects of local populations’ interactions and perceptions” pertaining to the operation.¹³ It has also been noted that gender inequality in a nation leads to a higher likelihood of intrastate conflict,¹⁴ which suggests that different outcomes stem from a diversity of inputs.

The business literature indicates that when women’s representation increases within a company, it runs differently; but, more important for companies, those with “higher proportions of women in upper management achieve higher profits . . . profitable firms where women represent 30 percent of leaders saw a 15 percent increase in one measure of gross profit.”¹⁵

Beyond examining the different outcomes resulting from more women in the national security sector, there are two very practical reasons to pay attention to workforce composition dynamics, particularly trends in retention. First, women are making up an increasing proportion of the overall workforce. As their numbers rise throughout various departments and agencies, it will become increasingly necessary to focus on the issues impeding their retention. Another reason to study issues facing women—particularly mothers—is that growing numbers of men, especially in the millennial generation, are concerned with work-life balance more than were the generations preceding them. Issues that were once viewed as applying only to women are now driving work-life balance conversations that apply to the entire workforce; men and women alike.

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II. The Current State of Women in National Security

To understand the current state of women in the national security pipeline, it is useful to examine data on the available pool of women at different stages in their academic and professional careers. For nearly all paths in the national security sector, an undergraduate education is required. Thus, trends in the rates of female undergraduates (the earliest accession point) provide context on the widest pool of eligible women moving forward. Master's degrees or other advanced education are increasingly required for employment or advancement in the national security sector, and data on women's enrollment in elite national security, security studies, and public administration programs provide an even more narrowly focused snapshot of the pool of women who have signaled their intent and obtained the requisite education to work in the field.

While educational data depict the available talent for entry into the national security sector, data on female representation at accession into the field, in the middle ranks, and at the top provide a snapshot of where the

field stands at this time. If women enter and stay in the field at the same rates as their male counterparts, or at the same rates as they are represented in graduate programs, then their representation at the top should be proportional. Yet, as of January 2017, they lag behind as a proportion of leadership positions.

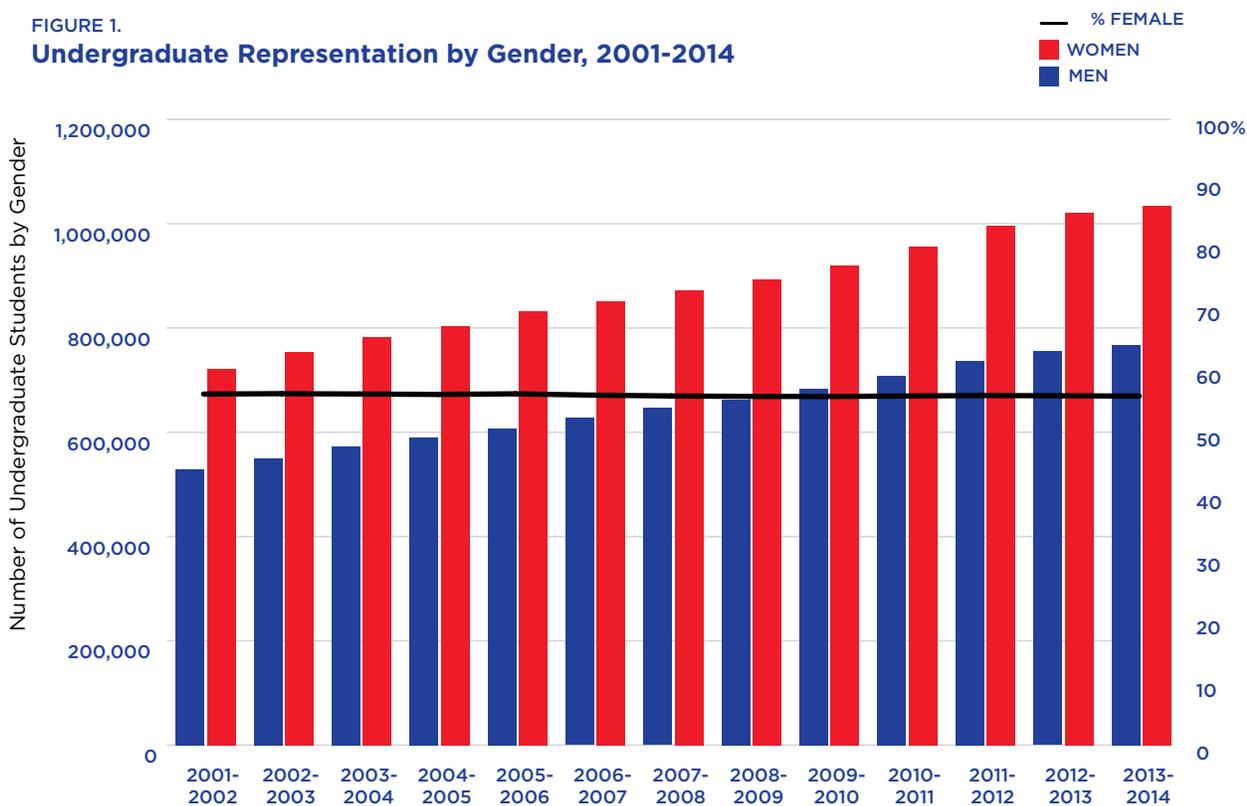
A. Education

UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN

Between 2001 and 2014, the number of women in undergraduate programs increased continuously, from 722,121 to 1,033,839. This trend is consistent with overall growth in college education for all Americans, as represented by the unvarying percentage of women in undergraduate education (a steady 57 percent).

Another way to study female representation in the national security education pipeline is to look at service academy representation over time. While more immediately resulting in female representation in the military, the long-term effects of military service, veteran status, and entry into the field of national security are potentially significant.

FIGURE 1.
Undergraduate Representation by Gender, 2001-2014



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

The figure below shows the representation of women at West Point at the point of admissions from the classes of 2000–2020 (students entering the service academy in July 1996–July 2016).¹⁶ Of note, the percentage of women at West Point increased significantly beginning with the class of 2018 (start date: 2014), from an average hovering around 16 percent to a “new normal” of more than 20 percent. This is a result of policy change regarding women in combat, and of new targets that were developed for branch placement for recently commissioned graduates.

Interestingly, the rise in female cadets at West Point is not the only evolution at the service academy traditionally led by men. Women hold the institution’s two one-star positions, commandant of cadets¹⁷ and dean of the academic board,¹⁸ for the first time in history. Only the institution’s one three-star position, that of Superintendent LTG Robert Caslen, outranks them.

GRADUATE EDUCATION

Female representation in graduate schools across the country has grown over the past four decades, whether in law schools, business schools, medical schools, or doctoral programs. This trend is also demonstrated in

competitive security studies, public policy, and national security graduate education programs, a prime talent pool for entry and mid-level human capital for the national security sector.

Figure 3 depicts the representation in some of the most competitive national security and public policy programs. The list is certainly not exhaustive, but it includes the top institutions in the field. The George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs Master of Arts, Master of International Policy and Practice, and Master of International Studies program has the highest rate of women, as measured by their fall 2015 incoming class at 60 percent. The Harvard Kennedy School Master of Public Administration and Mid-Career Master in Public Administration programs and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies Master of International Public Policy program have the lowest rates (Harvard Kennedy School as measured by five-year average, and SAIS as measured by the fall 2015 incoming class) at 35 percent. However, even programs with more modest enrollment still outpace the rate of women who make it to the top in the national security field (nowhere near 35 percent).

FIGURE 2. Female Representation per West Point Class at Admission, Classes of 2000-2020

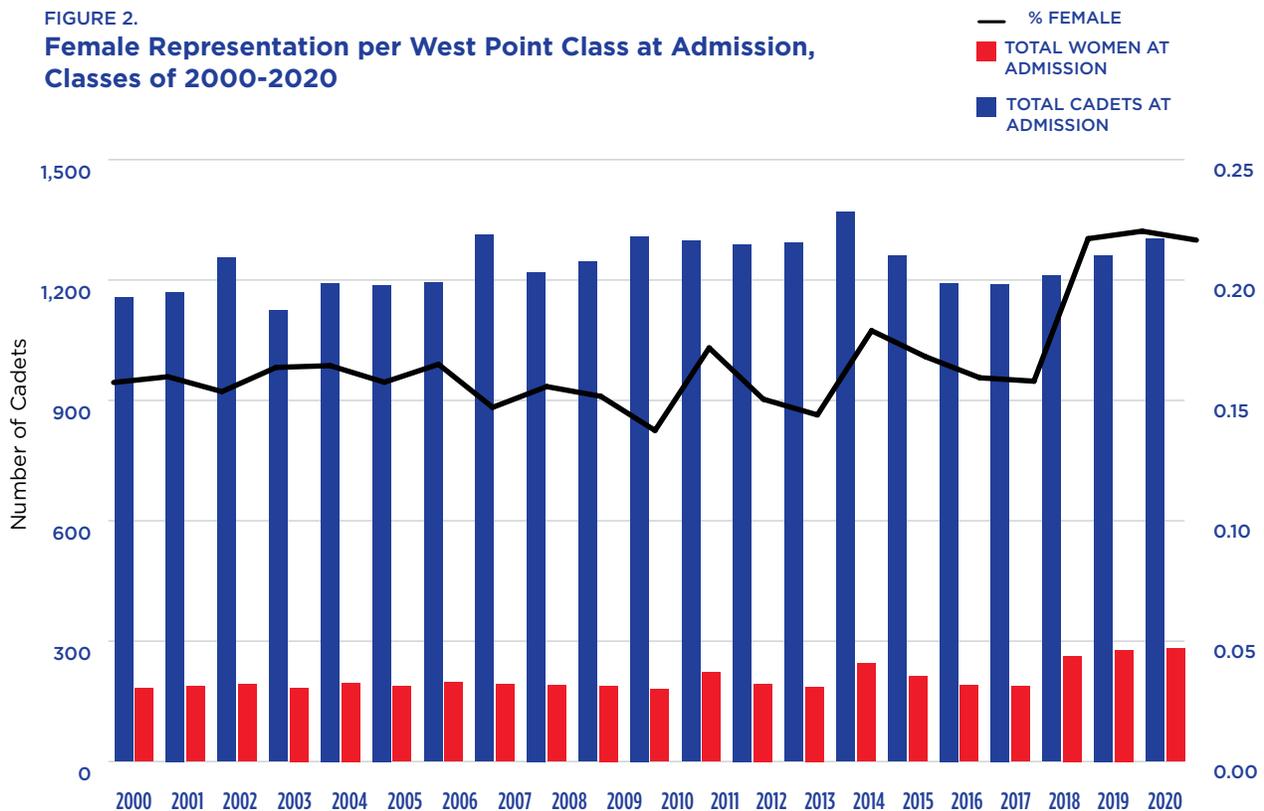
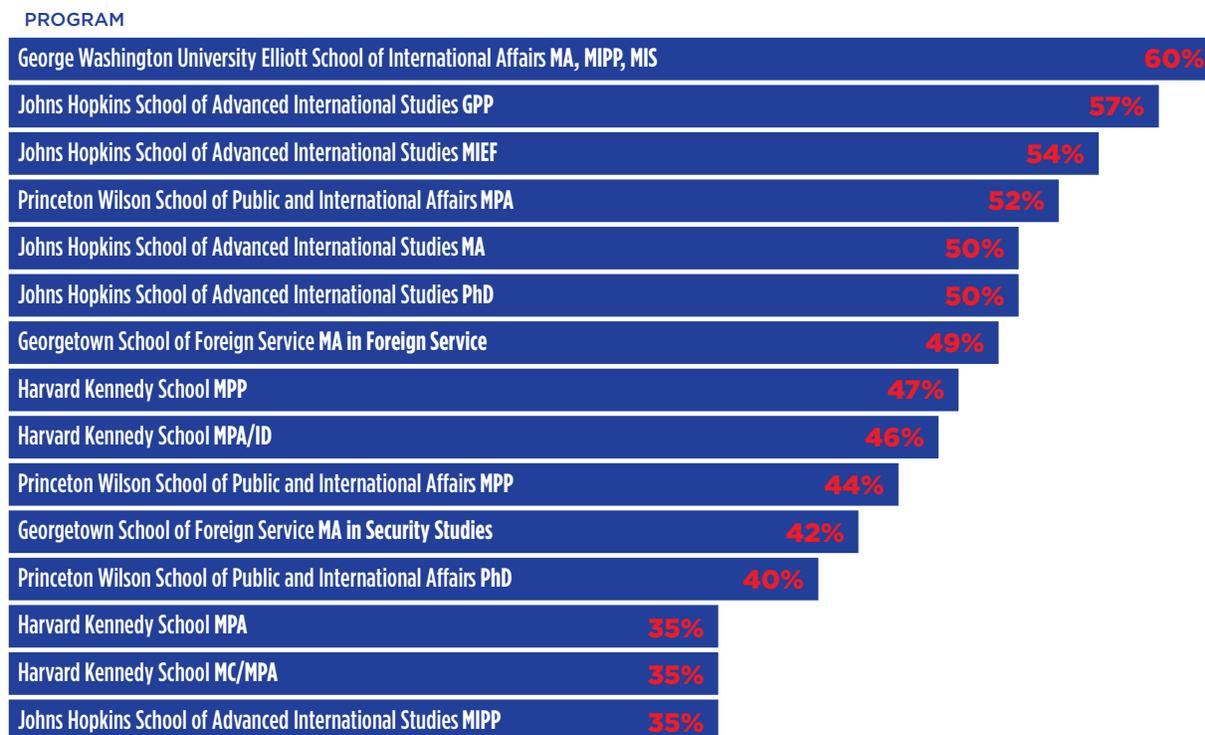


FIGURE 3.
Percent of Graduate Program Made up by Women



Sources: Johns Hopkins University, Georgetown University, George Washington University, Princeton University, and Harvard University.

B. On-ramps into Government Service

The federal government’s Pathways Programs offer college students and recent graduates from both undergraduate and graduate programs opportunities to gain experience in federal service. Internships are available to students still in school; the recent graduate program is designed for graduates within two years of degree completion; and the Presidential Management Fellows program offers opportunities for individuals with advanced degrees within two years of completion. While these pathways do not necessarily guarantee eventual government employment, they do offer several benefits. First, and particularly relevant for those in national security, these positions involve gaining a clearance, which is a prerequisite for future employment in the sector. Second, many federal jobs are only open to employees currently within the system; internships and fellowships represent an inside track. Third, those with this experience gain invaluable experience and are able to learn the cultures and norms of their selected organization, giving them a leg up in competing for future positions.

The percentage of federal appointments occupied by women through Pathways Program decreased from fiscal year (FY) 2010 to FY 2014 government-wide. Intern appointments remained fairly stable over this timeframe, with the notable exception of the Department of Homeland Security, in which female-occupied positions increased significantly from 32.4 percent to 57.8 percent. This timeframe aligns with overall cuts and hiring freezes across the government in conformance with the Budget Control Act of 2011, which limited overall opportunities, but the cuts should not have affected women disproportionately.

WHITE HOUSE FELLOWSHIPS

Although it is a particularly narrow program, the White House Fellowship program is a highly competitive opportunity for individuals in the early- to mid-level stages of their careers to enter or return to government service. Fellows are immersed in a year-long, full-time assistantship to senior White House staff, the Office of the Vice President, cabinet secretaries, and other high-level government officials.¹⁹ White House fellows include

medical doctors, attorneys, military officers, entrepreneurs, private sector professionals, and educators, among others, who bring their unique skills and backgrounds to the federal government. While offering valuable experience and insight into the process of governance, this program also opens tremendous opportunities for participants through the form of mentorship and networks. Many White House fellows return to their fields of origin, but some transition into government service.

There has been a significant increase in female representation among White House fellows between 2008 and 2016. The average representation of female fellows over the course of that timeframe is 40.9 percent, as opposed to an average of 25.5 percent between 2002 and 2008.²⁰

C. Full-Time Employment in the National Security Sector

TYPES OF JOBS

There are three broad categories of government service: political, career senior executive, and career civilian/government service. The differentiation allows for political accountability for decisions through political appointments, as well as continuity in governance through career civilian service. Perhaps the most visible positions are political appointments, which include cabinet-level, president-appointed, Senate-confirmable positions such as those of Secretary of State or Defense, Deputy Secretaries, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Deputy Assistant Secretaries; as well as senior executive appointments and more junior positions including entry-level in the C Schedule.²¹

Another category of employment is the Senior Executive Service (SES), the more “permanent” senior-level career positions. These were established by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 to “ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United

the number of women by department, it is worth noting that the DoD and the Department of Homeland Security had the first and third largest numbers of SES employees, respectively.²³

Yet another category of employment is the General Schedule (GS) System, which applies to the majority of civilians in “professional, technical, administrative, and clerical positions” throughout the federal government, totaling 1.5 million worldwide.²⁴ In the 20 years between 1992 and 2012, the proportion of men to women in the GS system shifted from 67:33 to a more equitable 55:45.²⁵ Yet with respect to supervisory roles, only 37.8 percent of GS-14 and GS-15 positions are occupied by women.²⁶ This indicates that while women’s representation throughout the GS workforce has increased, they are either leaving government service earlier than their male counterparts, or not being promoted at the same rates.

D. Women’s Representation in Departments and Agencies

Over the course of American history, women have played a role in the national security apparatus (however limited). In the post–World War II era, women’s participation grew. Changes to the overall workforce increased, as did women’s employment throughout the 1960s and 1970s, while gender dynamics changed. The entrance of women to the service academies in 1976 further expanded the roles available to women in the military, and drove a shift in culture that opened the door for their further participation in the national security community. In the post-9/11 era, with a sudden demand for a bigger national security workforce, the nature of opportunities changed. Opportunities and initiatives varied across departments and agencies, including in the CIA, State Department, NSC staff, military, and DoD civilian workforce.

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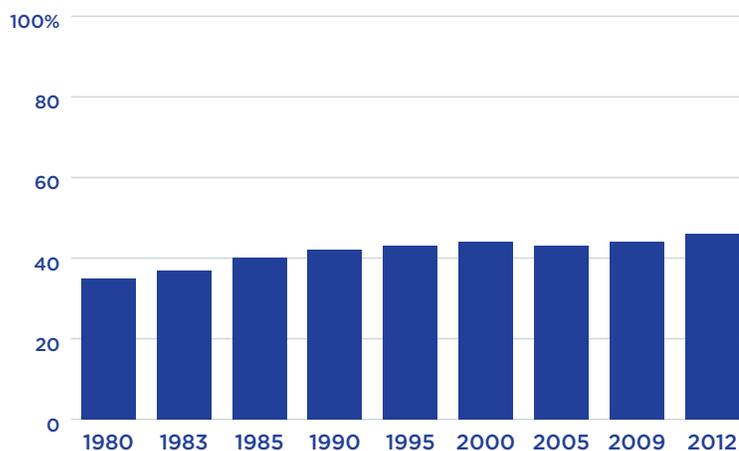
States is responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality.” These individuals serve “just below the top Presidential employees,” providing “the major link between these appointees and the rest of the Federal workforce.”²²

In September 2014, women made up 33.95 percent of the SES workforce (2,649 employees of a total 7,802). While the available data does not break down

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

During World War II, women served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in diverse roles as spies, cryptographers, and cartographers.²⁷ When the CIA replaced the OSS in 1947, women continued to participate in the new organization at a higher rate than elsewhere in the federal government, or even in the general workforce.²⁸ During the wartime period, women were supposedly

FIGURE 4.
Percentage of Female Employees, CIA, 1980-2012



Source: CIA Workforce Trends: 1980-2009

more desirable to perform code and map work,²⁹ but by the 1950s they were overwhelmingly assigned to roles such as secretarial or clerical positions.³⁰ A 1953 internal review dubbed the “Petticoat Panel” found that even though women made up 39 percent of the CIA’s workforce, they were drastically underrepresented in the professional and overseas covert branches.³¹ No woman held a pay grade higher than GS-12, while men held up to GS-15; women were also hired at an average of two grades lower than were men for identical positions.³²

Thirty years later, not much had changed. In 1983, women still accounted for 37 percent of the CIA’s staff workforce, but only 23 percent of the professional population and 85 percent of the clerical staff—figures that had remained virtually the same since 1953.³³ Only roughly 5 percent held senior GS-15 positions.³⁴ Staff employment of women remained essentially steady, but many were also hired as “contract wives” who accompanied their employee husbands on overseas tours and worked for extremely low pay in roles that were gendered in ways similar to those of the staff.³⁵

The CIA Glass Ceiling Study in 1992 reported that women remained an underutilized resource at the Agency,³⁶ but since then the proportion of women in senior levels has steadily increased. In 2012, 44 percent of GS-13 through GS-15 CIA employees were women, and they made up 31 percent of Senior Intelligence Services (SIS) officers—a higher percentage in senior executive ranks than the combined average of the other intelligence community agencies.³⁷ Improvements such as those to transparency in the vacancy, assignment, and promotion processes; increased opportunities for

employee feedback; policies intended to eliminate harassment; and training in diversity all contributed to the increase.³⁸ Further, more flexible and uniform policies on work-family balance made a career path in the intelligence community more appealing and realistic.³⁹

Women’s representation as a percentage of the workforce has grown consistently at the CIA, from 35 percent in 1980 to 46 percent in 2012 (see Figure 4).

Perhaps the CIA’s single most visible metric of success stemming from increased gender diversity is the role that female analysts played in the capture of Osama bin Laden. The remarkable focus of the team was reported to have been “influenced by a distinctly female view of security,” with a particularly aggressive view on “the protection of our children” and a perception that women saw “risks differently, longer term.”⁴⁰

STATE DEPARTMENT

The State Department has a unique structure in both foreign and civil service, as well as in how its ambassadors and senior appointees are distributed throughout the bureaucracy.

The first woman was admitted into the Foreign Service in 1922 in the Department of State, but only five more had entered by 1941, and just two of these total six remained permanently.⁴¹ Despite the fact that a woman was appointed to the chief of mission position for Denmark and Iceland as early as 1933,⁴² sexism remained common in personnel evaluations and assignments.⁴³ Indeed, until 1972 women who married while working for the service were required to resign—not by law, but because of State Department custom.⁴⁴ When they were appointed to ambassador positions, women were more likely to serve in small countries, particularly in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, and they were only infrequently appointed to positions in countries of high political or economic visibility.⁴⁵

In 1968, Foreign Service Officer Alison Palmer filed the first equal employment opportunity complaint at the Foreign Service, and in 1976 filed a separate suit against the State Department for “discrimination against women in hiring and promotion.”⁴⁶ As a result of her successes in both claims, the State Department undertook changes to its personnel practices, eliminating gender-based discrimination in evaluations, assignments, promotions, and hiring.⁴⁷ Hundreds of women who had been forced out of the service by discriminatory practices or even prevented from being hired in the first place were invited to rejoin or reapply.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, discriminatory hiring

persisted into the 1990s,⁴⁹ and although hiring and promotion of women in the Foreign Service has continued to rise, even today women remain underrepresented at senior levels.⁵⁰

Nearly 100 years after the first woman entered the Foreign Service, women hold 54 of the 169 currently occupied chief of mission positions.⁵¹ While 42 of those are career Foreign Service officers, many of the ambassadors to politically or economically significant countries such as France and Japan are political appointees.⁵²

POLITICAL APPOINTEES:**DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND DEFENSE**

Since 2001, the percentage of women in political appointee leadership roles in both the DoD and State Department has increased significantly. The DoD comprises 1 Secretary of Defense, 1 Deputy Secretary of Defense, 5 Under Secretaries of Defense, 5 Principal Deputy Under Secretaries of Defense, and 14 Assistant Secretaries of Defense. For many years women were not represented in any of these positions, but over the past 15 years, one woman has served as the acting Deputy Secretary of Defense (2013–14), and 2 women have held the position of Under Secretary of Defense (2009–12, 2014–15). Women were most greatly represented at the Assistant Secretary levels in 2011 and 2012, when 5 of the 14 positions were occupied by women.

The State Department employs 1 Secretary of State, 2 Deputy Secretaries of State, 6 Under Secretaries of State, and 26 Assistant Secretaries of State. Between 2005 and 2012, two women served as Secretary of State: Condoleezza Rice during the Bush administration; Hillary Clinton during the Obama administration. Every year between 2005 and 2015 except 2008, women represented 50 percent or more of the Under Secretary of State positions.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL STAFF

The NSC serves the president as the “main vehicle through which coordination among different U.S. government agencies on national security matters takes place.”⁵³ Statutory members of the NSC include the president, vice president, and Secretaries of State, Defense, and Energy (primarily due to Energy’s role in overseeing the nuclear arsenal). NSC staff members are drawn from various other departments and cover the full range of geographic and functional threats facing national security—including cyber security, violent extremism, weapons of mass destruction, and human rights. Staff positions on the NSC are not Senate confirmed, and many are on detail from the State Department, DoD, and

intelligence community.

Given the employment structure through the departments and agencies, it is difficult to capture data on the gender breakdown in the NSC. Through the end of the Obama Administration, 69 employees worked directly on the NSC payroll, though the size of the staff was around 400. However, notably, the senior-most position on the NSC staff, that of the National Security Advisor, has been held by women twice since 2001. Condoleezza Rice occupied the position during the George W. Bush administration between January 22, 2001, and January 25, 2005. Susan Rice occupied it between July 1, 2013, and January 20, 2017.

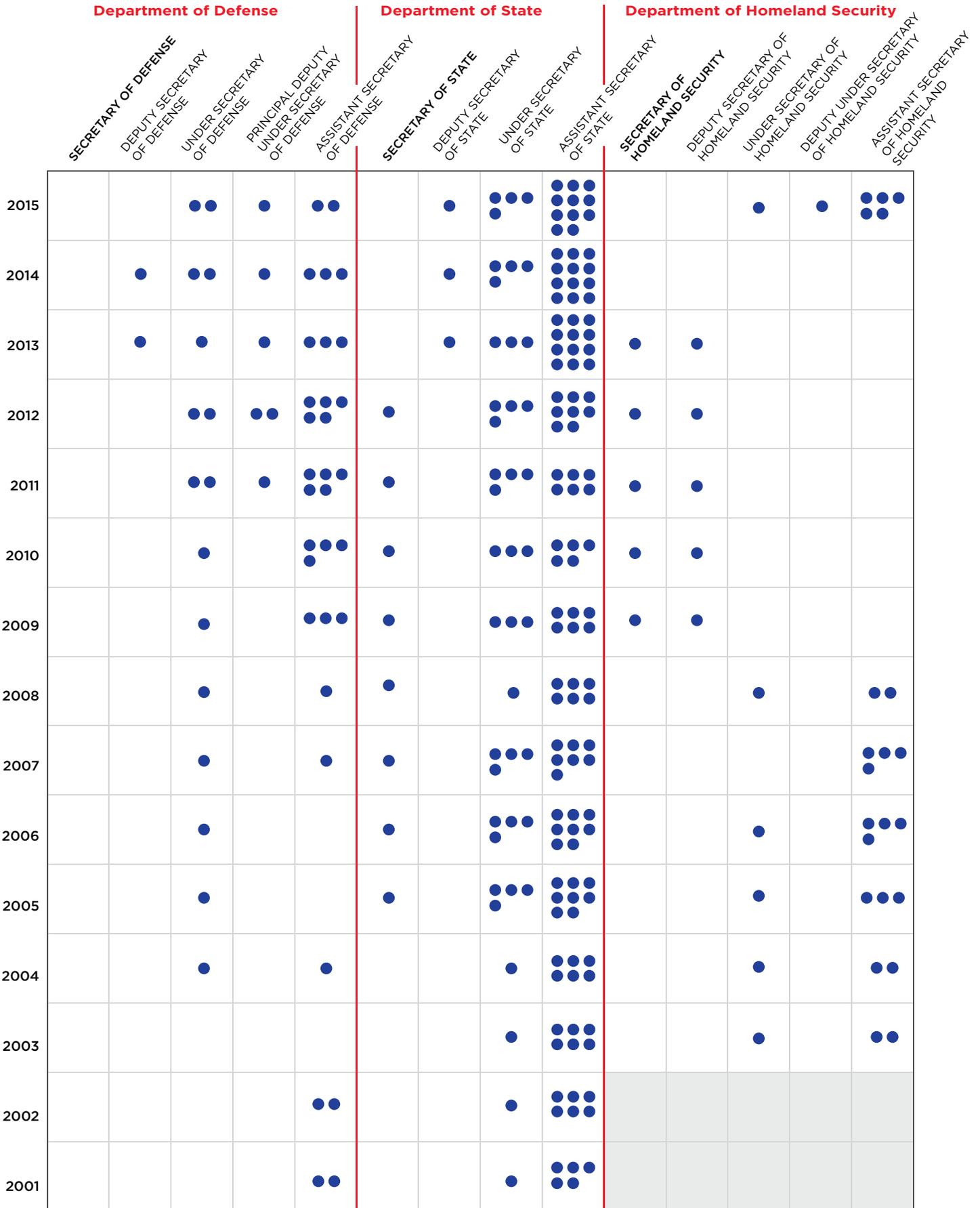
During the Obama administration, Susan Rice’s status at the helm of the NSC contributed to women’s leadership in half of the White House positions at that level.⁵⁴ In November 2016, three of the 11 members of the NSC and six of the 11 NSC deputy committee members were women. Women of prominence on the NSC included Deputy National Security Advisor Avril D. Haines, Attorney General Loretta Lynch, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Samantha Power, Principal Deputy Director of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence Stephanie O’Sullivan, Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury Sarah Bloom Raskin, Deputy Secretary of Energy Dr. Liz Sherwood-Randall, Deputy U.S. Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Michele Jeanne Sison, and Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates.

There are significant debates around limiting the size of the NSC.⁵⁵ The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act caps the size of the NSC at 200, a nearly 50 percent reduction from its size in November 2016. The limitations do not necessarily portend a downward trend in women’s rates of representation on the NSC. As the next president and National Security Advisor build out the human capital on the more narrowly scoped NSC, a thoughtful consideration of the team will be required to bring diverse perspectives to the table.

THE MILITARY

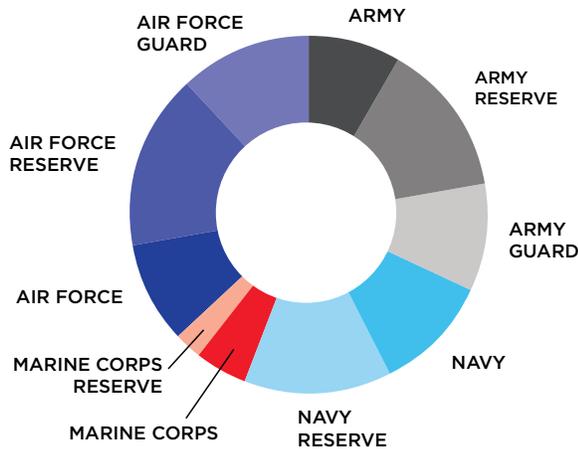
The first official participation for women in the military began with the establishment of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908.⁵⁶ Due to manpower requirements during both world wars that left open many positions traditionally occupied by men, women began to expand into non-combat service as yeomen, mechanics, and pilots.⁵⁷ After World War II, the Army-Navy Nurses Act of 1947 equalized rank and pay for women and their male counterparts,⁵⁸ and the

FIGURE 5.
**Female Political Appointees, Department of Defense, State Department,
 and Department of Homeland Security 2001-2015**



Sources: Department of Defense, State Department, and Department of Homeland Security

FIGURE 6.
**Percentage of Women in Military Services
 by Component, 2014**



1948 Women’s Armed Services Integration Act opened the door for women to serve in the regular Army during peacetime.⁵⁹ Still, it took nearly 20 years before most of the gender restrictions in the military—including caps on numbers and limits to career progression—were lifted in 1967.⁶⁰ Just three years later, Anna Mae Hays was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first female general officer in the Army.⁶¹

Although women were permitted to enter the service academies beginning in 1976,⁶² they encountered fierce resistance from Congress, the DoD, and other cadets and midshipmen.⁶³ Similar controversy surrounded the decision in 2013 to end the combat exclusion policy, which had previously barred women.⁶⁴ As of 2016, almost all positions in the military were open to women who could meet the requirements—finally recognizing the modern reality that women were already fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, regardless of whether or not they served in combat positions.⁶⁵

Despite the obstacles they have faced to participation, women currently make up 15 percent of active duty military members and almost 19 percent of reserve personnel.⁶⁶ Women account for 19 percent of the Reserve officer corps and 18.7 percent of the enlisted corps in the Reserves.⁶⁷ While women make up 15 percent of the active duty enlisted members and almost 17 percent of active duty officers,⁶⁸ they remain underrepresented at the highest ranks--as of 2013, only 69 of 976 general or flag officers were female.⁶⁹

In 2008, Ann Dunwoody became the first woman to achieve the highest grade in the military with her promotion to four-star general in the Army.⁷⁰ Since then, four more women have been promoted to the

same grade (GEN Lori Robinson, U.S. Air Force; ADM Michelle Howard, U.S. Navy; Gen Ellen Pawlikowski, U.S. Air Force; and Gen Janet Wolfenbarger, U.S. Air Force).⁷¹

With the exception of the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve, women make up a much larger percentage of the Reserve and Guard components for the services than of the active duty component. This is likely for two reasons. First, the Guard and Reserve provide more flexibility to service members, making it easier to manage work-life balance issues including parenthood. This flexibility may make military service in the Guard and Reserve more appealing as a first choice. Second, and perhaps more important, this points to the underlying issue of permeability in military careers. Unlike the situation with many other employers, once an individual

leaves active duty military service, whether for the Guard and Reserves or to transition into civilian life, it is very unlikely that the person will be able to return to active duty. Off-ramps are therefore permanent. This is a particular challenge for women as they enter motherhood, because the choice to be with their children past the period of maternity leave amounts to leaving active duty forever.

Congress authorized the Career Intermission Program (CIP) in 2009 as a pilot program intended to explore whether allowing service members to take a three-year sabbatical for the pursuit of other endeavors such as additional schooling or starting a family could aid in increasing retention. The program was initially slated to run for three years, from 2009 to 2012, but it has since been extended through 2019. The Navy began using the CIP in 2009, with the Marine Corps introducing it in 2013 and the Army and Air Force in 2014.⁷²

The program has been lauded and extended as part of Secretary Ashton Carter’s Force of the Future reforms, intended to aid in recruiting and retention of the all-volunteer force. In the first tranche of reforms, Secretary Carter called for lifting restrictions on the pilot program, citing the reluctance of service members to participate in an experimental effort and recognizing the need for congressional legislation to reform it.⁷³ Notably, less than half of the authorized CIP slots had been filled by October 2015.⁷⁴ This may indicate an unwillingness to buck traditional institutional culture, as well as a fear of long-term consequences to career advancement. Because it has been in place for only a short time, there has yet to be a robust evaluation of the CIP’s effects on long-term prospects.

III. Challenges

Candidates for jobs in the national security sector face several potential friction points over the course of their careers, from entry points through retention. While frustrating to the individual, these friction points may also be preventing the government—the various departments and agencies—from getting the best qualified candidates they need for any given position.

A. Entry Point Challenges

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWS CHALLENGES

One of the federal government's Pathways hiring programs, the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program, has faced significant difficulties in the constrained hiring environment of the past several years. Since 1977, the PMF program has placed selected graduate students and postgraduates in jobs throughout the federal government. Despite drawing from an extremely competitive pool—the program chooses only about 5 percent of applicants as finalists⁷⁵—it is often unable to find federal positions for them. In 2014, for example, only “about 48 percent” of the previous year's finalists were placed.⁷⁶ Those who do not find positions by the spring of the year following their PMF class year lose their finalist status, as well as their advantage in finding federal jobs. While the PMF program has never successfully placed all finalists, “the sequester, [2013's] government shutdown, hiring freezes and agency budget cuts” have exacerbated poor rates.⁷⁷

The difficulty of being placed—even after being selected as a finalist—may be exacerbating entry-level pathways for women into the national security establishment. Given the relatively high rates of women in national security-related graduate programs, and the pipeline that the PMF program intends to create from graduate programs into government service, the bureaucratic red tape may be eliminating women from service before they even begin their careers—particularly if other avenues, such as veteran preference, skew overwhelmingly male.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE AND GENDER DYNAMICS

The current Veterans' Preference program, as administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), aims to recognize veterans for their service by providing some advantage in federal hiring. The modern system, though owing inspiration to policies dating to the Civil War, was primarily established in the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944 and is currently codified in Title 5

of the United States Code. As administered by OPM, the program awards points—added to applicants' civil service examination scores—based on several ascending levels of veteran status.⁷⁸ Specifically, zero points are awarded (but certain preference policies apply) to veterans discharged as a result of “sole-survivorship” cases; five points are given to veterans of certain campaign periods; and ten points are awarded to veterans with service-connected disabilities, Purple Heart recipients, and spouses of certain veterans. The circumstances of each of these categories are explicitly defined in Title 5, U.S.C.⁷⁹

Despite the straightforward aim of the statute that outlines the Veterans' Preference policy, in practice critics view it as overly complex and unfair to non-veterans. Even though it is primarily governed by Title 5 of the U.S.C., many employers see Veterans' Preference as a confusing patchwork of laws and other federal hiring practices, as agencies have moved away from the points system to a category rating system that groups applicants into classes such as “best qualified.” Veterans are then promoted to the top of their assigned category.⁸⁰ Additionally, federal hiring managers and non-veterans often perceive the program as granting unfair advantages in hiring—veterans account for nearly 50 percent of federal hires⁸¹—and even elevating veterans over more qualified candidates.⁸² In an effort to make federal hiring more equitable, Congress considered proposals to limit the preference, including by allowing individuals only a single use of this eligibility.⁸³ These proposals face significant political challenges, however, from interest groups and opponents in Congress. In particular, veterans' service organizations (VSOs) strongly oppose any efforts to reduce Veterans' Preference and other benefits from their current form.⁸⁴

Veterans represented 26.3 percent of all federal employees in FY 2010, and this increased to 30.8 percent by FY 2014. Today, 46.9 percent of all DoD civilian employees are veterans, who represent the highest percentage of workers in any category within the DoD. The Department of the Air Force employs at the highest rate—56.9 percent—and Defense Activities hires the lowest rate of veterans at 35.7 percent. The three next most frequent employers of veterans are the Department of Veterans Affairs (32.9 percent), the Department of Justice (28.2 percent), and the Department of Homeland Security (27.9 percent). Veterans have lower retention rates than other employees in all federal agencies except DoD and NASA.

Females accounted for 19.9 percent of all veteran new hires in FY 2013. Because women make up a smaller proportion of service members, they also represent a

small proportion of veterans. Therefore, federal hiring practices may unintentionally skew the proportion of new hires toward men.

B. Retention Issues

Work-life balance issues—including but not limited to parenthood—have become the human capital and talent management topics du jour. The problem is certainly not limited to the national security sector. However, some challenges are unique to the national security sector and impact career path and retention outcomes.

One obstacle plaguing advancement in the national security field is the desire for work-life balance, particularly among those who may be starting families. Many of the most sought-after roles, and those that lead to the best future opportunities, come with the expectation of being constantly available. When President Obama's White House began working in 2009, as is typical in a new administration there was an expectation of significant hours, leading to some aides "trying to formalize ways to help staffers stay in touch with spouses and kids—with ideas under consideration that include inviting family members into the White House for casual after-hours meals."⁸⁵

As Julie Smith, the former Deputy National Security Advisor to the Vice President of the United States from April 2012 through June 2013 points out, the National Security Council Staff often works "upwards of 14 hours a day, 7 days a week."⁸⁶ As another former staffer notes, the 24-hour news cycle has led to 24-hour work schedules that allow little time for sleep, proper nutrition, and exercise regimens.⁸⁷ Smith argues that not only are these grueling hours typical across the national security establishment, but they undermine the ability of staffers to think strategically, let alone achieve any form of work-life balance. Travel can place significant demands on national security positions as well; Condoleezza Rice, Madeleine Albright, and Hillary Clinton, as Secretary of State, all spent more than 300 days engaged in diplomacy overseas,⁸⁸ which was accompanied by significant travel and preparation on the parts of their staffs as well.

The annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey found falling morale at both the DoD and Department of Homeland Security in 2014, with declines in trust, job satisfaction, and organizational satisfaction.⁸⁹ In departments where hiring has been difficult and the 2013 government shutdown forced many home without pay for several weeks, the frustration with being over-worked may have translated into low morale.

Maintaining such rigorous and unpredictable schedules puts health and relationships under stress, leaving little time for anything other than work. In recent years, several high-profile women in both the DoD and State Department have resigned, citing the requirements of family. Former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Flournoy left in 2012 to spend more time with her three school-aged children, with *The New York Times* noting that her schedule had been 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. weekdays and often weekends, and that she said the job had been taking a "toll on her family."⁹⁰ Similarly, in 2014 Ms. Flournoy took herself out of contention for the role of Secretary of Defense, citing "family considerations" that made it the wrong time to reenter government service.⁹¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, who served as the Director of Policy Planning under Secretary Clinton's State Department, decided to leave due to family considerations. Her account was most prominently highlighted in her *Atlantic* essay "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," in which she noted "how unexpectedly hard it was to do the kind of job I wanted to do as a high government official and be the kind of parent I wanted to be, at a demanding time for my children."⁹² The incredible demands placed on those in national security roles often seem to force an either/or decision about having a family, particularly if a woman feels the desire or pressure to be the lead parent.

RETENTION ISSUES IN THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

According to exit surveys conducted by the OPM, many of those in the SES who leave do so for a combination of reasons, not the least of which is greater pay. However, the survey indicated several non-monetary tools as key drivers that could increase retention, including verbal reinforcement of an individual's contributions to the organization; awards for service; and greater work-life balance. Some SES employees retire after their service, but 49 percent of those who leave the SES plan on working in the future, and 59 percent indicate that they expect to be working for increased pay. Of the "stay-factor themes" that emerged in the survey, the three most prominent were a desire for greater work-life balance, better pay and benefits, and an increase in authority and support.⁹³ Of those who choose to leave, 38 percent cite their "desire to enjoy life without work commitments" in addition to other work-related issues such as the political environment, organizational culture, and senior leadership.⁹⁴ These cultural levers indicate several methods by which retention could be improved, but national security careers represent a particular challenge in both changing organizational culture and providing competitive wages

by comparison with private-sector opportunities in consulting or defense contracting.

The work-life balance themes highlight the challenges facing those who may be in high-stress leadership positions with grueling hours; 30 percent cite job stress as having influenced—to a great or very great extent—their decision to leave.⁹⁵ However, a similar number cited a more attractive job offer elsewhere as affecting their decision to a great or very great extent. Of those surveyed, 84 percent were rated as “outstanding” or “exceeds fully successful” on their final performance evaluation, indicating that those leaving include very strong performers. Ten percent of respondents were from the DoD, and two percent were from the Department of State; the broader themes of the SES survey can be expected to apply throughout the national security agencies.

Particularly given the mix of SES who work with political appointees, the survey results about the importance of political environment are worth noting. Additionally, although this problem is not unique to SES employees, those who work with classified material do not have the flexibility to work outside the office, creating additional hurdles to work-life balance in the national security establishment.

C. Financial Competition with the Private Sector

Many women employed in the national security sector earn high salaries by comparison with those of their non-government counterparts in other sectors: \$86,365 on average,⁹⁶ whereas the national average American income is \$28,385.⁹⁷ However, the opportunity costs for many government employees are high, particularly political appointees, given their levels of education, experience, and leadership credentialing. The national security community competes for top talent with the high end of the private sector.

The Executive Schedule (5 U.S.C. §§ 5311-5318) sets forth the income of cabinet officials in the U.S. government at three levels (see Table 1).

By comparison, CEOs of private corporations have significantly higher compensation while employing

similar skills. Even though the incomes listed above are significantly higher than the national averages, they may not align with executive pay for large organizations. In 2014, average CEO compensation for large firms was \$16.3 million.⁹⁸

These are not easy apples-to-apples comparisons. To be clear, many of those who enter government service, whether through the SES, GS, or political appointee systems, see it precisely as that: service. Additionally, stewardship of tax dollars is a priority in setting maximum salaries. But implications do exist for building the national security human capital pipeline, and the national security sector must be aware of these while formulating non-monetary compensation and workforce management. First, caps at the top imply a proportionate impact on salaries down the rest of the chain of command; agencies and departments are therefore competing for talent all the way down the chain. Second, and related, the national security sector is not necessarily competing for average talent with average performers; it is competing with the private sector for top talent. Therefore, departments and agencies must maximize their comparative advantage, which is a compelling mission and a sense of service.

TABLE 1:
Executive Schedule Salaries for Cabinet Officials

LEVEL	POSITIONS	BASE PAY
I	Secretary of State Secretary of Defense Secretary of Homeland Security	\$205,700
II	Deputy Secretary of Defense Secretary of the Army Secretary of the Navy Deputy Secretary of State Administrator, USAID	\$185,100
III	Under Secretaries of Defense Under Secretaries of State	\$170,400

IV. Current Initiatives

While challenges remain in hiring and retaining women, during the past five years several directives, initiatives, and policy changes have come from the president, departments and agencies, and the military services to increase diversity and inclusion. The efforts are not purely motivated by a sense of equality, but rather directed at increasing overall government effectiveness. Such initiatives have been met with pushback by some who label them as “social experimentation,” but they create an opportunity to generate data on the impact of a more diverse national security workforce.

A. Presidential Directives

On August 18, 2011, President Obama signed executive order 13583, “Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce,”⁹⁹ with the aim of using diverse experiences and talents to overcome the greatest challenges facing the United States and set an example for other employers. This executive order further clarifies 5 U.S.C. 3201 (b)(1), which sets a legal standard for federal recruitment policies to “endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society.” In this context, diversity encompasses myriad categories, including in both gender and family structures.¹⁰⁰ One of the areas targeted by the strategic plan is future workforce planning, using more accurate projections to ensure that the pipelines for future needs are sufficiently diverse, as well as looking at predicted attrition and promotion.

In October 2016, President Obama announced a new initiative promoting diversity and inclusion with a focus on the national security workforce.¹⁰¹ The memo included data collected on the 3 million employees across departments and agencies engaging in the elements of national security, including defense and diplomacy. It revealed that “agencies in this workforce are less diverse on average than the rest of the federal government.” Across the national security apparatus, department and agency leadership reinforced the initiative. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter highlighted the need for diversity as a competitive advantage, Secretary of State John Kerry emphasized the diplomatic asset of a diverse workforce, and CIA Director John Brennan reiterated the intelligence advantage of including broad perspectives and a diversity of thought.¹⁰²

The 2016 updated plan focuses on expanding the data-driven approach, taking advantage of information collected by the federal government in previous

recruiting cycles to identify gaps in recruitment and patterns of retention and promotion, thereby further targeting areas for improved diversity.¹⁰³ Lessons learned from the 2011 approach are incorporated, such as the lack or urgency of measurement mechanisms for many efforts, as well as the role of implicit biases that affect various parts of the employee life cycle.¹⁰⁴

B. Department and Agency Policies and Initiatives

STATE DEPARTMENT DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

The State Department uses a Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan to further work toward an organization that “reflects the rich composition of its citizenry.”¹⁰⁵ This strategic plan is currently in the process of being updated to reflect the renewed OPM guidance from the summer of 2016. The State Department offers fellowships and internships that are specifically geared toward increasing levels of diversity. It also relies on a Diplomat in Residence program that provides community outreach through universities and civic organizations, as well as an advertising campaign with the slogan “I Am Diplomacy, I Am America.” According to 2011–14 Workforce Diversity statistics, women have yet to reach gender parity across the department, as women represent 44 percent of the Foreign Service and Civil Service workforce and 32 percent of the SES and Senior Foreign Service, many of these initiatives appear to be largely aimed at increasing racial diversity.

CIA DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

The CIA has recently released a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy spanning 2016–19, listing three key goals: “Weaving Diversity and Inclusion throughout the Talent Cycle, Becoming an Employer of Choice, and Increasing Diversity of Leadership.”¹⁰⁶ Aside from promoting diversity throughout the CIA employee life cycle, these new initiatives aim to develop metrics to evaluate the progression of new policies aimed at fostering an inclusive environment. Much of the CIA’s focus on these areas is thought to be influenced by the 2012 Director’s Advisory Group on Women in Leadership, led by Secretary Albright. The report noted that despite the lack of a magic fix for the gaps in gender diversity, proactive steps can be taken; toward this goal, ten recommendations were issued:

- establish clear promotion criteria from GS-15 to SIS
- expand the pool of nominees for promotion to SIS
- provide relevant demographic data to panels

- establish an equity assurance representative role on panels
- reduce and streamline career development tools
- create an on-ramping program
- provide actionable and timely feedback to all employees
- develop future leaders
- unlock talent through workplace flexibility
- promote sponsorship.¹⁰⁷

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE: FORCE OF THE FUTURE INITIATIVES

Beginning in 2015, the DoD rolled out several policy changes and legislative recommendations focused on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce with critical skills. The new human capital strategy, titled the Force of the Future initiatives, attempts to address hiring and retention problems for both the civilian and military workforces within the DoD.

DoD Civilians

The third tranche of Force of the Future initiatives included extensive proposed reforms for the civilian workforce, including providing six weeks of paid parental leave upon the birth or adoption of a child.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, a second initiative allows for civilian employees to choose to work part time for up to a year after birth, adoption, or foster parenthood to allow for “phasing in” their return to full-time employment.¹⁰⁹ In the context of Force of the Future reforms, the civilian workforce has received considerably less focus than have service members.

Uniformed Service Members

As Secretary Mabus recently highlighted, the military loses twice as many women between years 6 and 12 of service, often because they have been forced to choose between service and family.¹¹⁰ Force of the Future initiatives seek to mitigate or eliminate many of the barriers leading to a lower retention rate of women in the armed forces. Within the first tranche of reforms, Secretary Carter advocates for congressional action to increase the size of the Career Intermision Program, allowing service members who so desire to take “a sabbatical from military service” for several years for any number of reasons, including starting a family.¹¹¹

The second tranche of reforms focused more broadly on “improving the quality of life of military parents,” acknowledging that the stresses placed on families is

a key factor in the decision to separate from service.¹¹² This tranche included the adoption of 12-week paid maternity leave across the services (which reduced the 18-week leave previously offered by the Navy), as well as expanding paternity leave to 14 days. In the case of adoption, although three weeks of leave is currently offered to one parent, in the case of dual-military marriages congressional approval for an additional two weeks for the second parent is being pursued. The DoD will also pilot a program for the freezing of sperm and eggs for active duty service members. The department has set a requirement that “Mothers’ Rooms” must be established at all facilities with more than 50 women regularly assigned.

To further aid military families, the DoD will be extending the hours of Childcare Development Centers (CDCs), so that at a minimum they are open 14 hours a day to provide further support and accommodate the schedules of service members. Acknowledging the fact that CDCs are often so popular that not all families who need additional childcare are able to use them, the DoD will also study long-term options for additional supplementary childcare. Finally, the department will pursue an amendment to Title X to allow for Permanent Change of Station to be deferred in cases where it is deemed to be “in the best interests of the family,” such as when a family member is completing an educational program. This particular benefit would incur an additional service obligation when exercised.

MILITARY SERVICES

Beyond the DoD-led Force of the Future reforms, the Navy and Air Force have developed their own internal policies that present more assertive measures to recruit and retain women. The Navy’s Chief of Personnel from August 2013 to May 2016, VADM Bill Moran, led the charge to modernize the Navy’s personnel system, while the Secretary of the Air Force from December 2013 through the end of the Obama administration, Deborah Lee James, made diversity issues a key component of her policy legacy.¹¹³

Navy Initiatives

VADM Moran assumed the role of Chief of Naval Personnel in 2013 and focused on pioneering reforms to the service’s personnel system, focusing primarily on trying to reconcile the Soviet-style system with the expectations and flexibility sought by younger service members. His first initiative consisted of continuing a pilot sabbatical program to take time off, and his second focused on creating on- and off- ramps to service

between the active and reserve forces.¹¹⁴ In 2014, VADM Moran discussed milestone-based advancement, sabbaticals, and a more decentralized approach to training. These reforms have been largely echoed in the department-wide Force of the Future efforts.¹¹⁵

Since VADM Robert P. Burke became Chief of Naval Personnel, the Navy has announced “Sailor 2025” and personnel system modernization, referring to the program as “a living, breathing, evolving set of initiatives aimed at modernizing our entire approach to personnel programs—everything from how we manage assignments, promotions and pays to how we train our sailors and make our sailors more resilient throughout life.”¹¹⁶ In an interview upon assuming his position, VADM Burke noted “it’s about making it more and more possible to have a family and have a career; do all the things that people want to do in life while staying Navy.”¹¹⁷

Air Force Initiatives

Over the past two years, the Air Force has rolled out two separate tranches of diversity reforms, first in March 2015 and then most recently in October 2016. The 2015 Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives encompass a wide range of areas, with several projects of key interest for this report. First, the Air Force aims to increase its female officer applicant pool from 25 to 30 percent. Second, the service is altering its Post-Pregnancy Deployment Deferral to extend it from six months to one year, aiming to retain those who may be leaving due to the strain on their new family. More broadly, several ideas attempt to address obstacles to promotion and advancement. These include further requirements for Development Team Boards and updates to Promotion Board Memorandums of Instruction, in order to better value personnel who “have demonstrated that they will nurture and lead in a diverse and inclusive Air Force culture.”¹¹⁸

The 2016 Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives built on the 2015 reforms and aim to leverage data to further the Air Force’s goals in these areas. The reforms include encouraging females to serve in historically underrepresented career fields within the service, particularly those that have a tendency to lead to further Air Force leadership positions, such as aviation and space and missile operations.¹¹⁹ The Air Force is also modifying the current policy that allows female service members to exit their service commitment before the birth of a child. Now they will be granted up to a year after birth to decide, which will allow women the time to explore how they might be able to balance service and motherhood.

V. Lessons from the Private Sector

The national security sector, like all government service, does not always lend itself to practices found in the private sector. However, as the competition for talent increases, employers throughout national security would be well served to examine potential options that may translate in the public sector.

Several private sector industries are known for schedules similarly grueling to those in national security, such as tech startups, law firms, and consulting firms. Recently even these industries have faced pushback against the unrelenting pace, with law firms losing talent to newly founded companies that emphasize flexibility and a greater work-life balance, for example by allowing some hours to be worked from home.¹²⁰ Some of the most successful CEOs work 80-hour weeks, but they use mitigation strategies such as specifically scheduling time to not work and prioritizing family events. However, the experience of top executives may not necessarily reflect the realities of those who work at lower levels in demanding industries, nor the constraints imposed by the sensitive nature of work in the national security sector.

Additionally, as expectations shift in the private sector, initiatives such as paid paternity leave have taken root, particularly in tech companies such as Facebook, Netflix, and Microsoft.¹²¹ Secretary Carter’s Force of the Future reforms have attempted to institutionalize paid parental leave for DoD civilians, as well as standardizing 12 weeks of maternity leave across the uniformed services.

The practice of job sharing, in which two people work part time to fill one full-time position, may provide a unique opportunity for retention of national security experts facing work-life balance challenges. Though still uncommon in the private sector,¹²² the OPM advocates part-time work and job sharing as a means of providing a “family-friendly workplace,” with the Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Act in place to authorize such arrangements since 1978.¹²³ Job sharing also offers the possibility of retaining experienced workers who seek more time to care for a family member, pursue another degree, or seek other opportunities. Such arrangements may prove more difficult in the national security field due to the sensitive nature of much of the work and the unpredictability of crises.

Whether this arrangement is cost-efficient for a company can vary according to how its head count and employment policies function. Companies that provide full benefits to both part-time workers will face higher costs, while those that negotiate partial or minimal

benefits may find that the arrangement provides overall savings, particularly if the job-sharing provides two types of expertise. Currently the federal government job-sharing arrangement pro-rates benefits per the number of hours worked by each employee.¹²⁴

One added cost for job sharing within the national security sector could be the need for multiple clearances for one role. However, in particularly demanding offices, this type of arrangement may prove prudent over the long term, because of its retention benefits. Particularly in a high-burnout field such as national security, maintaining continuity via job sharing may be helpful or a prudent way to transition a portfolio. Case studies have shown that employee satisfaction and retention increase when job sharing is implemented, and in consumer industries, customer satisfaction often increases as well.¹²⁵ Job sharing could also provide the opportunity to match someone with a functional specialty to another person with a regional specialty, thus gaining more subject matter expertise in a particular role.

In the national security field, it may be difficult to find two qualified people for particular roles, and with many job functions built on relationships, sharing a position may lead to confusion and difficulty in building productive working relationships across the interagency. Similarly, this is a field with constantly changing circumstances that often require in-person briefings that only occur once, making it difficult for a job-sharing arrangement to be executed. Because of these considerations, it is not available in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, CIA, or National Security Agency.¹²⁶ Another factor is the number of hours worked in this sector. Depending on the available resources, job sharing may mean that two federal employees work up to 32 hours each per week. However, in many of the most high-demand national security roles, one person may work 70 or 80 hours a week, which would not be covered by a time-sharing arrangement.

VI. Recommendations

1. Frame the issue of women’s representation in the national security sector, and diversity initiatives writ large, around measurable impacts on effectiveness.

Recognizing that many in leadership positions are men, frame the issue of women’s inclusion and representation in ways that draw men into the conversation rather than establishing barriers. Such framing also serves women in leadership positions, as they frequently face the challenge of being perceived as “social justice warriors” when they raise issues of diversity and inclusion. Gender equality may be achieved through the initiatives discussed here, but that is not necessarily the goal. The goal is to build the most effective workforce, and to get there, we need more women. Indeed, reframing the discussion beyond “diversity initiatives” and into talent management and workforce optimization expands the aperture and may allow for more engagement by male employees and leadership in a way that draws them in and allows for more lasting change.

2. Don’t exclude men from the conversation. As noted above, the creation of policies that enable more women to succeed in the national security sector does not mean that the sector amounts to a zero-sum game in which women can only succeed at the expense of men. In fact, such policies should increase the quality of life—as well as the quality of employees—for everyone.

3. Collect more—and better—data on individual, team, and department/agency performance. To make the case that diverse teams have a measurable impact on outcomes and effectiveness, there is a requirement that data be collected. Departments should collect better information on individual, team, and department performance. Who are the top individual performers, and what are their retention levels? How do the outcomes of diverse teams compete with the outcomes of more male teams over time?

Additionally, while the pace of politically appointed positions is known to be grueling, there is little hard data available on how political appointees spend their time. In order to allow candidates to make informed decisions, specific and realistic data would be useful. A model exists in the business world through the London School of Economics Executive Time Use survey, which tracks the ways in which CEOs use their time.

4. Rethink mentorship relationships. Women interviewed during the course of this study indicated

frustration with automatically being assigned female mentors in their organizations. With respect to career paths, they articulated that they would much rather be guided by the best person in their office or field, regardless of gender. However, when it came to questions of work-life balance, particularly those regarding the timing of having children within a career path, women did have a strong preference for female mentors. While formal mentoring networks can provide significant positive reinforcements for retention, all factors should be considered—not just gender.

VII. Conclusion

Women have made significant progress in the national security sector, particularly in the post-9/11 era. However, significant work remains to be done to see a more diverse set of leaders throughout the departments and agencies that develop and execute U.S. national security policy.

The start of a new administration presents an opportunity to set the tone for the future of the national security workforce. As the president builds and maintains his new team, he should take great care to represent a diversity of expertise and experience in order to deliver the critical security the nation has entrusted to him. He should further build on the programs and initiatives developed since 9/11 under both the Bush and Obama administrations to attract and retain the most highly qualified individuals and continue to structure a system that works for both national security demands and the needs of individual employees and their families.

Endnotes

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