

OUTSOURCING OF WAR IN THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE (285 TO 476 A.D.)  
AND APPLICABILITY TO CURRENT U.S. MILITARY IN AFGHANISTAN

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
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by

ERIC L. SUITS, MAJOR, USAF  
B.S., Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky, 2003  
MBA, Trident University, Cypress, California, 2008

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
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Name of Candidate: Major Eric L. Suits

Thesis Title: Outsourcing of War in the Western Roman Empire (285 to 476 A.D.) and  
Applicability to Current U.S. Military in Afghanistan

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chair  
John D. Hosler, Ph.D., FRHistS

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Mark M. Hull, Ph.D., J.D., FRHistS

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Paul G. Schlimm, MMAS

Accepted this 15th day of June 2018 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

OUTSOURCING OF WAR IN THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE (285 TO 476 A.D.) AND APPLICABILITY TO CURRENT U.S. MILITARY IN AFGHANISTAN, by Major Eric L. Suits, 73 pages.

This thesis examines military outsourcing effects on U.S. policy, and what is driving this strategy. A relevant historical parallel exists between America's situation and that of ancient Rome. The Western Roman Empire's (285 to 476 A.D.) use of outsourcing to supplement its military, in conjunction with the factors that forced the necessity of outsourcing, exacerbated the reasons behind Rome's eventual downfall. The Empire's vast size and the population's increased disconnect with the military resulted in the use of non-citizens. This created challenges for Rome that it ultimately would not be able to overcome. The U.S. should examine the mistakes made in the Roman Empire and avoid taking a similar path.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The United States (U.S.) outsourced military functions during Operation Enduring Freedom with mixed results. Uniformed personnel worked side-by-side with contractor personnel performing an array of warfighting tasks. In many instances, private contractors outnumbered U.S. and allied troops at Forward Operating Bases throughout the theater and performed functions that were once explicitly military. Although this seems to be a military-specific issue, this paper will investigate the effects on the U.S., what is ultimately driving this strategy, and what lessons learned can be gleaned from a previous global power that also instituted military outsourcing. Although the Roman and U.S. Military outsourcing strategies are not an exact parallel—contractors and barbarians had different roles and responsibilities—there are important military, political, and economic lessons to be learned from the Western Roman Empire. This paper will focus on the conditions that existed in the U.S. and Rome that necessitated the need for these two global powers to employ outsourcing to extend their operational reach. The militaries of both states were stretched thin across multiple fronts, were committed to a disproportionate number of tasks, and were limited by political, social, and economic issues. As such, outsourcing became a viable option for the U.S. and Rome and played a key role in their militaries.

A relevant historical parallel exists between America's situation and that of ancient Rome. The Western Roman Empire's (285 to 476 A.D.) use of outsourcing to supplement its military, in conjunction with the factors that forced the necessity of this strategy, exacerbated the reasons behind the Western Empire's eventual downfall.



Rome's vast size, financial troubles, and the population's increased disconnect with the military resulted in the use of barbarians to augment the army. In this paper, barbarians will be a term used to describe non-Roman peoples or tribes (friendly and non-friendly) living in and around the Western Roman Empire, to include the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Germans, Huns, Vandals, Alans, and Burgundians. The term outsourcing in this paper will be used to describe the purpose of obtaining military functions or services from non-military entities.

Outsourcing created challenges for Rome that it ultimately failed to overcome. Many times, the military units staffed and led by these barbarians performed admirably and pushed back invasion attempts by non-friendly tribes. However, their foothold within the military and government opened up opportunities for a takeover of Rome as the empire spiraled down a path of growing weakness. The U.S. should analyze the political, economic, and military mistakes made in the Western Roman Empire, the reasoning for the Roman Government to rely so heavily on non-citizens in their army, and avoid taking an analogous path.

#### Primary Research Question

Is the U.S. on a similar course as to what befell the mighty Western Roman Empire? It is not hard to find parallels between the two powers. This paper will compare and contrast the military outsourcing strategies of the late Western Roman Empire to the U.S. experience in Afghanistan. While the comparison is not an exact match—the situations and employment of outsourcing are different—America can glean significant takeaways from the Roman experience. Most importantly, the Romans and the U.S.

turned to military outsourcing for similar reasons that include extending operational reach and saving money.

Although Afghanistan is the focus of this examination with military outsourcing, the principles are applicable throughout other parts of the world where the U.S. deploys troops (Iraq, Africa, Syria, etc.). Outsourcing affords the U.S. Government many advantages, including cost reduction, access to talent and expertise unavailable in the military ranks, increased flexibility, and reduction in formal troop counts. Moreover, contractor statistics are not officially disclosed while deployed to foreign areas or when deaths occur. This is significant, as the U.S. can reduce troop numbers, while continuing to conduct the mission at-hand and extend its operational reach.

Conversely, there are also negatives associated with employing contractors for military purposes. Contractors are ultimately motivated by profit, may lack important training and oversight, are typically not covered by status of forces agreements, and normally do not train hand-in-hand with their military counterparts prior to arriving in theater. The U.S. has depended heavily on contractors to perform functions from cooking and serving food to executing armed security tasks. However, there are fundamental issues to analyze as to why the U.S. is relying upon outsourcing to help fight its wars instead of depending solely on its men and women in uniform.

Military outsourcing dates back centuries and was employed extensively in the late Western Roman Empire. In its early years, the empire dealt with hostilities close to its borders but quickly moved to more distant wars as it began to stretch its growing muscles amid a quest for territory, riches, and domination. As Rome became wealthier and more powerful, complacency and comfort took center stage and the motivation for

growth and war was replaced with a desire for peace. What was once an ambitious and motivated people became a population content with the status quo:<sup>1</sup>

From its infancy to the end of its childhood, a period comprising some three hundred years, the Roman people were engaged in wars close to its walls; next, in its adolescence, after various grievous struggles, it penetrated beyond the Alps and the sea; in its early and its mature manhood it won laurels of victory in every part of the great globe; finally, when it was verging on old age and owed its occasional victories only to its reputation, it gave itself over to a more peaceful way of life.<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently, the Roman Empire needed to transition its military due to its stretched borders, ongoing attacks and invasions on the frontiers, the increasing cost of sustaining a professional citizen military, and an overly bureaucratic government. These political, economic, and military factors also resonate with the situation in the U.S. Outsourcing its military was not the sole reason the Roman Empire eventually fell, but it did exacerbate growing weaknesses. The U.S. should be mindful of its experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, ed., and trans. Walter Hamilton and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Penguin Group, 1956), 14.6.3-6.9, 46-49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.6.3, 46.

## CHAPTER 2

### OUTSOURCING OF ROMAN MILITARY

#### Introduction

In order to scrutinize the conditions of the U.S. and Rome that led to the dependence on outsourcing, we need to first examine how Rome became dependent upon barbarians over the course of three centuries. The Roman Army, from 285 to 476 A.D., transitioned from what had made it a world power, a professional citizen army, to relying heavily on non-citizens to fill the ranks. This was in large part due to the empire's political, economic, and military state. The military was charged by fighting ongoing civil wars while invasions on the empire's frontiers increased steadily. The Roman Government recognized the army needed to expand to offset the growing requirements facing the empire but could no longer afford the mounting costs of recruiting and fielding citizen soldiers. The solution was to turn to outsourcing for frontier defense while the citizen army moved internally to protect the cities. The barbarian tribes recognized this opportunity and assumed a growing role in the Roman Army and throughout the empire.

Many believe the Roman Empire fell sometime during the fifth century—which is accurate considering the Western Empire only—but the Eastern Empire lived on for another thousand years.<sup>3</sup> A.H.M. Jones, considered to be the modern day expert on the later Roman Empire, contends in his book *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, the Western Empire would have survived longer had the split into East and West never

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<sup>3</sup> John L. Teall and Donald Nicol, "Byzantine Empire," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 8, 2018, accessed March 5, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Byzantine-Empire>.

occurred; a united empire may have withstood destruction from the barbarians in the west.<sup>4</sup> His book was crucial in the research for this paper as he focuses on the social, economic, legal, and administrative makeup of Rome as well as the organization, recruitment, and conditions of service in the army. He provides an overview of many crucial aspects of Rome during this timeframe—especially economics—and discusses how the organization and recruitment of the empire’s military factored in its demise.

Others contend that the east did not want a united empire for fear of a western takeover and were happy to see the barbarians gain a larger foothold in the west.<sup>5</sup> While historians disagree on what exactly caused the fall of the Western Empire, most believe it was due to a combination of political weaknesses, economic downturn, and military decline.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, pagans blamed Christianity for the fall, while the Christians blamed sin and the empire’s immorality.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the empire had been slowly eroding for years due to ongoing civil wars.<sup>8</sup> Rome’s financial difficulties continued to mount and it simply could no longer afford to feed and clothe a citizen army.<sup>9</sup> In order to supplement

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<sup>4</sup> A. H. M Jones. *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 2:1026.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 385.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 2:1026.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1025-6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1033.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:200-1.

the army and muster a fighting force capable of resisting invasions, Rome progressively began to rely on non-citizen recruits, who for the most part were competent fighters.<sup>10</sup>

Alaric, king of the Visigoths, took advantage of the Roman situation in 410 and sacked the city of Rome. This meant the Western Empire's pride and joy, Rome, had fallen and the reverberations were felt throughout the empire and the world. The Western Empire proceeded down a path of subdivisions among various tribes who followed Alaric's effective example.<sup>11</sup>

### Roman Recruiting Issues

The Roman Empire is historically known for fielding a powerful and successful army for most of its existence. To man such an army, Rome was heavily reliant on recruits from within itself—Roman citizens. These soldiers were obtained for centuries via landowner taxes or volunteers. However, as the empire expanded and economic problems intervened, Rome had trouble raising the necessary number of recruits to meet all of its military requirements.

Ammianus Marcellinus provided a first-hand account of the Roman Army during the later empire. Marcellinus was a prodigious Roman historian and covered a crucial part of the Empire's decline. He moved within some of Rome's highest political circles and provides valuable insight. Additionally, he had served as an army officer and is a useful primary source for the inner-workings of the army, in the fourth century.

The military system was where possible kept separate from the civil. Troops fell into three main types: the emperor's household or palatine troops; the field armies

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<sup>10</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 2:196.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1025-6.

(*comitatenses*) and the frontier troops (*limitanei*). The senior command was provided by the masters of infantry and cavalry (*magistri peditum* or *equitum*) of whom a number were distributed round the prefectures; the division of function between horse and foot was notional, and might be combined in a master of troops (*magister militum* or *armorum*). Next to them ranked the counts (*comites*). At a provincial level, frontier troops were under commanders (*duces*). Junior ranks included tribunes (*tribuni*). Staff-officers for the high command were supplied by detaching protectors *dometrici* from the court. A quasi-military group was that of the security agents (*agentes in rebus*).<sup>12</sup>

This chain of command structure is not unlike that of the U.S. Army today with senior leaders largely rising out of the combat arms branches.

J.B. Bury's book, *History of the Later Roman Empire—From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian*, is another respected modern work on the later Roman Empire (395 to 565 A.D.) and provides a great deal of information regarding the Roman Army as well as its politics and culture, and discusses Rome's struggles with managing such a large empire. Bury states the Roman Army strength in 428 is believed to have been over 600,000 soldiers, with most of them residing in the west.<sup>13</sup>

*The Codex of Justinian*, documented Roman law set in place by the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century and detailed how members of the military were to be used. Among many other regulations, it specified the empire must ensure its troops were only utilized for public good, not profit.<sup>14</sup> The basis for U.S. law today can be traced back to *The Codex of Justinian* along with *The Theodosian Code*. Similarly, U.S. law

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<sup>12</sup> Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, 477.

<sup>13</sup> J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire - From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 1:40.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Frier, ed., *The Codex of Justinian*, trans. Fred Blume (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2935.

governing the employment and use of the military are found in U.S. Code Title 10—Armed Forces.<sup>15</sup>

The Roman Empire flourished because of its large and strong military, but as the empire expanded, it was forced to disperse units across the frontiers.<sup>16</sup> If an attack was waged at one location, units from other parts of the empire were deployed to assist, leaving gaps in the defenses.<sup>17</sup> This made the border areas vulnerable to attack, and outsourcing became the solution.<sup>18</sup> The units that were formed on the frontiers were primarily made up of cavalry, infantry, and mixed (cavalry and infantry) and were generally no bigger than 500 to 1000 soldiers.<sup>19</sup>

The frontiers were not an easy location to defend for the Roman Army, and varied widely based on geography and location. Parts of the boundaries were open while others had a road or river. In an attempt to help secure certain locations, the Romans assembled barriers, ditches, and forts. Military forces were arrayed based on the area they were protecting. If a river or barriers were available, the troops were placed near the border. If

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Code, “Office of the Law Revision Counsel: United States Code,” accessed April 10, 2018, <http://uscode.house.gov/browse/prelim@title10/subtitleA&edition=prelim>, Title 10.

<sup>16</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 2:1035.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1035.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1036.

<sup>19</sup> Pat Southern and Karen Ramsey Dixon, *The Late Roman Army* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 6.



the frontier location was mainly open, soldiers were brought towards the interior and assembled at more feasible locations.<sup>20</sup>

Bernard Bachrach discusses the Roman's conscription system, integration of barbarians into the military, and the militarization of Roman households. Specifically, he describes the tax system utilized for conscripting recruits and Rome's contracts and agreements to defend the empire's borders. Furthermore, Rome's shift to militarizing households to protect its interior while drawing down the army and relying heavily on outsourcing to cover the frontiers. He helps define Rome's transition from an expensive and mighty imperial army to a military that relied on households and barbarians for defense. This transition is important as it highlights a growing weakness in the empire as it starts its descent.

The Romans historically filled their army ranks with conscripts that were recruited via landowner taxes.<sup>21</sup> The taxes were assessed on individual landowners or groups of smaller landowners if individuals did not meet the required threshold to provide a recruit.<sup>22</sup> Private land owners provided troops based on the value of their land; the higher the value, the more recruits were required.<sup>23</sup> The government required landowners to provide people annually; however, if additional soldiers were not needed,

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<sup>20</sup> Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard Bachrach, "Merovingian Mercenaries and Paid Soldiers in Imperial Perspective," in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France (Boston: Brill, 2008), 169.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

the tax was paid in gold to help assist with paying the military.<sup>24</sup> Per Roman law, (*The Theodosian Code*), certain provinces were exempt from providing recruits, and were able to always pay monetarily.<sup>25</sup>

It is our will that the states of our household shall not be pressed to provide recruits in person throughout these provinces in which recruits in person are demanded. But We do permit Our estates to be required to make money payments in provinces in which money instead of men is demanded. Thus We shall compensate for the aforementioned concession by a fixed payment of revenues.<sup>26</sup>

Those who were recruited into the army via conscription did not necessarily have a choice—most were dependents or tenants of the landowner.<sup>27</sup> Soldiers were paid by the government and some received bonuses during their service time along with tax immunities.<sup>28</sup> Roman law ensured veterans who served honorably and retired from service were cared for and provided with land and tax exemptions.<sup>29</sup> *The Theodosian Code* lays out the provisions as follows:

Constantine Augustus then proclaimed: ‘Be it known that it has just now been conceded to all veterans by My munificence that no one of them shall be compelled by law to the performance of a compulsory municipal service nor to service on public works, nor to any tax payment, not by the magistrates, not to any imposts. In whatsoever public markets they may engage in business they shall

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<sup>24</sup> Bachrach, “Merovingian Mercenaries and Paid Soldiers in Imperial Perspective,” 170.

<sup>25</sup> Clyde Pharr, Theresa Davidson, and Mary Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1952), 7-12-2, 13.2, 170.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Bachrach, “Merovingian Mercenaries and Paid Soldiers,” 170.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, 7-20-2, 20.2, 179.

not be compelled to pay the market taxes. The publicans also who are accustomed to extort exorbitant tax payments from tradesmen shall be removed from the aforesaid veterans. After their labors the veterans shall forever enjoy perpetual peace. By this same edict We have also prohibited Our fisc from disturbing anyone at all of these veterans, but they shall be allowed to buy and sell, so that their special legal privileges may be cited in court with full force, under the protection of the repose and peace of Our generation, and their old age shall enjoy to the full their leisure after their labors.<sup>30</sup>

This is not unlike veterans in the U.S. who earn retirement benefits after serving honorably for 20 years or more. Similarly, they receive various tax privileges throughout their active duty time on their housing and sustenance allowances and while serving in combat zones.

However, those who were honorably discharged but did not meet the years of service requirement for retirement were not afforded the same privileges.<sup>31</sup> This method of conscription provided the bulk of the army's soldiers during the third through fifth centuries.<sup>32</sup> Volunteers also served in the Roman military and were treated the same as conscripts and were provided with the same benefits.<sup>33</sup>

The Roman Army had high standards for recruits and deemed they should be at least five feet seven inches tall.<sup>34</sup> Recruits from certain classes of citizens (cooks, tavern

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<sup>30</sup> Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, 7-20-2, 20.2, 179.

<sup>31</sup> Frier, *The Codex of Justinian*, 2617.

<sup>32</sup> Bachrach, "Merovingian Mercenaries and Paid Soldiers," 171.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, 170.

owners) were restricted from serving in the army's most elite units.<sup>35</sup> Vegetius, the great Roman tactician, believed the rural areas of the empire produced the best recruits due to their hard work, toughness, and lack of luxury.<sup>36</sup>

The next question is to consider whether a recruit from the country or from the city is more useful. On this subject I think it could never have been doubted that the rural populace is better suited for arms. They are nurtured under the open sky in a life of work, enduring the sun, careless of shade, unacquainted with bathhouses, ignorant of luxury, simple-souled, content with little, with limbs toughened to endure every kind of toil, and for whom wielding iron, digging a fosse and carrying a burden is what they are used to from the country.

Vegetius believed recruits from rural areas brought a toughness and mindset that simply was not common in those from the cities. However, he did provide recommendations for training recruits from the city if their service was necessary.<sup>37</sup> Vegetius believed "city-dwellers:"

[M]ust first learn to work, drill, carry a burden and endure heat and dust; they must adopt a moderate, rural diet, and camp now under the sky, now under tents. Only then should they be trained in the use of arms and, if a long campaign is in prospect, they should be detained for considerable periods on outpost-duty and be kept far away from attractions of the city, so that by this means their physical and mental vigour may be increased.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, 171-2.

<sup>36</sup> Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*, trans. N. P. Miller (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 1.3, 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, once a soldier had settled into a unit, it was illegal for that soldier to be transferred to another unit.<sup>39</sup> As *The Theodosian Code* states:

It is Our will that Our soldiers shall not be transferred, contrary to the public welfare, from one service unit to another. The counts and dukes, therefore, to who has been entrusted the responsibility of directing the military service, shall know that not only are they not allowed to transfer a soldier from the field army and palatine units to other service units, but they have not even been granted the right to transfer soldiers from the secondary field army legions or from the river patrols, camp soldier, or any other troops, because it is fitting that promotion in rank should come to each and every one not by corrupt solicitation but by his own labor. If any man should act contrary to these regulations, he shall know that a pound of gold will be exacted from him for each soldier so transferred.<sup>40</sup>

This regulation ensured promotions were based on hard work and ability vice political initiatives.<sup>41</sup> The Roman Government wanted to ensure the most talented soldiers were able to rise in rank and avoid promoting those with stronger political connections.

Traditionally, the Roman Army was organized by legions, which normally consisted of 5,000 soldiers.<sup>42</sup> The empire believed that war never required more than two legions due to the Roman Army's superiority: "In all the authorities it is found that individual consuls led against the most numerous hostile forces no more than two legions each, with auxilia of the Allied added. So great as their training, such their confidence, that two legions were deemed sufficient for any war."<sup>43</sup> Vegetius reaffirmed Rome's

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<sup>39</sup> Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, 7-1-18, 1.18, 157-8.

<sup>40</sup> Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, 7-1-18, 1.18, 157-8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-8.

<sup>42</sup> Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*, 3.2, 31.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.4, 34.

belief that superior training and confidence meant the Roman legion could defeat forces much larger in size.

Each legion consisted of 10 cohorts assembled by function (infantry, cavalry), and numbers of soldiers per cohort depended on the location of the cohort within the legion and its role during battle.<sup>44</sup> Vegetius provided several principles for the Roman Army's success: reconnaissance, surprise, initiative, training, preparation, and bravery.<sup>45</sup> The legions also provided the empire with building skills, which proved crucial for its victories and to the empire's expansion.<sup>46</sup>

In the early fifth century, the Roman Government began allowing its citizens to bear arms for self-protection.<sup>47</sup> This was because the empire fell deeper into debt and could not afford to maintain the level of troops needs for protection. The law prohibiting citizens to bear arms was repealed, and two military institutions were formed: military households and citizen militias.<sup>48</sup> These institutions were conscripted to defend the areas in which they lived (urban or rural), and were mostly successful.<sup>49</sup> However, as this new

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<sup>44</sup> Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*, 1-3.5-6, 35-6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-26.22-23, 108-11.

<sup>46</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 7-8.

<sup>47</sup> Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, 524.

<sup>48</sup> Bachrach, "Merovingian Mercenaries and Paid Soldiers," 173-5.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

military model moved forward, the empire's large standing armies began to further dissolve.<sup>50</sup>

### Political and Economic Effect on Recruitment

Political and economic factors played a large role in driving the Western Roman Empire towards military outsourcing. Raising a citizen or volunteer army is not an inexpensive endeavor for any state, but it is especially costly for a large empire encountering seemingly endless attacks on its borders, while also dealing with internal political conflicts and civil wars. Paying and supporting a massive citizen army was no longer economically feasible, but political instability prevented Rome from decreasing its size.

Unfortunately, government costs continued to rise in the empire and reached a point where tax increases on the populace were no longer sustainable. Politics was the main factor in several empire-wide decisions (taxation, religion, power sharing, and entitlement programs) that caused the empire to drift deeper into debt. Despite the growing bureaucracy, the army remained the empire's biggest cost.<sup>51</sup> As the empire expanded, so did its need for imports; unfortunately, its exports decreased at the same time. Agriculture directly impacted the trade imbalance as many farmers left their fields to escape the tax burden that left them with little or no profit.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 64.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 2:1038-53.

In the late third century, financial reforms provided the struggling empire with security and order, and aimed to ensure the fiscal burden was spread equitably, and a more robust government bureaucracy was instituted leading to improved public works.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, the cost of this restructuring increased the financial strain on an already overburdened populace; so much so that agriculture was effectively abandoned, at a time when it was Rome's most prosperous form of revenue as the government taxed the land as well as the labor.<sup>54</sup>

As the Western Empire moved into the mid-fourth century, the tax burden only increased because of growing bureaucratic functions and extravagance.<sup>55</sup> The government recognized the tax burden was too large—beyond what was actually needed to run an effective government—and provided some relief to the western provinces.<sup>56</sup> This was in large part due to rising military expenditures courtesy of the Gothic revolt and subsequent rebuilding of the army.<sup>57</sup>

From a political standpoint, the emperor's power widened, and the power of the senate deteriorated, leading to increased friction over roles and responsibilities within the government.<sup>58</sup> However, the senate did not dissolve and continued to be made up of the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 1:67.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:67; Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1:46.

<sup>55</sup> Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, 21.16.14, 232.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 17.2.3-3.5, 120-1.

<sup>57</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:162.

<sup>58</sup> Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1:5-13.



empire's wealthiest individuals who favored giving themselves tax breaks while raising taxes on the populace.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, Rome's vast size meant there were numerous opinions and preferences spread across the empire, resulting in infighting and lack of unity.<sup>60</sup>

In the late third century, Rome recognized the empire had become too large to be ruled by one emperor and pivoted to a construct where four leaders worked in unison.<sup>61</sup> The burden of governance was shared among four rulers who were given specific land-based areas to oversee. Furthermore, the empire was subdivided into provinces with governors who directed financial and administrative efforts.<sup>62</sup> More power and opportunity were given to the empire's senators, and Christians began to be appointed to high authority within the government.<sup>63</sup> This was noteworthy because, up to this point, they had been largely excluded from the government. Unfortunately, the Roman Government continued to swell, and furthered the bureaucrats' appetite for power and riches.<sup>64</sup>

There is clear documentary evidence that Constantine was the first to whet the appetite of his staff, but it was Constantius who crammed them with the marrow of the provinces. Under him the leading men of all classes were consumed by a

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:50.

<sup>60</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 448.

<sup>61</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:41.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:106-7.

<sup>64</sup> Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, 16.8.8, 98.

passion for riches which knew no bounds and recognized no legal or moral restraint.<sup>65</sup>

As Marcellinus described, the emperors led the way in living a luxurious life, but other government officials soon followed. This resulted in yet another severe burden for the taxpayers to bear.

During the fourth century, the Roman Empire was divided into two major parts (western and eastern). Gaul and Italia formed the Western Roman Empire with its capital and emperor located at Rome. The west included Britain, Gaul, Spain, and the north-western corner of Africa. Italia was made up of Italy, the remainder of Africa, land between the Danube and the Alps, and the north-western portion of the Illyrian peninsula. The Eastern Empire was comprised of Illyricum with its capital and emperor at Constantinople. Illyricum included Dacia, Macedonia, Greece, Egypt, and the Levant.<sup>66</sup>

As the Western Roman Empire flourished, the size of its government and bureaucracy grew disproportionately along with it. Unsurprisingly, this led to higher operating costs and subsequently higher taxes for its citizens to bear. Some of this growth can be attributed to the empire's expanding military requirement as invasions on the frontiers were becoming more of a nuisance, and the military was called upon to offset the threats. However, most of the government's growth was caused by unnecessary duties and responsibilities beyond what the empire actually needed to govern effectively.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 16.8.8, 98.

<sup>66</sup> Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1:26.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 2:1046-53.

Later in the fourth century, trust in the senate decreased and senators were even charged for magic, poisoning, and adultery in an attempt to remove them.<sup>68</sup> Many peasants, to include barbarians, were appointed to the open senate seats, along with a growing number of military leaders.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, the Roman Government faced an immigrant influx from Goth caused by the Huns advancement westward.<sup>70</sup> The empire was not prepared to handle the influx of immigrants and made many missteps; Goths were enlisted in the military, enslaved, and treated poorly.<sup>71</sup> They executed a revolt that the Roman Government and military severely underestimated, which cost them dearly in lives and treasure.<sup>72</sup> The government faced a large task of rebuilding the empire and the army afterward.<sup>73</sup> There was an attempt to unify the empire once again and *The Theodosian Code* was developed to provide standard statutes to govern across the entire empire.<sup>74</sup>

Emperor Theodosius I was successful in uniting the western and eastern sections of the empire. But, after his death, the division between the east and west once again began to extend. To make matters worse, the army was in a deteriorated state due to years

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 1:141.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 1:141-2.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1:152.

<sup>71</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:152-3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 1:154.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 1:156.

<sup>74</sup> Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1:232.

of war. This provided ample opportunities for tribes to exploit the division and begin asserting their power. Alaric, especially took advantage of the situation to gain control of Roman territory in the west as well as insert himself into the governmental hierarchy.<sup>75</sup>

### Recruiting the Barbarians

Initially, Rome's outsourcing strategy was simple—hire barbarians to help protect the frontier areas of the empire from attacks and invasion. However, they eventually began to desire fair treatment, upward mobility, and to serve their native leaders. This complicated the relationship as more recruits were needed and their roles and responsibilities changed.

Frontier attacks continued into the mid-third century, and the government was forced to respond with a larger army.<sup>76</sup>

The reason for their exceptional hostility was that the envoys whom they sent to Roman headquarters to receive the regular gifts that they had come to expect were fobbed off with small and cheaper presents, which they thought unworthy of them and threw away in a rage. After rough handling by Ursatius, master of the offices, a cruel and passionate man, they went home with an exaggerated account of the matter and roused their savage countrymen to revenge the insulting treatment they had received.<sup>77</sup>

As Marcellinus describes, the Romans were growing tired of making payments to the attackers in exchange for protection and to avoid hostilities. Rome was having trouble keeping their finances in order internally and started to view the payments as unnecessary.

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<sup>75</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:182-4.

<sup>76</sup> Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, 26.5.2, 319.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

As such, the Roman Government reformed conscription in order to entice landowners and the recruits they provided.<sup>78</sup> Enlistment requirements were relaxed, increasing the number of eligible males, and more non-citizens were able to join the ranks of the citizen army.<sup>79</sup> The army was able to contain a massive revolt in 369 near Britain, but faced uprisings in other parts of the empire.<sup>80</sup> The relaxed conscription strategy worked and improved the overall numbers in the army, but at the cost of discipline and loyalty issues in the ranks.<sup>81</sup>

Unfortunately, some of these units broke into bands and invaded Roman cities.<sup>82</sup> The Roman Government was forced to negotiate a treaty to allow them to fight under the command of their tribesmen while retaining their home within Roman territory.<sup>83</sup> This was a significant event for the empire, as non-citizens previously only served under Roman leadership, but now would be protecting the frontiers as an ally.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, the empire's ongoing civil wars required additional reliance on the barbarians, ultimately leading to their ascent to leadership positions within the Roman Army itself.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:149.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:149-56.

<sup>80</sup> Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, 27.8-9.2 342-4, 28.3.2-3.9, 357-8.

<sup>81</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:156.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:156.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:157.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:158-9.

Unfortunately, Roman soldiers had essentially been misused fighting one another instead of protecting the empire from outside attacks.<sup>86</sup>

For example, the Goths had built a positive relationship with the Roman emperor, Theodosius, but it quickly soured, and led to the rise of Alaric as their king in 395.<sup>87</sup>

But after Theodosius, the lover of peace and of the Gothic race, had passed from human cares, his sons began to ruin both empires by their luxurious living and to deprive their allies, that is to say the Goths, of the customary gifts. The contempt of the Goths for the Romans soon increased, and for fear their valor would be destroyed by long peace, they appointed Alaric king over them.<sup>88</sup>

He wanted the Goths to have autonomous territory within the empire, and decided it was time to seize the initiative.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, other tribes began rising up and were looking to gain a foothold within the empire, as well. In response, the army increased conscription. For the first time in the Western Roman Empire's history, senators had to send their slaves as recruits, and gold could no longer be used as an alternative.<sup>90</sup>

The barbarians saw opportunities for power and Roman territory. Alaric and the Visigoths were especially aggressive in the early fifth century and took advantage of invasions from other tribes to push further into Roman territory. The Roman Army was initially able to push back against these invasions but was forced to continue drastic

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<sup>86</sup> Southern, *The Late Roman Army*, 21.

<sup>87</sup> Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, trans. Charles Mierow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915), 146, XXIX, 92.

<sup>88</sup> Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, 92.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 146, XXIX, 92.

<sup>90</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:183-5.

conscription measures. The army even had to resort to enlisting recruits from groups they defeated, to fight against other invaders.<sup>91</sup>

The Roman Government essentially treated barbarian recruits the same as Roman citizens within the army in order to keep them loyal and motivated. Unfortunately, this led to jealousy within the ranks, and Roman troops began massacring these non-citizens and their families. In response, 30,000 left the army and marched off to join Alaric, who managed to stay influential in a small part of the empire. With these reinforcements, Alaric renewed his quest for power and demanded gold and Roman territory. The government denied his request, so he marched to Rome and set up a blockade, forcing the senate to pay him and institute a peaceful alliance to avoid future struggles.<sup>92</sup>

Alaric noticed Rome's weakness in the early fifth century and demanded three Roman provinces for his tribe to settle in, along with a gold grant. The government refused and he again set up a blockade. This time, the Roman Army had been reinforced with 10,000 additional barbarian recruits and were able to push him out of the region. Alaric attempted to influence the Senate to install an emperor that would be friendly toward him and his tribe. He was not successful and marched to Rome again and sacked the city. Rome soon recovered after Alaric died and his successor retreated to Gaul.<sup>93</sup>

The Roman Army achieved years of success in combating invasions when their government and military leaders were able to focus on the task at hand. Unfortunately,

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 1:183-4.

<sup>92</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:185.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1:186.

this was not always the case and the attackers were able to capitalize. The Roman emperor during the early fifth century, Honorius I, and his top general, Stilicho, faced a constant barrage of raid attempts. Fortunately, Stilicho was a strong general and was able to lead the Roman Army to victory, but Honorius's mental state was not as it should be and he had Stilicho executed. Without its talented leader, the army was severely handicapped.<sup>94</sup>

Other tribes (Vandals, Alans, Visigoths, Burgundians) began invading throughout the empire after witnessing Alaric's success and to take advantage of Rome's growing military weakness.<sup>95</sup> Historians estimate in total nearly 400,000 barbarians invaded the empire.<sup>96</sup> This forced the government to seek peace with the groups vice continue the costly and destructive strategy of fighting them off.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, the military changed its command structure, allowing non-citizens to hold prominent positions once reserved only for Romans.<sup>98</sup>

Unfortunately for the Roman Army, peace with the tribes did not stop the invasions. In the early fifth century, Attila and his massive army invaded the Western Empire after success against the Eastern Empire.<sup>99</sup> The Roman Army was able to keep

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<sup>94</sup> Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1:106-73.

<sup>95</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 7-8; Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:187-90.

<sup>96</sup> Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1:104.

<sup>97</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:187-90.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:187-92.

<sup>99</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 300-1.



the Huns at bay initially, but Attila tried again about a decade later.<sup>100</sup> This was the first time Attila had been defeated, due to the Huns' logistical issues.<sup>101</sup> The Roman Army was able to stop Attila's advance this time, Attila died, and soon thereafter the Hun Empire crumbled.<sup>102</sup> Although Attila was never able to fully conquer the Western Empire, his invasions caused irreparable in treasure and personnel.<sup>103</sup>

### The Enrollment of the Barbarians

The Roman Empire needed a lot of soldiers to assist with its extensive list of military requirements, and political and economic issues further exacerbated their problems. The Western Empire was initially successful in withstanding the barrage of invasions and took advantage of the opportunity to source some cheap labor from the defeated tribes for the army. Unfortunately, many of these types of recruits proved to be unreliable. As such, Rome decided to try a new tactic in order to give the barbarians more to fight for—they enrolled them in the Roman Army and provided benefits similar to what a Roman soldier would receive.

As the Roman Army transitioned from securing the empire's frontiers to a new focus on protecting its cities, the government began outsourcing military functions to defend the borders. This seemed a beneficial situation for both parties. The barbarians were involved in numerous skirmishes on the frontiers and a large number surrendered to

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<sup>100</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:193.

<sup>101</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 339-40.

<sup>102</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:193-4.

<sup>103</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 343-8.

the Roman Government. After their surrender, many were conscripted into the Roman Army. Furthermore, the Romans were able to indoctrinate military-age men from these groups into the Roman way of life. This was done to prevent further uprisings in addition to providing strong and trained recruits for the Roman Army. In some instances, these recruits were intermingled among other Roman units and other times they were formed into a unit and moved to a far distance from their homes. Both tactics strove to ensure organized revolts could not take place in the future.<sup>104</sup>

Additionally, tribes that were at peace with the empire were allowed to settle within Roman borders and provided recruits. They were treated like other veterans once their terms of service were completed—free land or cash to start a business. Rome’s use of non-citizens generally fit into one of three different categories: those who were obtained via treaties or contracts with their kings, tribes that became part of the empire due to invasion or invitation, and small groups that essentially wanted stability and a slice of Roman territory.<sup>105</sup>

The Roman Government also instituted contracts with friendly groups living outside Rome’s borders, called *foederati*. These contracts were established to provide a buffer zone between the empire’s borders and its enemies.<sup>106</sup> Procopius, a sixth century Greek historian, describes Rome’s relationship with the *foederati*: “Now at an earlier time only barbarians were enlisted among the foederati, those, namely who had come into

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<sup>104</sup> Southern, *The Late Roman Army*, 46-7.

<sup>105</sup> Bachrach, “Merovingian Mercenaries and Paid Soldiers,” 171.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-9.

the Roman political system, not in the condition of slaves, since they had not been conquered by the Romans, but on the basis of complete equality. For the Romans call treaties with their enemies ‘foedera.’”<sup>107</sup> They enabled the Roman Government to increase the size of its military temporarily to fight as required under their own leadership, but then were disbanded after the battle or war.<sup>108</sup> *Foederati* were not treated like citizen recruits; they only operated outside of the empire’s borders. However, at times some of the leaders were given rank within the Roman Army. Later in the fourth century, the contracts were modified to allow for settlement within Roman borders. The *foederati* were considered part of the Roman regular army, but they were not trained as such and did not serve in regular army units. They served under a barbarian commander until the fifth century, when Roman soldiers and leaders started to insert themselves into the units.<sup>109</sup>

In the early fourth century, a different strategy for employing the military was developed: a rapid response force was established to protect the interior Roman cities.<sup>110</sup> The frontier defense continued, but some units were pulled back to assist with internal

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<sup>107</sup> Procopius, *History of the Wars, Books III and IV: The Vandalic War*, trans. H. B. Dewing (n.p.: Dodo Press, 1916), XI, 35.

<sup>108</sup> Southern, *The Late Roman Army*, 48-9.

<sup>109</sup> Bachrach, “Merovingian Mercenaries and Paid Soldiers,” 172-173.

<sup>110</sup> Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 1:35.

defense.<sup>111</sup> In order to do this, the overall size of the military was increased and the reliance on non-citizens to assist with frontier defense grew.<sup>112</sup>

Later in the fourth century, the army was subdivided into regions.<sup>113</sup> This led to a dispersed field army and increased the number of local groups who were not necessarily willing to leave their home to support militaries in other parts of the empire.<sup>114</sup> However, the army continued to focus more on the interior of the empire as smaller, more mobile units.<sup>115</sup> Large forces remained on the frontiers to contain the invasions—a constant struggle—and were increasingly manned with *foederati*.<sup>116</sup> They achieved many victories, recovered Roman territory in the west near Gaul and Germania, and withstood multiple land grab attempts.<sup>117</sup> As Marcellinus describes below, the emperor Julian achieved overwhelming success in 356 A.D. while defending against invasion attempts.

So, without any relief from his anxieties and ignoring the servile flattery of his suite, who tried to turn his mind towards pleasure and luxury, he made all necessary preparations and on 24 June arrived at Autun, intending like a seasoned commander of proved strength and sagacity to attack the barbarians, who were scattered over the country, as soon as an opportunity offered. At a council of war to consider the safest route, held with the assistance of men who knew the terrain, diverse opinions were expressed, some asserting that he should go by Sedelaucum and Cora and others recommending a different route. When, however, some added that Silvanus, recently master of infantry, had with a considerable difficulty

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>112</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:98-100.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 1:124-5.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 1:125-5.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 1:124-5.

<sup>117</sup> Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)*, 16.1-4, 88-91.

taken 8,000 auxiliary troops by a way which provided a short-cut but was dangerous because it lay through dark woods, the Caesar was on fire to imitate the example of this bold general. To avoid delay he took with him only the cuirassiers and artillerymen, an inadequate escort for a commander, and reached Auxerre (Autessiodurum) by Silvanus' route. After a short halt to refresh himself and his men (it was never his habit to pause for long) Julian made his way towards Troyes (Tricasae). The barbarians hurled themselves upon him in successive bands; in some cases, when their superior numbers alarmed him, he did no more than close his ranks and keep an eye on the enemy; at other times he won an easy victory by descending on them from a point of vantage; some gave themselves up in panic, the rest took to flight as best they could and were allowed to get away unharmed, because he was hindered from pursuit by the weight of his equipment.<sup>118</sup>

A divide between the military and the nobility started to become noticeable as more soldiers were non-citizens while much of the leadership were Romans.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, at the end of the fourth century, the Western Roman Empire Military underwent several changes. The empire was strained financially and emotionally from years of war and from its overwhelming size.<sup>120</sup> The government recognized that change was needed and administered far-reaching reforms.<sup>121</sup> Military commanders were separated from civil authorities and focused the army on guarding the frontiers. The emperor instituted agreements with friendly tribes and began utilizing them frequently to help defend the frontiers against attack from non-friendly groups.<sup>122</sup>

After these events, the Goths had already returned home when they were summoned at the request of the Emperor Maximian to aid the Romans against the Parthians. They fought for him faithfully, serving as auxiliaries. But after Caesar Maximian by their aid had routed Narseus, king of the Persians, the grandson of

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>119</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:135.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 1:38-73.

<sup>121</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:38-73.

<sup>122</sup> Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, XXI, 110, 82.

Sapor the Great, taking as spoil all his possessions, together with his wives and his sons, and when Diocletian had conquered Achilles in Alexandria and Maximianus Herculius had broken Quinquegentiani in Africa, thus winning peace for the empire, they began rather to neglect the Goths. Now it had long been a hard matter for the Roman army to fight against any nations whatsoever without them. This is evident from the way in which the Goths were so frequently called upon.<sup>123</sup>

As Jordanes, a Roman Gothic historian, described, the Romans achieved great symmetry with the Goths and fought together often to push back invasions. The army successfully defended the empire and provided relative peace, but the financial toll was great.<sup>124</sup>

### Impacts of Outsourcing

Faced with increasing attacks, the size of the military again needed to grow. The government withdrew the citizen soldier units towards the interior and left the frontier defense largely to barbarian units. The need for a bigger, cheaper army forced the empire more towards outsourcing. However, outsourcing was not always a sign of weakness within the empire, and many times it was a useful strategy to obtain cheap soldiers who were also able to fight.<sup>125</sup> In addition, groups that could turn to enemies under the right conditions were fighting on the side of the Romans, under Roman law, against other aggressors.<sup>126</sup> In theory, and many times in practice, the operational reach of the army increased across a large empire, while the citizen soldiers could be moved internally to

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., XXI, 110, 82.

<sup>124</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1:61.

<sup>125</sup> Southern, *The Late Roman Army*, 49-9.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 49.

deal with other priorities. Unfortunately, things did not necessarily work out that way and the fallout took its toll on the empire and ultimately facilitated its descent.

The Roman Army and Government worked to set up positive relationships with the tribes that were used to supplement the army. The government set up payments to offset the costs of equipment, uniforms, and food for the troops.<sup>127</sup> However, these relationships soured over time and as the empire grew weaker economically and politically, and the groups were presented with opportunities to better their situations and permanently seize desirable Roman territory.<sup>128</sup> Infighting and leadership struggles left the empire vulnerable to many of these attacks and some were successful.

In addition, the Western Empire may have found itself in a situation of overreliance and poor management. As is the case with other militaries throughout history, including that of the contemporary United States, undesirable individuals can creep into the ranks. Purging these individuals and groups is normally the best practice, but the Romans were unsuccessful in doing this. As the empires' need for more troops increased, standards were lowered and many more untrained and undisciplined barbarians found themselves in the Roman Army. The more that joined the ranks, the harder it became for the Roman generals to effectively command and control their forces.

Furthermore, these troops started to take on the habit of coming and going as they pleased

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 21.

to the battlefield. In the end, Rome lost the core warfighting pillar as described by Vegetius: small, highly-trained, mobile units fighting and winning its battles.<sup>129</sup>

Compounding this problem was the fall of the Hunnic Empire in the mid-fourth century after Attila's death. The Huns had become allies with the Romans and most importantly became a buffer between Rome and belligerent Gothic tribes. The Huns were effective in pushing back Gothic attacks within their territory before they could make it onto Roman soil. Unfortunately, after the Huns fell, invasions onto Roman territory increased and Rome was left with an overwhelming number of refugees on their soil stemming from the collapse. This provided an appealing opportunity for the Goths and they raced to sack Rome. The government had no other option than to embrace the Goths and attempt to form an alliance.<sup>130</sup>

Other tribes, especially the Burgundians and Vandals, observed the Goths' success and believed the time was right to begin maneuvering for their own piece of Roman territory and to assert their power. Additionally, refugees near Britain formed a new regime and Frankish warbands starting attacking within Roman territory for the first time. Unfortunately, political instability, decreasing tax revenues, and a feeble army forced the Roman Government to permit these groups to expand on Roman soil.<sup>131</sup>

The Western Roman Empire decided to make an attempt to regain valuable territory near the Mediterranean Sea that had been overtaken by the Vandals after they

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<sup>129</sup> Southern, *The Late Roman Army*, 53-4.

<sup>130</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 366-79.

<sup>131</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 381-94.



sacked Rome in 455. They were very skilled at fighting sea-based wars and pulled the Roman Army into a battle on the Mediterranean. It was an overwhelming victory for the Vandals. Barbarians moved quickly after the defeat to stake out their own kingdoms on Roman soil. The remaining Roman citizens recognized it was time to begin negotiations in order to retain their land and perhaps keep some power within the new regimes.<sup>132</sup>

### Conclusion

Military, political, and economical factors drove the Western Roman Empire towards military outsourcing and played a large part in its eventual downfall. Politics were key throughout and influenced decisions that pushed the empire deeper into instability and overwhelming debt. Likewise, government operating costs rose and reached a point where tax increases were no longer sustainable. As the empire was forced to withstand more attacks and invasions, the size of the military had to grow. The government decided to withdraw the citizen soldier units towards the interior and relied on outsourcing for frontier defense. Moreover, Roman civil wars were common and took a large toll on the army, requiring the government to seek other avenues for manning beyond conscription.

Outsourcing was a viable solution for effectively increasing the size of the military, and Rome experienced successes employing this approach. However, Roman political instability and a feeble citizen military presented the tribes opportunities too good to forego. Thus, various groups—many once seen as allies—began to assert their power and establish their own kingdoms within Roman territory. This ultimately proved

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 395-422.

to be more than the Roman Government and military could handle and the Western Roman Empire's decline accelerated into the hands of barbarians.

CHAPTER 3  
OUTSOURCING OF UNITED STATES MILITARY

Introduction

There are underlying social, economic, political, and military issues to explore as to why the U.S. is employing such a large number of contractors to help fight its wars. The U.S. did not recently invent military outsourcing for the sole purpose of counterinsurgency operations; this strategy dates back centuries and was employed extensively in the later Western Roman Empire prior to its fall. The U.S. used paid contractors during Operation Enduring Freedom and continues to employ them across the globe. Their tasks range from logistics support (operating dining facilities, maintenance, fuel delivery), security (entry control points, patrols, towers), intelligence, and even armed security. Contractors have many benefits: they can be cost effective, do not factor into military end strengths, they provide technical expertise, and are easy to replace. But, there are negatives too: they may lack training and oversight, may be unwilling to work in a non-permissive environment, and are ultimately motivated by money.

The U.S. has outsourced military functions to contractors beginning as early as the Revolutionary War.<sup>133</sup> Those functions include nearly everything in a combat environment, but mostly focused on logistical support.<sup>134</sup> Since the first Gulf War, the

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<sup>133</sup> David Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization: The US Armed Contractor Phenomenon* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1-2.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

U.S. has grown more dependent on outsourcing, especially in Afghanistan.<sup>135</sup> In 2013, nearly 108,000 contractors were working in Afghanistan,<sup>136</sup> compared to only 46,000 U.S. troops.<sup>137</sup> Contractors could be seen performing base security, training, technical support, maintenance, quality of life services, and transportation (among others).<sup>138</sup> The U.S.'s dependence on contractors to support or accomplish missions that have tactical and strategic outcomes is at an all-time high.<sup>139</sup>

After the Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union ended, large standing armies began to draw down worldwide.<sup>140</sup> This flooded the global market with prior service, highly trained military members.<sup>141</sup> These individuals were looking for work and military contractors were a natural fit—and the market for their skills was growing.<sup>142</sup> The U.S. was faced with a dilemma as global instability increased in the 1990s—not

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization: The US Armed Contractor Phenomenon*, 14.

<sup>137</sup> Associated Press, “A timeline of U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan since 2001,” *Military Times*, July 16, 2016, accessed December 28, 2017, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2016/07/06/a-timeline-of-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-since-2001/>.

<sup>138</sup> Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization*, 2.

<sup>139</sup> P.W. Singer, “Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and Its Ramifications for International Security,” *International Security* 26, no. 3 (Winter 2001/02): 187.

<sup>140</sup> Peter Singer, “Outsourcing War,” Brookings, March 1, 2005, accessed January 11, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/outsourcing-war/>.

<sup>141</sup> Singer, “Corporate Warriors,” 193.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

having enough troops to conduct necessary missions.<sup>143</sup> To augment the smaller force, outsourcing strategies became more popular.<sup>144</sup> In fact, between 1995 and 2005, the Department of Defense (DoD) had entered into over 3,000 such contracts.<sup>145</sup>

During the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld developed a strategy to increase the military's reliance on technology while reducing the number of troops. However, the necessary tasks to fight two wars remained and forced an increased reliance on contractors to fill the gap. Likewise, as the pressure to decrease costs for the wars, the DoD transitioned from relying solely on U.S. citizens to fill the contractor billets to international personnel. While costs went down, so did the military's control over these contractors.<sup>146</sup>

The DoD's use of contractors is guided by U.S. law and prohibits certain functions and tasks from being accomplished by other than government employees. The Federal Acquisition Regulation states, "Contracts shall not be used for the performance of inherently governmental functions."<sup>147</sup> Some key examples of these functions include commanding military forces, supervising military or government civilian employees, criminal investigations, intelligence operations, determination of policy, foreign relations,

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<sup>143</sup> Singer, "Outsourcing War."

<sup>144</sup> Singer, "Outsourcing War," 193.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> William A. Taylor, *Military Service and American Democracy From World War II to the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2016), 169-170.

<sup>147</sup> Federal Acquisition Regulation, "Subpart 7.503," FARsite, November 6, 2017, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://farsite.hill.af.mil/vmfara.htm>.

hiring and firing government employees, and awarding government contracts.<sup>148</sup> It is crucial that the U.S. closely manage the functions and tasks that are being outsourced and what needs to be kept under government control.<sup>149</sup> As a result, the best solution from a purely budget standpoint may not be the best solution from a future war capability standpoint. The U.S. will continue to be faced with the temptation to sacrifice crucial government skills to potentially save money for other priorities.

### United States Military Reliance on Outsourcing

Why does the U.S. rely so heavily on outsourcing instead of performing these functions in-house with military members? A 2003 Government Accountability Office report describes how the DoD employs contractors:

DOD uses contractor services for a number of reasons. In some areas, such as Bosnia and Kosovo, there are limits on the number of U.S. military personnel who can be deployed in the region; contract workers pick up the slack in the tasks that remain to be done. Elsewhere, the military does not have sufficient personnel with the highly technical or specialized skills needed in-place (e.g., technicians to repair sophisticated equipment or weapons). Finally, DOD uses contractors to conserve scarce skills, to ensure that they will be available for future deployments.<sup>150</sup>

The U.S. deploys troops across the globe for numerous missions and faces congressionally mandated troop levels; contractors enable service secretaries to extend operational reach by aligning service members in occupations that are most required for

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Singer, "Outsourcing War."

<sup>150</sup> General Accounting Office, *Contractors Provide Vital Services to Deployed Forces but Are Not Adequately Addressed in DOD Plans* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 2003), accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/240/238667.pdf>.

mission success.<sup>151</sup> In other words, the combat-related career fields can increase while career fields that can be replaced by contractors are going away. The Western Roman Empire also was faced with the need to extend their operational reach in a more cost-effective and efficient manner.

An additional advantage for the U.S. is the ability to delay or forego reserve and National Guard call-ups. If a gap can be filled with a contractor instead of a reservist, it enables the DoD to avoid disrupting those units and families back home. The National Guard and reserves make up approximately 20 percent of the U.S. Army's total manpower but provide nearly 75 percent of logistics, medical, engineering, military information support, and civil affairs.<sup>152</sup> Many of these tasks can be filled or significantly augmented with contractor personnel.

The three areas identified by the Government Accountability Office make sense, but recruiting tens of thousands of civilians to work in combat zones is a significant undertaking. To entice talent into the combat theater, contractors are paid large sums of money, sometimes reaching as high as \$20,000 per month.<sup>153</sup> This is obviously far more than the average U.S. service member earns, but the U.S. avoids mounting health insurance costs, retirement, and other benefits afforded to military members.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>152</sup> Col (ret) Richard Dunn III, "America's Reserve and National Guard Components Key Contributors to U.S. Military Strength," Heritage.org, 2016, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://index.heritage.org/military/2016/essays/americas-reserve-and-national-guard-components/>.

<sup>153</sup> Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization*, 16.

Additionally, the U.S. can access the global market for outsourcing. Contractors filling jobs in Operation Enduring Freedom hailed from all parts of the world. Certain jobs require U.S. citizens or citizens from trusted allies—private security contractor management, for example—but many can be filled by anyone with limited skills (food preparation, grounds keeping, construction, etc.). Global market access enables the DoD to use individuals that can be paid well below normal U.S. wages or are willing to come to combat environments for job opportunities and salaries that do not exist in their country. An added benefit is the U.S. can hire local nationals and inject money into struggling local economies.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, the Romans were able to pull from groups that had previous combat experience, were considered competent fighters, and paid at lower rates than Romans.

Contractors can also be brought on for a short amount of time to perform the mission, then let go with no repercussion to the government.<sup>155</sup> Contractors can be deployed quickly with little to no footprint and are highly flexible as the operational environment and mission changes over time.<sup>156</sup> Contracts state that the contractor must provide trained and prepared personnel to fill the necessary roles. The government is not responsible for providing and paying for the required training. If a contractor does not perform to expectations, he or she can be sent home, and a replacement must be provided.

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<sup>154</sup> Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization*, 77.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.



## Politics and the War in Afghanistan

On 7 October 2001, the U.S. launched the Afghanistan War after the Taliban refused to cease harboring al Qaeda terrorists.<sup>157</sup> The goal was to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a base of operations for terrorist organizations.<sup>158</sup> Military victory came quickly, as the Taliban were removed from Kabul in November and Kandahar in December.<sup>159</sup>

However, the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization were charged with essentially developing an army for Afghanistan from the ground up. Afghanistan needed help covering training, equipment, and personnel costs for their fledgling military and police forces, and the U.S. and its allies had to step in. Sustaining this force will not come cheap; according to our international officials estimate it will cost \$2.2 billion per year to sustain the Afghanistan National Security Forces.<sup>160</sup> Unfortunately, this cost will remain with the U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the foreseeable future as Afghanistan has little to no economic activity and natural resources to cover the cost.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Catherine Dale, “War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress,” in *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations and Congressional Issues*, ed. Easton Ussery, Defense, Security and Strategy Series (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 58.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-121.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-4.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

This price does not include future improvements and modifications required to meet changes in the operational environment.<sup>162</sup>

In 2008, the U.S. and world perception on the Afghanistan War was deteriorating and many did not understand what the goal of the effort was and what was being achieved.<sup>163</sup> President Bush, followed shortly by President Obama, believed additional troops and a renewed focus were required to get the war back on the right course.<sup>164</sup> Of particular concern was an inability to stop the movement of militants back and forth between the Afghanistan and Pakistan border.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, President Obama sought help from partner nations and requested North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries send more troops.<sup>166</sup> This was met with resistance from North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies due to growing discord for the war within those countries.<sup>167</sup> If the U.S. wanted more troops deployed to Afghanistan, it would have to provide most of them.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>163</sup> Vincent Morelli and Paul Belkin, “NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance,” in *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations and Congressional Issues*, ed. Easton Ussery, Defense, Security and Strategy Series (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 14-5.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 15.

In addition to Afghanistan, the U.S. was fighting a protracted war in Iraq. Fighting wars on two fronts can take a large toll on an All-Volunteer Force (AVF), stretching resources and troops thin. An obvious solution for the U.S. was to reach further into its outsourcing toolbox. To cover the massive amount of tasks required for fighting to wars, more contractors were hired to fill the gaps and limit the amount of troops deployed. The Romans experienced this issue as well with attacks taking place on many locations throughout the frontiers as well as internal civil wars.

Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama believed success in Operation Enduring Freedom was crucial for the U.S. and the world's security, but their outlook and policies towards the war differed. After the 9-11 terrorist attack, President Bush developed a policy for facing a new world that included terrorism and sponsors of terrorism. The National Security Strategy of 2002 highlighted that the U.S. would strengthen alliances, increase global cooperation, defuse regional conflicts, prevent the manufacture and use of weapons of mass destruction, expand democracy, and increase global economic growth.<sup>169</sup> President Bush set out to remove the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, set the conditions for the nation's first ever democratic election, and develop an economically thriving and democratic country.<sup>170</sup>

In the summer of 2009, President Obama set a new strategy for the seven-year-old war in Afghanistan. Public support for the war was dwindling and Afghanistan itself had

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<sup>169</sup> Robert Kauffman, *In Defense of the Bush Doctrine* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 158.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 131.

recently endured a contested election of its President, Hamid Karzai.<sup>171</sup> President Obama decided to increase troop numbers (up to 35,000 more) but cautioned that the commitment to Afghanistan was not open ended and would pivot to an Afghan-led, U.S. supported mission.<sup>172</sup> He also called for increased diplomatic engagement, strengthened ties with Pakistan, and reduced corruption from the Afghan Government.<sup>173</sup>

By 2011, President Obama's rededication to the Afghanistan War provided some progress on the ground, but military leaders deemed it fragile.<sup>174</sup> In July 2011, U.S. forces began shifting lead security responsibility to the Afghan Government with a full handover planned for 2014.<sup>175</sup> With that in mind, President Obama called for a U.S. troop drawdown to begin that summer and reaffirmed the U.S.'s commitment to Afghanistan beyond 2014 once the full handover took place.<sup>176</sup> President Obama maintained that the U.S.'s core mission was to defeat al Qaeda and prevent their return.<sup>177</sup>

By 2012, the troop withdrawal in Afghanistan was in full effect, and the military continued to close Forward Operating Bases across the war-torn country. President

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<sup>171</sup> Michael Bowman, "Obama Launches Afghanistan War Strategy Ahead of National Address," *Voice of America News* (December 2009), 1.

<sup>172</sup> Bowman, "Obama Launches Afghanistan War Strategy Ahead of National Address."

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>174</sup> Dale, "War in Afghanistan," 104.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

Obama directed the DoD to drawdown troops from 90,000 at the start of 2012 to 68,000 by October 2012 and then continue down to 38,000 and 48,000 by June 2013.<sup>178</sup>

However, the drawdown numbers do not indicate the entire story. The U.S. continued to maintain high numbers of contractors in Afghanistan; reaching as high as almost 120,000 in country in 2012 and a ratio nearly 2:1 (contractors to soldiers).<sup>179</sup> Tasks necessary to accomplish the mission did not go away simply because troops were heading home; contractors would continue to be relied upon to fill the gap.

### Social Factors

From a social standpoint, the gap between those who serve in the military and the rest of America continues to widen. Respect for the U.S. Military continues to remain high, with 78 percent of Americans having a “Great Deal” or “Quite a Lot” of confidence in the military as an institution—tops in the 2017 Gallup poll.<sup>180</sup> However, despite this respect and the U.S. population growing to well over 300 million people, the divide

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<sup>178</sup> CJ Radin, “US withdrawal from Afghanistan: the plan for 2012, 2013, and 2014,” *FDD's Long War Journal*, March 18, 2012, accessed January 12, 2018, [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/03/us\\_withdrawal\\_from\\_a.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/03/us_withdrawal_from_a.php).

<sup>179</sup> Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Program Support, *Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 2017), 1-7.

<sup>180</sup> Frank Newport, “U.S. Confidence in Military Reflects Perceived Competency,” *Gallup News*, July 27, 2017, accessed January 16, 2018, [http://news.gallup.com/poll/214511/high-confidence-military-reflects-perceived-competency.aspx?g\\_source=MILITARY&g\\_medium=topic&g\\_campaign=tiles](http://news.gallup.com/poll/214511/high-confidence-military-reflects-perceived-competency.aspx?g_source=MILITARY&g_medium=topic&g_campaign=tiles).

between those serving and society continues to deepen.<sup>181</sup> This divide is very concerning for DoD leadership as it threatens the country's ability to produce an AVF.<sup>182</sup>

A 2007 Congressional Budget Office report studied the effects of maintaining an AVF on the U.S.

The prolonged combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with difficulties in army recruiting, has raised concerns among decisionmakers, military analysts, and others that not enough troops will be available to accomplish the military's missions; that service members and their families are experiencing continued, significant hardships not shared by the rest of the U.S. population; and that less-affluent people are more likely to be serving in those operations that other groups are.<sup>183</sup>

Specifically, decisionmakers were concerned that the military continues to have more missions than necessary troops, and the impact of two wars is being carried by an inordinately small percentage of the population.<sup>184</sup>

The U.S. instituted an AVF in 1973 following the Vietnam War, but some see the current operations tempo as too large of a strain for an AVF.<sup>185</sup> However, the DoD has

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<sup>181</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Census Bureau Projects U.S. Population of 315.1 Million on New Year's Day," United States Census Bureau, December 27, 2012, accessed January 12, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-255.html>.

<sup>182</sup> Dianna Cahn, "Pentagon Says Military-Civilian Divide Could Endanger All-Volunteer Force," Task and Purpose, January 20, 2018, accessed January 22, 2018, [https://taskandpurpose.com/pentagon-says-military-civilian-divide-endanger-volunteer-force/?utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_content=tp-share](https://taskandpurpose.com/pentagon-says-military-civilian-divide-endanger-volunteer-force/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share&utm_content=tp-share).

<sup>183</sup> Congressional Budget Office, *The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, July 2007), 1.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

been able to offset these issues while maintaining the AVF with outsourcing. Contractors are leveraged to fill mission gaps as well as lessen the deployment burden for the active and reserve forces.

The military's target demographic includes the ages of 17 to 24 or roughly 33.4 million people, in 2017.<sup>186</sup> However, only 33 percent meet the army's minimum standards and therefore would be eligible to serve.<sup>187</sup> The army's recruiting command found that only 1.6 million of that 33 percent are high quality or what the military prefers to join its ranks.<sup>188</sup> Even more alarming, only 136,000 of that 1.6 million would ever consider joining the army and most have a family tie to the military.<sup>189</sup> About 80 percent of the recruits entering military service today have family members who previously served.<sup>190</sup> But, since 1980, the number of veterans in the U.S. has decreased by 50

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<sup>186</sup> James Clark, "The Vast Majority of Americans In Their 20s Are Unfit For Military Service," Task and Purpose, October 13, 2017, accessed January 15, 2018, [https://taskandpurpose.com/vast-majority-americans-20s-unfit-military-service/?utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_content=tp-share](https://taskandpurpose.com/vast-majority-americans-20s-unfit-military-service/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share&utm_content=tp-share).

<sup>187</sup> Clark, "The Vast Majority of Americans In Their 20s Are Unfit For Military Service."

<sup>188</sup> Meghann Myers, "Top Recruiter: Just 136,000 out of 33 million young Americans would join the Army," *Army Times*, October 12, 2017, accessed January 15, 2018, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/10/12/top-recruiter-just-136000-out-of-33-million-young-americans-would-join-the-army/>.

<sup>189</sup> Myers, "Top Recruiter," Clark, "The Vast Majority of Americans In Their 20s Are Unfit For Military Service."

<sup>190</sup> Clark, "The Vast Majority of Americans In Their 20s Are Unfit For Military Service."

percent, providing a smaller target base for recruiting.<sup>191</sup> Geography has also played a large role as nearly 44 percent of military recruits come from rural areas, but these areas only make up 20 percent of the U.S.'s population.<sup>192</sup> This equates to an overwhelming majority of the high-quality demographic who do not consider a career in the military as a viable option, and only a small military-linked subset of the U.S. population is willing to serve.<sup>193</sup> The disconnect causes problems as it severely limits the talent pool from which the DoD can draw recruits to fight its increasingly technologically advanced wars. If the trend continues, eventually there will not be enough recruits to fill the military's ranks, and outsourcing may have to take on an even larger role.

As the U.S. weapons systems continue to become more and more complex, maintenance and operation requires specific skills that are not readily available in the military.<sup>194</sup> Contractors who developed and produced the systems are also increasingly tasked to deploy with the units to provide technical support. The military is able to capitalize on these skills without directly paying and training for them organically. Additionally, many of these individuals may not necessarily want to serve or may not be eligible—further extending the DoD's ability to use talent it may not have had access to previously. But, there is risk in this strategy; especially if these individuals do not want to deploy to a certain area or are not available. The U.S. may be left with unusable

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Singer, "Corporate Warriors," 195.



equipment that provided an advantage over the enemy or was crucial to conducting operations. Training military members to fill those roles could take months, and the level of expertise may never be achieved. Furthermore, this takes more troops out of the fold that were necessary for accomplishing other important missions.

To further highlight the growing separation between those who have served and the rest of the U.S. population, the number of veterans serving in Congress has also decreased significantly. The 114th Congress (2014) consisted of only 97 members—or less than 18 percent—who had previously served in the military.<sup>195</sup> Just 43 years prior in 1971, 73 percent were veterans.<sup>196</sup> As the nation’s lawmakers become more disconnected from military service, they may unknowingly trivialize issues that hamper the military and the wars it is fighting. This is not unlike what was occurring in the Roman Government as the senate and other government leaders grew further removed from the military and did not fully grasp the impacts continuous fighting had on the army.

As an example, in the U.S. the Congress last passed a defense appropriations bill on time (October 1st) in Fiscal Year 2009, leading to multiple continuing resolutions each year for the DoD.<sup>197</sup> Continuing resolutions enable federal agencies to continue operations when a budget has not been passed by Congress prior to the start of a new

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<sup>195</sup> Rachel Wellford, “By the numbers: Veterans in Congress,” *Public Broadcasting System*, November 11, 2014, accessed January 15, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/by-the-numbers-veterans-in-congress>.

<sup>196</sup> Wellford, “By the numbers: Veterans in Congress.”

<sup>197</sup> Seamus Daniels and Todd Harrison, “What the Continuing Resolution Means for Defense Spending in FY 2018,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 17, 2017, accessed January 19, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-continuing-resolution-means-defense-spending-fy-2018>.

government fiscal year. Unfortunately, continuing resolutions have debilitating impacts on the military as they maintain the budget at the previous year's level. This prevents the defense department from directing the necessary funds to wartime needs, new development and modernization programs, and hiring and recruitment.<sup>198</sup>

### Economic Factors

Economic factors also play a key role in the U.S. outsourcing strategy. Funding an AVF is not a cheap undertaking for any country and drives nations to balance the size of their militaries against what they can afford and what they really need. Furthermore, recruiting top talent requires competitive pay and benefits. In 2013, the DoD budgeted \$150 billion to pay for active and retired military members' pay and benefits, and that number continues to grow steadily each year.<sup>199</sup> As the Congressional Budget Office report, "Costs of Military Pay and Benefits in the Defense Budget" points out:

Compensation of military personnel takes up a substantial portion of the nation's defense budget. In its fiscal year 2013 budget request, for example, the Department of Defense (DoD) requested about \$150 billion to fund the pay and benefits of current and retired members of the armed services. As in most recent years, that amount was more than one-quarter of DoD's total base budget request (the request for all funding other than for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and for related activities—often called overseas contingency operations).<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Congressional Budget Office, *Costs of Military Pay and Benefits in the Defense Budget* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2012), 1.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

Rome faced a similar issue: the barrage of invasions increased, so did the need to grow and pay for a larger army. Citizen soldiers were expensive, so the Roman Government pivoted their strategy to cheaper barbarians to fill the ranks.

Additionally, an AVF must compete for the same talent that may be presented lucrative opportunities in the civilian sector.<sup>201</sup> This requires the DoD to set competitive wages and benefits to entice and retain its best performers. Subsequently, high personnel costs impact the department's ability to develop and produce new weapon systems, build necessary infrastructure, and other crucial military items.<sup>202</sup> The high cost of fielding a citizen army impacted the Western Roman Empire as well. This forced their government to continue raising taxes to pay for the military's growing requirements.

Furthermore, the U.S. Military is charged with carrying out more tasks than it has the available manpower to accomplish.<sup>203</sup> Congressionally mandated end strengths for each service attempts to provide the number of troops required for the U.S. Military to carry out its missions while staying within annual budgets. Undeniably, more tasks exist than the military can accomplish with the number of troops provided. However, contractors enable commanders to extend their operational reach; by filling those gaps and augmenting uniformed members.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Congressional Budget Office, *The All-Volunteer Military*, 12.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>203</sup> William Latham Jr., "Operational Contract Support: Five Things Every Field Grade Officer Should Know," *Military Review* (May-June 2012): 16-18.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

The U.S. economy has held its spot as the world's strongest for decades, but the national debt has grown from just over \$6 trillion in 2002 to nearly \$17 trillion in 2013.<sup>205</sup> The growth can be contributed to multiple factors, but many economists point to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, President Bush's tax cuts, Medicare, healthcare entitlements, President Obama's economic stimulus, and the Great Recession.<sup>206</sup> The U.S. has spent over \$2 trillion on the wars in Afghanistan<sup>207</sup> and Iraq since 2001, and there is currently no end in sight.<sup>208</sup> The war on terrorism continues to expand and challenge the world and is not likely to end any time soon. Various terrorist organizations—al Qaida, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Haqqani Network, etc.—show no desire to quit despite successful efforts to remove them from their territory, disrupt their financing, and destroy their militants.<sup>209</sup> The Roman's struggle with invasions closely resembled the U.S.'s terrorism dynamic—a seemingly endless stream of attacks

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<sup>205</sup> Treasury Direct, "Historical Debt Outstanding - Annual 2000 - 2015," accessed January 16, 2018, [https://www.treasurydirect.gov/govt/reports/pd/histdebt/histdebt\\_histo5.htm](https://www.treasurydirect.gov/govt/reports/pd/histdebt/histdebt_histo5.htm).

<sup>206</sup> The Week Staff, "What caused the national debt? 6 culprits," *The Week*, July 22, 2011, accessed January 16, 2018, <http://theweek.com/articles/483063/what-caused-national-debt-6-culprits>.

<sup>207</sup> Kimberly Amadeo, "Cost of Afghanistan War: Timeline, Economic Impact," *The Balance*, January 11, 2018, accessed January 16, 2018, <https://www.thebalance.com/cost-of-afghanistan-war-timeline-economic-impact-4122493>.

<sup>208</sup> Amadeo, "Cost of Afghanistan War: Timeline, Economic Impact."

<sup>209</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, "Fifteen Years on, Where Are We in the 'War on Terror'?" *The RAND Blog*, September 7, 2016, accessed January 17, 2018, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2016/09/fifteen-years-on-where-are-we-in-the-war-on-terror.html>.

mounted across the empire's frontiers. As soon as one tribe was defeated, others took advantage of the situation and attacked in a different location.

However, these numbers do not take into full account the overall impact to the U.S. Government. The numbers address the funds provided solely for executing the war itself, but not the underlying costs resulting from the war, for instance, the health care expenses of taking care of the thousands of wounded troops over the course of their lives.<sup>210</sup> The Congressional Budget Office estimates the total to be over \$500 billion.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, acquisitions expenditures to replace and repair equipment that has been abused over years of war has taken a large toll on the DoD budget, and has prevented the department from investing into necessary research and development programs to ensure the U.S. Military keeps its technological edge.<sup>212</sup> Development and production costs for military equipment continue to skyrocket as well. Weapons systems are becoming increasingly more complex and thus more expensive to build and operate.<sup>213</sup>

### Impacts of Outsourcing

Negative impacts of outsourcing exist, as well. As the U.S. outsources more functions to contractors, those skills and expertise atrophy within the military, forcing the

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<sup>210</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, "The High Cost of the Iraq War," in *The Economists' Voice: Top Economists Take on Today's Problems*, ed. Joseph Stiglitz, Aaron Edlin, and J. Bradford DeLong (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 80-1.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Stiglitz, "The High Cost of the Iraq War."

<sup>213</sup> Obaid Younossi et al., "Is Weapon System Cost Growth Increasing? A Quantitative Assessment of Completed and Ongoing Programs" (Research Project, RAND Project Air Force, 2007), xxi.

government to rely more heavily on contractors.<sup>214</sup> This can be a slippery slope as contractors are not required to enter into dangerous situations.<sup>215</sup> In counterinsurgency operations that took place in Afghanistan, this was not an issue as contractors operated from relatively safe Forward Operating Bases and received periodic vacations out of the theater for rest and recuperation. However, in a Major Contingency Operation where a non-permissive environment exists, contractor safety cannot be assured.<sup>216</sup> Contractors may face the difficult task of recruiting individuals who will be willing to do their jobs if their life is in danger.<sup>217</sup> If they cannot, the result for the U.S. when critical functions are not available on the battlefield would be devastating.<sup>218</sup> The U.S. could be faced with a difficult situation of having to reconstitute skills that have not existed for years within the DoD in the middle of a major war or rapidly mobilizing National Guard and reserve forces. These vulnerabilities could be exploited by a near-peer enemy, and the U.S. may not be able to recover quickly enough.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization*, 161.

<sup>215</sup> Singer, "Outsourcing the Fight."

<sup>216</sup> Matt Kotowski, U.S. Army logistics officer, interviewed by author, Ft Leavenworth, KS, January 11, 2017.

<sup>217</sup> Singer, "Outsourcing the Fight."

<sup>218</sup> Singer, "Outsourcing the Fight."

<sup>219</sup> Peter Singer, "Can't Win with 'Em, Can't Go To War without 'Em: Private Military Contractors and Counterinsurgency," Brookings, September 7, 2007, accessed January 12, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/cant-win-with-em-cant-go-to-war-without-em-private-military-contractors-and-counterinsurgency/>.

Another potential concern regarding outsourcing points to losing talented and trained troops to lucrative contractor positions.<sup>220</sup> This could present a retention problem for the services as well as a recruiting issue as these firms compete with the government for the same talent pool.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, it may be motivating private contractors to leverage skills obtained at public expense for profit.<sup>222</sup>

Furthermore, contractors can quit and leave their jobs at any time, hampering the personal relationships that may exist while working with U.S. troops on the battlefield.<sup>223</sup> This is important because military members rarely, if ever, train with the contractors they will be serving with prior to arriving in theater.<sup>224</sup> This can lead to command and control challenges along with decreased interoperability and synchronization. Trying to find, train, qualify, and replace departed talent and skillsets could be prohibitive from a timing standpoint.

### Conclusion

While U.S. troops and contractors share the same goals and end state, contractors are not motivated in the same way as military members.<sup>225</sup> Profit is the underlying

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<sup>220</sup> Singer, “Outsourcing War.”

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization*, 19. A potential legal concern with respect to contractors is the lack of repercussions if they commit a crime in a warzone. Military members fall under UCMJ, but contractors have no such legal framework.

<sup>224</sup> Barnes, *The Ethics of Military Privatization*, 19.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 18.

objective for all companies providing the contractor workforce, and they must abide by the contracts in place. Companies that provide these personnel are registered and incorporated businesses that compete on the international market, not just in the U.S.<sup>226</sup> This provides an interesting dynamic, because the companies obviously prefer to support the customer who pays the most and openly advertise their services.<sup>227</sup> In some instances, this could lead to two warring nations competing against one another for the services of the same company. Theoretically, one day a contractor could be your friend supporting your mission in a combat environment, and the next day may move to the other side thanks to a better offer from the enemy. This could lead to a war being fought and won by the highest bidder, not necessarily by the nation with the best equipped and trained military.

Lastly, contractor personnel do not fall within the chain of command and cannot be ordered to perform tasks not discretely laid out in the contract.<sup>228</sup> Warranted contracting officers are the only government employees legally able to task contractors or change contract requirements.<sup>229</sup> However, developing requirements and necessary capabilities needed via outsourcing is a team effort and involves the contracting officers working closely with the commander as well as his or her staff.<sup>230</sup> This can create

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<sup>226</sup> Singer, "Corporate Warriors," 191.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 191-2.

<sup>228</sup> Latham, "Operational Contract Support: Five Things Every Field Grade Officer Should Know," 16-18.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.



challenges in deployed locations if commanders do not fully understand how to utilize and work with contractors. Nevertheless, education and training focused on legally and ethically maximizing contractors can prevent these issues from occurring.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

The Roman Empire in the fourth century had half a million men in arms, and none of its enemies could rival such glory; indeed, most could raise only the equivalent of a single legion, 6,000 men. But Rome's leaders did not focus on their enemies, and they preferred to fight one another. Now their empire is dust, their splendid cities are lost, and their glory is buried in earth.<sup>231</sup>

— John France, *Perilous Glory: The Rise of Western Military Power*

This thesis addressed the similarities and differences between the U.S. and the late Western Roman Empire's strategies for military outsourcing. While there are some similarities among the two experiences from which important lessons can be drawn, the American situation is too dissimilar from Rome to draw the conclusion that history will repeat itself. However, the U.S. may confront challenges similar to what the Western Roman Empire experienced and should stay vigilant to avoid making the same mistakes.

#### United States and Roman Outsourcing Similarities

The Romans and the U.S. turned to outsourcing for analogous reasons. Barbarians and contractors enabled both the Western Roman Empire and the U.S. to extend their operational reach at a reduced cost. The Roman and U.S. militaries were stretched thin across multiple fronts while tackling more tasks than their soldiers could accomplish. The Romans were fighting civil wars and guarding an empire from recurring invasions across its extensive borders. The U.S. Military is not only involved in a large operation in Afghanistan but also in other conflicts and missions across the globe. Barbarians and

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<sup>231</sup> John France, *Perilous Glory: The Rise of Western Military Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 393.

contractors were essential to achieving their respective governments' increased demands and were a viable source for obtaining services not readily available within the military ranks.

Furthermore, Rome and the U.S.'s political, social, and economic situations drove their need for outsourcing. In the Western Roman Empire, the size of the government grew unimpeded along with infighting over power distribution. What resulted were civil wars and tax increases to offset the increased spending. More troops were required to fight the civil wars along with guarding against the frontier invasions, and non-citizens were considerably cheaper than citizen soldiers. Furthermore, rising taxes crippled Rome's economy and increased the empire's appetite for imports.

In the U.S., a growing divide is becoming more apparent in the population between those who serve and those who do not. Additionally, fewer members of Congress are veterans and may not fully grasp the impact their decisions make on the military. The cost of maintaining an AVF is growing, the country's national debt continues to climb, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have cost over \$2 trillion. As a result, military end strengths are not high enough to account for all of the tasks levied on the DoD. Contractors have been leveraged to offset the disconnect between end strength numbers and performance of the necessary tasks.

Thanks to barbarians, Rome was able to move its citizen soldiers to the interior areas of the empire, where they could more closely guard the cities. They were then heavily relied upon to defend the empire's vast frontiers from attacks and invasions. Similarly, the U.S. is able to focus its AVF on the most crucial military functions while leveraging contractors for tasks not required to be performed by a uniformed military

member. For example, the U.S. Military is able to recruit more combat arms personnel while staying within Congressionally-mandated end states. Thus, contractors can be used to perform services that enable those billets to be moved to a combat arms function.

### United States and Roman Outsourcing Differences

A key difference between Roman outsourcing and U.S. outsourcing is the regulation of the personnel. The U.S., up to this point, has maintained leadership controls over contractors. Legally, contractors cannot manage or lead government personnel, and contractors cannot perform inherently governmental functions. These laws make a contractor-led coup very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

The Roman Government attempted to maintain formal control and leadership over the barbarians. Initially, only citizen soldiers held leadership positions within the military, and non-citizen units and Roman units did not mix. However, as time went along, this changed. Talented leaders, some achieving general officer rank, integrated into the Roman chain of command and led citizen soldiers and Roman units. Likewise, some military units transitioned to a mixed variety of citizen and non-citizen soldiers. As the recruits integrated into Roman units, their power and influence within the Roman Army and government also grew.

Comparing Rome's relationship with the barbarians to the U.S. relationship with its contractors is not an exact one-to-one match. Tribes living in or near the frontier areas of the empire were used as a defense force from attacks. Initially, Rome's relationship with the tribes benefited both parties. The empire was able to supplement its military with capable soldiers, and they were provided with Roman territory and stability. Moreover, the Roman Empire was the only source capable of employing them for defense purposes.

Conversely, the U.S. seeks out and employs personnel from all over the world. Contractors do not belong to specific tribes but are loyal to their companies and, ultimately, profit. The U.S. seeks out many diverse skillsets to supplement nearly all of its military functions and normally for a limited amount of time. While the U.S. often can offer the highest price for contracted services, other nations and organizations are able to bid for these skills on the open market. In the end, contractors are most likely to work for the highest bidder, particularly those firms with an international presence.

### Key Takeaways

As the U.S. continues to leverage contractors to supplement its military and help fight its wars, other historical implications may come to light that should be investigated. More research is necessary to further understand the role of military outsourcing and the impact on nation states, especially the U.S. The Western Roman Empire is but one of many examples throughout history where outsourcing was used to supplement a nation's military. Comparative work on mercenaries in early-modern Europe might be another area to investigate further.

Based on this analysis, an area where the U.S. should proceed with caution regarding its uses of contractors is the forfeiture of services and functions within the AVF. An over-reliance on contractors can lead to a degradation or total loss of necessary skills within the uniformed ranks. In permissive counterinsurgency environments with restricted troop limits similar to Afghanistan and Iraq, relying on contracted personnel is a suitable strategy to extending operational reach and accomplishing tasks normally performed by military personnel. However, in a future conventional fight that, most likely, will take place in a non-permissive environment, contractors cannot be relied upon

to work side-by-side with soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. Unfortunately, this could render critical services and functions unavailable and reduce the U.S.'s chances of success. Retraining uniformed personnel to perform these services and functions could take months—which may prove to be too late.

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