For the United States Armed Forces, the ethical issue of gays in the military has been an ongoing struggle. This issue has impacted the lives of thousands of men and women who have lost their careers after being forced out of the military due to their sexual preference. For the military, this is the most divisive issue of this generation, as the impact of allowing openly gay troops to serve in the military is hotly contested. From high ranking Generals all the way down to the low ranking foot soldier, every military member is directly affected by this issue (Grier, 2010).

In the early 90’s, President Bill Clinton passed the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” (DADT) law that became the guiding principle for the Armed services to follow in dealing with the issue of homosexual soldiers and the way they are to conduct themselves. In brief, DADT allowed gay men and women to serve in the military as long as they essentially hid their sexual preference and never discussed it or displayed it openly to anyone.  From the conservative perspective, the policy was not perfect, but, it kept homosexuals from being able to openly join the military services so it pacified them. For the homosexual point of view, it was complete discrimination that ethically forced them to lie about who they were and how they lived in order to go to work every day and function as a soldier (Sangillo, 2009).

The primary stakeholders in this debate are the soldiers first, then the government, and finally the American people. For soldiers, their concerns range from concerns about openly gay men serving in male only forward combat missions for months at a time. For many soldiers the concerns of shared showers, shared quarters, separation of men and women to prevent misconduct while gay men and women are allowed to share same bunks seems to violate the straight soldier’s rights also. For the gay soldier, their concern is equality and being treated the same as everyone else they serve with. Being forced to lie about their true identity seems counterproductive for them so they are demanding that their way of life be accepted by everyone (Sangillo, 2009).

For Congress, their stake is politically motivated and trying to decide which option helps them get the most votes usually wins the debate. However, for the Obama administration, this policy was paramount legislation that he felt was a human rights issue and they stayed the course to fundamentally change the United States Armed Services forever (Grier, 2010).

For the American people, this issue tore conservatives and liberals apart. The traditional conservative sees homosexuality as ethically immoral and will never accept an openly gay military based on their religious and personal values. For the liberals, the revoking of DADT policy and allowing openly gay service has been a top issue for them for many years as their morals and values see homosexuality as a citizen’s right that should be accepted by everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs (Shanker, 2010).

So, the ethical argument is conservative and religious belief versus liberal and ideological belief as to how the military should function and what protects our country more, DADT or an openly gay military. Many pro-gay advocates draw comparisons to the segregation issues of minorities not being allowed to serve in the military and draw the conclusion that this is the same type of discrimination (Sangillo, 2009).

I choose this issue because it forces one to really evaluate the complicated ethical issues involved. It concerns ones values, religious beliefs, and world view. The issue of allowing openly gay men and women to serve in the military is complex. It forces a conservative to go against their ethical beliefs and accept gay soldiers, is this fair? For the gay soldier, it removes their ethical dilemma that forced them to lie to keep their job (does that make the military stronger?). So, the social and moral implications of such a law are intriguing and require a deep evaluation of your ethical positions and that is why I am reviewing this topic.

The issue of gays in the military has been in the media spotlight due in large part to the Obama administration’s repeal of the DADT policy and allowing gay citizens to openly register to serve and continue to serve in the United States Armed Forces. By repealing this law, Obama is taking three mainstream approaches to the ethics involved: deontology (DADT policy violates the civil and ethical rights of individuals), consequential-ism (DADT forced qualified men and women to be expulsed and rejected from the military), and finally virtue ethics (DADT policy discourages honesty and fairness) (Danny, 2011).  In Obama’s conclusion, the continued denial of gay service member’s rights to serve openly in the military and the incentive to be dishonest was more of a weakness of the military than the actual allowing of gays to serve openly beside their fellow soldiers as equals (Danny, 2011).

In summary, only time will tell if this policy stands or is rebuked. The American history of acceptance would lead one to believe it will remain intact now that the barrier has been removed, as it would be near impossible to repeal. The issue of making the military stronger or weaker is up for debate. The acceptance of a gay military is going too positively or negatively impact people’s ethical views and there is no way around that. Hopefully, people will remain civilized and move on with their lives and this topic will be put to rest once and for all as was the case with the civil rights movements that lead to women’s rights and the successful desegregation of America.

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