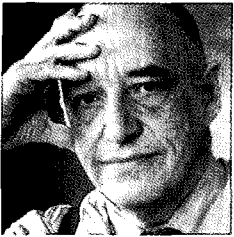


The war on terror, and earlier problems in filling military positions, yield intriguing practical arguments over whether a new form of conscription should be considered. Is it...

Time to Bring Back the Draft?



Charles Moskos

If there was any upside to the terrible events of September 11, 2001, it was the perception of Americans coming together. The press highlighted the patriotic upsurge all across our country. There was,

however, no increase in young people seeking to enter the armed forces in the weeks following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Despite all the flag waving, recruitment concerns remain at the forefront of the problems facing today's U.S. military.

Even before the war on terror opened, our armed services were already undermanned. The only way to resolve their serious shortages is to bring back the draft. It is time to construct a new form of American conscription that will restore the citizen soldier, properly compensate the career force, and allow other essential security work to be done at a reasonable cost to the nation.

A draft would dramatically upgrade the quality of U.S. recruits, because it would give the military access to a true cross-section of our youth. Due to enticing economic and educational alternatives elsewhere, the number of military enlistees who achieve advanced scores on qualifying tests has dropped by a third since the mid 1990s. In fiscal year 2000, the Army actually took in some 380 recruits with felony arrests.

Most telling, over a third of new military members currently fail to complete their enlistments. Contrast this with the one in ten draftees who didn't complete their two-year obligations when we last had a draft. It's much better to have most soldiers serve a short term honorably than to have large cohorts discharged for cause.

A twenty-first-century draft would be based on several principles: 1) Males only, as combat would be a likelihood. Women should be allowed to volunteer as they do now. 2) Active duty should be relatively short—perhaps 18 months. 3) This would be followed by assignment to a part-time Reserve or National Guard unit (the forces that will play a critical role in homeland security). 4) Easy options for alternate but equally demanding civilian service should be provided, thereby accommodating conscientious objectors and individuals who would be poor military performers. Providing airport security is one area where those opting out of military units could be placed. The costs of increased airport security in the new era will be staggering; they

Lawrence Korb



Why fix something that isn't broken? The answer is that we shouldn't.

Nonetheless, two groups advocate a return to a military draft: people who dislike an all-volunteer force, and people who overstate the military demands of a war on terrorism.

Opponents of a volunteer army claim it is too expensive. They assume military costs would drop with a draft because the Pentagon could cut its advertising budget and pay the conscripts subsistence rather than market wages. There is no doubt that military manpower is expensive. This year alone, the Defense Department will spend \$83 billion on military personnel.

But reinstating the draft would actually cost more. The average length of service for a volunteer enlistee is four years; most draft proposals call for no more than a two-year hitch. About half of volunteers re-enlist, while only 10 percent of draftees did so the last time we had a draft. Increased training costs could thus make a mixed draft and volunteer force more expensive than an all-volunteer force.

The point is illustrated when one compares our military personnel costs in the last year we had a draft, 1973, to our current costs. Back 29 years ago, military personnel amounted to 33 percent of the budget. This year, the Pentagon will spend about 25 percent of its budget on military personnel. Admittedly, the force is much smaller. But this evidence suggests that promises of significant savings on military pay amidst a draft may not pan out.

Draft advocates argue that a volunteer force allows the children of elites to avoid military service, and thus breaks the connection between the military and society.

People who hold this view seem to have forgotten how many children of the elite managed to avoid active military service even with a draft.

The truth is, the connection between America and our military is stronger than ever today. Witness the concern among Americans about casualties when our armed forces are sent in harm's way.

Draft proponents used to argue that under a volunteer force the public wouldn't care as much about those who were sent abroad to fight America's wars, since American society at

MOSKOS continued

can be contained only by some form of conscription. Israel currently relies on college-age young adults to do almost all of their airport screening, and they accomplish the job very effectively.

Opponents of the draft argue that the modern military requires a high level of technical skills that cannot be achieved by short-term personnel. Precisely. Higher pay packages should thus be aimed specifically at those career specialists whose skills are most needed, and not squandered on signing bonuses and college aid used in desperation to pull in enough entry-level privates. A two-track pay system could be devised to give long-term enlistees much higher compensation and drafted short-term soldiers much more modest pay.

The need to enhance the compensation of our skilled career force is pressing. We currently overpay new recruits and underpay sergeants, and the result is serious strain. Pay raises and bonuses should be focused on the career force, not on recruits, and this can only be done with conscription. Back when the U.S. had a draft, the pay ratio between a master sergeant and a private

was seven to one; today it is less than three to one. Restoring something like the old balance is the best way to upgrade retention in hard-to-fill skills and leadership positions.

Along with a draft, a major redirection is required in the way federal aid operates in higher education. At present, we've created a GI Bill for people who haven't toiled as GIs. Annually, \$30 billion in federal grants and subsidies

goes to students who never serve their country. In the future, only individuals drafted into our military or alternate civilian service should be eligible for federal subsidies for college.

Even with larger active and reserve military forces, and expanded forms of civilian service, only about half of all eligible U.S. males would probably be needed to serve. How then can a draft be equitable? I suggest we start drafting at the top of the social ladder—who better to serve a short term for their country than those benefitting most from living here?

When the children of our nation's elite perform military service for their country, our national interests will be taken much more seriously. If serving one's country becomes commonplace among privileged young men, the future leaders of our civilian life will have a formative citizenship experience at a critical age. This can only be of advantage to our nation.

Northwestern University professor Charles Moskos, a former draftee, is co-author of The Military: More Than Just a Job?

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large would not be bearing the burden of military service.

Yet as any politician can tell you, when America's army goes to war today, all of America goes to war. (Remember, the divisive Vietnam War was fought with a draft.)

Our armed services simply do not need everyone. Two million American males turn 18 every year. Since our active and reserve forces currently take in only about 300,000 new recruits annually, it would be a thorny task to decide whom to pass over.

Today, our active and reserve forces take in about 300,000 new recruits each year. Meanwhile, some 2 million American men annually turn 18. It would be a thorny task to decide whom to draft and whom to exempt.

Some argue the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington mean this nation should go on a wartime footing, which in our other great wars included a draft. But this war will not be like the war against the Axis powers or the Cold War. In addition to the 1.4 million people on active duty, the U.S. armed forces have some 800,000 reservists.

It is hard to imagine a situation in the war against terrorism that could not be handled by the more than 2 million volunteers already in our forces.

The all-volunteer force has given us the most professional and competent military in our history. Even in the booming economy of the 1990s, it managed to attract and retain high-quality people. Volunteers performed successfully in the Gulf War and are still doing an excellent job in the Balkans and around the globe. They will carry out their missions in the war against terrorism.

Why mess with success?

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence Korb is an officer of the Council on Foreign Relations and a retired Navy captain.



He's both a soldier and a scholar. A gentleman and a democrat. An admirer of high achievement and a critic of credentialism. A proponent of boxing and piano playing. Meet a sterling educator.

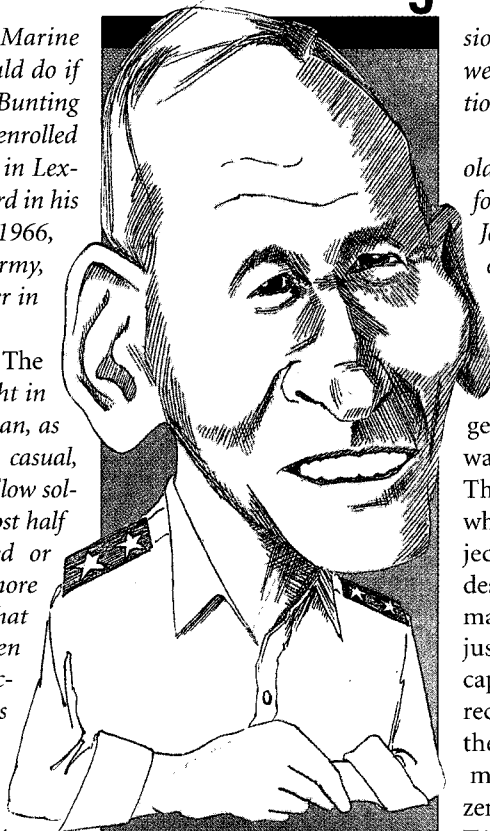
Josiah Bunting

In 1957, Josiah Bunting enlisted in the Marine Corps. “It was the kind of thing you would do if you had something to prove to yourself,” Bunting once remarked. After the proof was in, he enrolled at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington, where he eventually graduated third in his class and won a Rhodes scholarship. In 1966, Bunting began a six-year career in the Army, including six months on the Mekong River in Vietnam.

In 1974, Bunting wrote a novel entitled *The Lionheads*, a paean to the GIs who fought in southeast Asia. “They were utterly American, as American as a tall man with a crew-cut... casual, loose-jointed, confident,” he wrote of his fellow soldiers. “They knew what was coming. Almost half their company had already been killed or wounded, and they were going back for more because they were ordered to. The thing that got to you was that last year they had been taking cars apart in Pittsfield or driving tractors outside Bismarck or sinking jump shots in the gym in Cedar Rapids.”

Bunting then migrated toward academic life, teaching at West Point and the Naval War College, and becoming the president of Briarcliff College, a women's school in New York, in 1973. In 1977, he was appointed president of Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, an all-male school drenched in the Southern gentleman tradition. Bunting later became headmaster of a New Jersey prep school, then in 1995 returned to head VMI, just as the U.S. Supreme Court decided to force the institution to admit women.

Bunting's time in the academic world was the catalyst for two books: In 1998's *An Education for Our Time*, a fictional wealthy businessman sets out to create a college devoted to things absent from today's higher education. All *Loves Excelling*, published this year, is a novel about a girl at an elite boarding school who aims to attend Dartmouth College, and all the pressures that go with such aspirations. Bunting manages to make the book a searing indictment of America's obses-



sion with ambition, status, and credentials, as well as a behind-the-scenes look at the degradation of our teaching system.

Bunting, a father of four, and now 62 years old, runs long distances and plays classical piano for pleasure. He spoke with TAE associate editor John Meroney in the superintendent's residence on the VMI campus.

TAE: How have the terrorist attacks of September 11 affected the cadets?

BUNTING: The cadets are members of a generation that has had things pretty much its way. There is no military draft. There is MTV. There's also—so it appears to them—a broad white canvas on which to paint any career, project any ambition, and indulge almost any desire. “Hell, I'll do whatever I want” is their primary view of the future. That presumption has just absorbed a deep shock. But the American capacity to sustain resolve—once the threat has receded a bit—is uncertain. For this generation, the tragedy and its long aftermath, the summons to their patriotism and notions of citizenship, may be ignorable. I do not know.

TAE: No doubt the cadets here at VMI will respond to the crisis differently than will their peers in the civilian world.

BUNTING: Well, about 40 to 50 percent of them will be commissioned directly into the military, many of them this coming May. Plainly, their lives will be very directly and constantly altered.

TAE: What is their mood?

BUNTING: Somber and determined. They were powerfully touched by President Bush's speech to Congress in September, and they understand they're in it for a long haul. It's useful to remember that they were born when Ronald Reagan was President; they have no memory whatever of Vietnam—which is as remote to them as World War I is to many of us.

TAE: What lessons did Vietnam teach us that the nation can apply to this new war?

There are no snobs at VMI. This is the ultimate leveling experiment. And it lasts a lifetime.