

CONSCRIPTION, the REPUBLIC, and AMERICA'S FUTURE

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THE U.S. ARMY AND MARINE CORPS are too small to do all that we ask and require of them, and the American people live comfortably with a lie. The lie is that the U.S. armed forces have sufficient men and women to do their job, that morale is high, and burdens and pains are negligible. But the American people are absent from the battlefields, and Soldiers and Marines are angry. They are angry that they have had to serve extended tours in Iraq, that stop-loss policies have prevented some of them from pursuing their dreams, that there were too few of them to correctly implement counterinsurgency doctrine, that their families have had to sacrifice much because of their repeated deployments, and that—while many of them have served two or more tours in Iraq or Afghanistan—many Americans of the same age have contributed nothing to the war effort. This is because of one fact: American political leaders made an expedient decision to place the entire burden of the War on Terrorism on a small, professional force.

This breeds anger, pain, and contempt. However, these are all out of sight and therefore out of mind. The distance between the American people and their armed forces has grown considerably since the Vietnam War, facilitating the comfortable façade that the American people have only one part to play in the Nation's wars—that of spectator. The American people must acknowledge the *need to reinstitute conscription*.

Some argue that this is not possible, primarily because the United States is no longer a cohesive, unified nation, and because Americans are too culturally damaged, too focused on consumption. According to this school of thought, consumer culture has produced selfish people incapable of sacrificing for the greater good. Others argue that conscription is not possible because political and military leaders fear the public might restrict their freedom of action. They also fear the people's will is as weak as it was when it failed the military in Vietnam. Consider the words of Andrew Bacevich in his recent book, *The Limits of Power*: "As for the hope that reinstating conscription might reenergize politics, it's akin to the notion that putting Christ back in Christmas will reawaken American spirituality. A pleasant enough fantasy, it overlooks the forces that transformed a religious holiday into an orgy of consumption in the first place."¹ This statement reveals the *zeitgeist* of the American public in the 21st century.

The U.S. Army and Marine Corps are both overcommitted, stretched beyond their capacity to succeed in their missions. Constant deployments

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PHOTO: Soldiers stand at attention during an induction of new U.S. Army recruits on the field prior to the Army's All-American Bowl football game, 3 January 2009, at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas. (AP Photo, Darren Abate)

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are wearing out Soldiers, Marines, and their families physically, psychologically, and emotionally. The United States lacks the strategic reserve to respond immediately to serious threats. As a matter of national security, the country needs to significantly expand the size of the Army and Marine Corps. The only way to do this in the current political, social, and economic environment is to reinstitute the draft.

While there is ample evidence to support Bacevich's conclusion, we must not lose sight of one fact: *the American people have not yet been asked to serve*. There has been no national debate on the subject. Political leaders have lacked the courage to initiate one, and military leaders are too uncertain of the American people and too comfortable with professional forces to challenge the status quo.

In the years after the Vietnam War, the armed forces became a "military cluster" (representing 0.5 percent of U.S. households), a professional group with its own unique system and set of values, ethics, and beliefs. They have fought the wars of the United States from 1973 to the present. The end of the draft in 1973 effectively removed the American people from the fighting; be sure, they wanted to be removed. The Vietnam War left an anti-military atmosphere in the country, and it was not until the Reagan administration that this atmosphere started to change. However, the Reagan administration made no effort to put the people back into the equation for war. The removal of the people from the Nation's wars continues to have significant ramifications, the unacknowledged net effect of which has been disastrous for the military and national security.

After the horrendous 9/11 attacks on the United States, the Bush administration declared a "War on Terrorism," promulgated a new, aggressive strategic doctrine of "preemptive war" (really preventive war); and committed the Nation to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. It also deployed U.S. forces in other parts of the world such as the Horn of Africa and the Philippines. The Bush administration relied on forces already in existence to fight this extended war. It did not mobilize the American people for

"a long, difficult struggle," though it persisted in a propaganda campaign of demagoguery through fear by naming it such. With its Manichean, black-and-white world view and bellicose rhetoric, it effectively alienated allies and told them they were not needed.

Thus, almost the entire burden of the so-called War on Terrorism fell on the regular, professional Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force and the National Guard and Reserves. The burden rested on less than 1 percent of 300 million Americans. Moreover, with the American people removed from the equation, it was easier to go to war. There was no fear of an antiwar movement such as that experienced by the Johnson and Nixon administrations.

The Bush wars are not national efforts in a way that would rouse the ire of large numbers of people. In fact, it is wrong to say, "The United States is at war." It is more accurate to say that the military of the United States is at war and the American people are either spectators or disinterested bystanders. They have no duties, no responsibilities, and no commitments. Indeed, after declaring war, the Bush administration instituted tax cuts and told the American people to go shopping. Bush never asked the American people to make even small sacrifices, nor did he appeal to their better nature. He appealed to greed and self-interest. This was not the traditional American response to a war, and this was not the traditional role of American presidents in war.

Why Conscription?

Conscription is necessary at this time because we have too few Soldiers and Marines doing too much. However, this is only a partial explanation. The threats facing the United States are real, substantial, and growing. Part of the reason for these threats is ineptitude in managing foreign affairs and military policies. The presence of American forces in various parts of the world in the past 60 years has created stability and prosperity, making it possible for people to grow their economies without fear of invasion from their neighbors. From Korea to Europe, U.S. forces have maintained the status quo. The unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces by the Rumsfeld Pentagon, while necessary to meet the growing demands for U.S. forces in the Middle East, created new opportunities for aggression. The strategic reserve of the United States now consists primarily of air and

naval powers. United States ground forces cannot adequately respond to new or old threats.

U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine required four to five hundred thousand Soldiers in a country the size and population of Iraq, yet the United States was incapable of deploying and sustaining two hundred thousand troops. The stability achieved in recent years in Iraq is fragile, and the country will likely require the presence of substantial American forces for many years to come.

The Taliban and Al-Qaeda are recovering in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and NATO allies have failed to provide the forces or leadership necessary to prevent this resurgence.

The stability of the government of North Korea is uncertain. A change in leadership seems to be in progress. This always creates uncertainty in oligarchies, because they lack the institutional and constitutional systems for an orderly transition of leadership; and war sometimes appears to be a viable option for consolidating political power. Yet, the United States has withdrawn most of the 2d Infantry Division from South Korea.

Not satisfied with the status quo, Russia recently invaded Georgia. Russia has also worked to destabilize the government in the Ukraine and has challenged the American deployment of a missile defense system in Eastern Europe. Its naval forces are reemerging as a significant force. Yet the United States has withdrawn the bulk of two corps from Europe, and the U.S. Navy has committed considerable resources to the Persian Gulf region.

The United States is still responsible for the security of Taiwan. The People's Republic of China is rapidly expanding its navy, particularly its fleet of quiet diesel submarines, and has improved its ability to destroy communication satellites. It is modernizing its ground forces as well. Yet the United States retains no significant strategic reserve committed to conventional war.

Iran is rapidly developing nuclear and missile technologies and, by some estimates, it may pos-



A U.S. Air Force staff sergeant at McEntire Joint National Guard Base, SC, addresses new recruits during morning formation at Unit Training Assembly, 12 July 2009.

U.S. Air Force, TSGT Caycee Cook

sess the wherewithal to produce nuclear weapons and missiles capable of striking Europe in roughly two to five years.

The rapprochement between Russia and China aligns two of the most powerful nations on Earth, both of which are allies of Iran and have no affinity for the United States.

Pakistan, a state that possesses nuclear weapons, is going through a period of instability. Its new government lacks significant public support and is under pressure from the army. The disintegration of Pakistan's government would directly influence the decisions of the government of India, which is also a nuclear power. India, too, is experiencing instability and terrorist attacks.

American influence in Europe has declined. The European Union is poorly armed and frequently seems more willing to deal with Russia than the United States. This is understandable, given its dependence on Russian oil and gas and the dismissive, go-it-alone attitude of the Bush administration. The U.S. cannot count on Western Europe to provide a strategic reserve of armed forces.

General George W. Casey, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, discussed the current imbalance of U.S. forces:

While we remain a resilient and committed professional force, our Army is out of balance for several reasons. The current demand for our forces exceeds the sustainable supply. We are consumed with meeting the demands of the current fight and are

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unable to provide ready forces as rapidly as necessary for other potential contingencies. Our Reserve Components are performing an operational role for which they were neither originally designed nor resourced. Current operational requirements for forces and limited periods between deployments necessitate a focus on counterinsurgency to the detriment of preparedness for the full range of military missions. Soldiers, families, and equipment are stretched and stressed by the demands of lengthy and repeated deployments with insufficient recovery time.... Army support systems including health care, education, and family support systems that were designed for the pre-9/11 era are straining under the pressure from six years at war. Overall, our readiness is being consumed as fast as we can build it.²

No terrorist organization, undeveloped country, or failed state possesses the wherewithal to do more than minor damage to the United States. However, China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, India, and Pakistan can alter the strategic, international situation dramatically. The mere presence of trained, ready, well-equipped U.S. forces creates stability, deters aggression, and is evidence of America's commitment to peace. The absence of American forces is an invitation to aggression. The United States needs to maintain a significant strategic reserve of ground forces ready to deploy and conduct conventional operations and maintain a significant presence in ground forces in various regions to prevent war.

The Bush administration overcommitted U.S. forces and created vulnerabilities. It squandered numerous opportunities to diminish threats and secure real allies. The Obama administration inherited this situation. It needs to restore balance, and the only way to do this without sacrificing our gains in Iraq and Afghanistan is to significantly increase the size of American ground forces.

We are not in a new environment. We have been here before. The United States has a long history of conscription. Conscription has been the nation's response to labor-intensive wars since the Civil War. In 2006, I wrote:

Many Americans believe it is wrong for the small "military cluster" to bear the full burden of war while the rest of America does

nothing. Hence, there have been calls for the reinstatement of the draft. . . . As the demand for U.S. forces around the world increases, which seems very likely after the attacks on September 11, 2001, the arguments and demands for reinstating the draft will also increase. At the end of 2005, the Army and Marine Corps were overcommitted, trying to do more than was reasonably possible with current troop levels.³

Obviously, I was wrong, at least, in part. The demands for U.S. forces in various parts of the world have increased. However, there has been *no* sustained call from any segment of American society to reinstitute the draft. The reason for this is because Americans are once again disgusted with war. Most Americans believe the war in Iraq is unnecessary, poorly planned, and poorly executed. Americans are also too enamored with high-priced, sophisticated weapons systems, which substantiate the lie that additional people are not needed for warfighting.

After World War II, the United States became a European and Asian power responsible for the security of hundreds of millions of people beyond its geographic borders. *The problem is that Americans never fully recognized what it meant to be a European and Asian power, and never fully accepted the fact that it had to have significant ground forces ready for war on day one.* Consequently, the United States was ill-prepared when war came and had to rely on conscription to meet its manpower needs. Consider the following:

- In 1939, when World War II started in Europe, the U.S. Army numbered less than 190,000 men. When World War II ended in 1945, U.S. Army ground forces numbered more than 6 million men in 89 divisions. This was the result of a conscription Army.
- In 1950, when the Korean War started, the U.S. Army numbered less than 600,000 men, formed into 10 divisions. As General Ridgway noted: "We were,

Americans are...enamored with high-priced, sophisticated weapons systems, which substantiate the lie that additional people are not needed for warfighting.

in short, in a state of shameful unreadiness when the Korean War broke out, and there was absolutely no excuse for it. The only reason a combat unit exists at all is to be ready to fight in case of sudden emergency, and no human being can predict when these emergencies will arise. The state of our Army in Japan at the outbreak of the Korean War was inexcusable.”⁴ In 1952, during the height of the Korean War, the U.S. Army numbered 1,596,419 Soldiers, organized into 20 active duty divisions. This Army was the result of conscription, and with just a few more divisions, the Army could have stopped the Chinese well north of the 38th parallel and held North Korea.

- In 1961, on the eve of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army had 858,622 Soldiers organized into 14 active duty divisions, roughly half its size ten years earlier. In 1968, the year of the Tet Offensive, the U.S. Army numbered 1,570,343 Soldiers organized into 19 active duty divisions.⁵ In 1973, conscription ended. Many lessons have arisen from the failure of the United States to achieve its political objective of a free South Vietnam; however, one of those lessons should not be that the citizen-Soldier Army failed. Tactically and operationally, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps were not defeated in Vietnam.

On the eve of the first Persian Gulf War, the George H.W. Bush administration was in the process of drawing down American forces. The Cold War had ended and the American people were about to receive a “peace dividend,” primarily at the expense of the Army. Demobilization stopped temporarily to fight a conventional war in Iraq. After the war, demobilization continued, and the Army went from a force of almost 800,000 Soldiers to less than 500,000, and from 16 divisions to 10.

When George W. Bush came into office, the U.S. Army still numbered less than 500,000 men and women, organized into 10 divisions, but in 2001, under the heading “transformation,” the new Bush administration started developing plans to further cut the Army by more than two divisions. The terrorist attack on 9/11 put a halt to these plans, and the administration instead geared up for war in Afghanistan.

Throughout the 20th century, the U.S. Army was repeatedly understrength and ill-prepared for the wars it fought, and conscription became necessary. In each case, the citizen-Soldier Army rose to meet the requirements of war, and was successful in it.

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Anti-Conscription Arguments and Developments

Why has the Nation not employed its traditional method of manpower procurement in the current situation? A number of arguments advance political and military explanations, and others advance social, cultural, and economic explanations. The following presents the major reasons:

- The belief that science and technology are the panacea to all human problems.
- The belief that military service should not interrupt the unrelenting pursuit of wealth and ever-greater consumption.
- The fragmentation of the Nation into small, “tribal nations,” each with its own set of values, ethics, and beliefs.
- The belief that limited, asymmetric warfare, which is not in accord with the American vision of war, is not a threat that requires the attention and participation of the American people.
- The presumed inability of drafted Soldiers to master the technologies and doctrines required to fight on the modern battlefield with sophisticated weapon systems during a single, short term of service.
- A widespread preference for professional Soldiers who are more consistent and reliable, who do not restrict their leader’s range of action, and who minimize the public’s involvement in the fighting.

To be sure, this list of arguments is incomplete, and these arguments are not mutually exclusive, but it is important to understand them.

Science and technology. After World War II and the development of the heavy bomber and strategic bombing doctrine, airpower became a panacea, the answer to avoid the carnage that occurs when two great armies clash in ground warfare. During World War II, some argued that air power was a war-winning technology.

In 1948, after witnessing two atomic bombs bring the war against Japan to an end, Eisenhower articulated the new American vision of war:

In an instant, many of the old concepts of war were swept away. Henceforth, it would seem, the purpose of an aggressor nation would be to stock atom bombs . . . Even the bombed ruins of Germany . . . provide but faint warning of what future war could mean to the people of the earth.⁶

This focus on air power was evident in 2003 in the “shock and awe” doctrine that was supposed to win the war in Iraq without the involvement of significant numbers of U.S. ground forces. The invasion was supposed to demonstrate the most recent so-called “revolution in military affairs.” The development of information technologies, stealth bombers, and precision weapons produced the strategic doctrine known as “network-centric warfare” and the operational doctrine of “shock and awe” to eliminate or minimize the employment of Soldiers.

Unfortunately, the Pentagon was wrong, again. It is hard to see a revolution in military affairs in current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The prophets of airpower and technology have again contributed to a disaster that ground combat forces had to fix.

Wealth and consumption. Consider the words of Andrew Bacevich:

For the United States the pursuit of freedom, as defined in an age of consumerism, has induced a condition of dependence—on imported goods, on imported oil, and on credit. The chief desire of the American people, whether they admit it or not, is that nothing should disrupt their access to those goods, that oil, and that credit. The chief aim of the U.S. government is to satisfy that desire, which it does in part through the distribution of largesse at home (with Congress taking the leading role) and in part through the pursuit of imperial ambitions abroad (largely the business of the executive branch).⁷

U.S. News & World Report recently reported, “America is incredibly indebted. The debt in the financial world went from 21 percent of a \$3 trillion gross domestic product in 1980 to 120 percent of a \$13 trillion GDP in 2007, reflecting an astonishing accumulation of as much as \$30 of debt for every \$1 of equity in many firms.”⁸ The evidence is overwhelming that the pursuit of wealth and greater

levels of consumption dominate American thinking and actions more than any other endeavors.⁹ Consumption influences every aspect of American life, including the Nation’s ability to produce combat Soldiers. In 2007, I wrote:

With each subsequent decade of the latter half of the twentieth-century, the American people became physically and psychologically less capable of fighting wars. In the 1990s, ROTC departments around the country complained that new recruits couldn’t run a half-mile. New physical training programs were initiated to get potential cadets up to the minimal physical condition required for service, a standard that was far below that required in U.S. Army infantry units. Recruiters had the same problem.¹⁰

This is an issue of national security that has only grown worse since the end of the Cold War. The problem, although identified during the Korean War, plagued the services throughout the Vietnam War. In 1957, Robert Osgood wrote:

Quite aside from the moral odium of war, the fear of violence and the revulsion from warfare are bound to be strong among a people who have grown as fond of social order and material well-being as Americans. War upsets the whole scale of social priorities of an individualistic and materialistic scheme of life, so that the daily round of getting and spending is subordinate to the collective welfare of the nation in a hundred grievous ways—from taxation to death. This accounts for an emotional aversion to war, springing from essentially self-interest motives.¹¹

“Getting and spending” are no longer subordinate to war; they, in fact, govern the American conduct of war. The absence of a national discussion on conscription clearly indicates that national security is subordinate to the major American endeavor, the pursuit of wealth and consumption.

Fragmentation. Some argue that the United States is no longer a cohesive cultural entity. Evidence of the Nation’s fragmentation is more than anecdotal. “According to the geodemographers at Claritas, American society today is composed of 62 distinct lifestyle types—a 55 percent increase over the 40 segments that defined the U.S. populace during the 1970s and 1980s.”¹²

Some believe that people would ignore any law that required national military service. Patriotism is thus more rhetoric than reality. Robert R. Palmer remarks that—

The tie between sovereign and subject was bureaucratic, administrative, and fiscal, an external mechanical connection of ruler and ruled, strongly in contrast to the principle brought in by the [French] Revolution, which, in its doctrine of responsible citizenship and sovereignty of the people, effected an almost religious fusion of the government with the governed. A good government of the Old Regime was one that demanded little of its subjects, which regarded them as useful, worthy, and productive assets to the state, and which in wartime interfered as little as possible with civilian life. A ‘good people’ was one that obeyed the laws, paid its taxes, and was loyal to the reigning house; it need have no sense of its own identity as a people, or unity as a nation, or responsibility for public affairs, or obligation to put forth a supreme effort in war.¹³

Arguably, the term “old regime” provides as precise a description of America at the dawn of the 21st century as it does of the new nation-states born during the French and American revolutions.

Evidence of fragmentation is visible in the recent American conduct of war. Private military firms have taken over many of the responsibilities that once belonged exclusively to the military.¹⁴ War in America has become a lucrative business, which, arguably, further diminishes the need for Americans to participate in it. The responsibilities that once belonged to the American people now belong to private military firms loyal to the dollar, not the people, the government, or the Army.

The strategic culture of limited and asymmetric war. While the Nation has fought many limited wars, the paradigm for war that occupies

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the thinking of most Americans is that of the Civil War and World War II, both of which required total mobilization. President Harry Truman remarked on the American desire for peace: “Americans hate war . . . No people in history have been known to disengage themselves so quickly from the ways of war. This impatience is the expression of a deeply rooted national ideal to want to live at peace.”¹⁵

Americans have traditionally believed that—

- The United States is a *unique* nation-state, unbound by the rules that govern other nations.
 - War is serious business, and the U.S. ought *not* to enter into it lightly.
 - Major wars are a national endeavor involving the resources of the nation.
 - We ought to conduct wars in a professional, expeditious, and unrelenting manner and bring them to a quick, decisive, and successful end.
 - A war should be strategically and doctrinally offensive—and short.
 - Its aim should be the destruction of the enemy’s main army followed by the occupation of its country, and its political, economic, social, and cultural transformation.
 - The postwar objective is to change the defeated state to one that more closely resembles the United States—a capitalist democracy.
 - War is fighting; that fighting ought to commence as soon as possible, and proceed continuously and aggressively until America achieves victory.
 - There is nothing Americans cannot achieve when fully mobilized.
 - The enemy’s identity should be unambiguous, his location certain, and his forces visible and willing to accept battle.
 - Fighting ought to produce demonstrable progress and decisive results.
 - Compromise solutions are un-American and do not justify the human cost of war or achieve the Nation’s political objectives, which are absolute.
 - The exigencies of battle ought to dictate the course and conduct of war and minimize the loss of life; political matters should not impede the efficient use of force and the expeditious prosecution of war.
- Americans believe in equality of sacrifice—the fair distribution of the war’s burdens among the adult population. They believe that the Nation’s human capital is its most precious resource, and that while Americans are fighting and dying, no

other resource should be spared to bring the war to a rapid, successful conclusion. Americans like to fight highly organized, systematic, materiel- and technology-based wars. Americans believe that war is an aberration that upsets the American tenet that man is not a means to an end, and that his “pursuit of happiness” is the end.

Americans believe in acting unilaterally and aggressively and that sustained warfare is un-American and potentially damaging to American democracy. Americans do not accept defeat. They increase effort, employ more resources, improvise, adapt, and seek new solutions. Unfortunately, few wars look like this.

The atomic bomb created modern, limited war. Nuclear weapons destroyed the Clausewitzian tenet that war is a continuation of politics by other means. There is nothing of political consequence to discuss after a nuclear exchange between the great powers. American dominance in conventional forces has ended conventional warfare, at least for the near future. Thus, the American strategic war culture does not apply to the current environment.

If Americans cannot fight the type of war they want to fight, they will not fight at all. Hence, the

withdrawal from Vietnam before the mission was complete. Hence, the anger at George H.W. Bush for not going all the way to Baghdad in the first Gulf War. Hence, the absence of a discussion about a draft even today, when U.S. ground forces are over-committed, fighting two distinctly un-American wars.

Soldiers cannot master the technology and doctrine of modern warfare. This premise is demonstrably false. Most Americans can master the technologies and doctrines required to fight effectively on the modern battlefield in one year, and with a two-year commitment, the services would have another 12 months to employ conscripted Soldiers in war or other duties in foreign lands. In one to two years, most individuals can earn a master’s degree at a good university. Surely, an individual can master using basic weapons and learn to operate as part of a team in a year’s time. In a year, the average American can meet the rigorous training requirements to perform as part of an effective combat unit. The real problem today, not faced by previous generations, is getting young Americans in the required physical condition.

The absence of a draft gives leaders greater freedom of action. Using regular forces eliminates



AP Photo, Jason E. Miczek

U.S. Army SFC R. Scott Gianfrancesco talks to Wilkes Central High students about a career in the Army in Wilkes County, NC, 30 April 2008.

the American people from war, and it greatly diminishes the role of the American people in the political decision to go to war and in military decisions concerning its conduct. Without a draft, political and military leaders can be less responsive to the American people. Uninvolved, disengaged, and in many cases disinterested, the American people have no say in the decisions made by political and military leaders. They are not part of the fight. With an all-volunteer force, political and military leaders are not as accountable to the American people as they were during previous wars. As Bacevich puts it, “The truth is that the four-star generals and admirals view citizen-Soldiers as more trouble than they’re worth.”¹⁶ Since the end of the draft, the Army has grown to look more like the Marine Corps, a small, highly trained, elite fighting force, and at the same time, *less representative* of the American people.¹⁷

Many believe it was not the Armed Forces, but the will of the American people, that failed during the Vietnam War. The specter of Vietnam still influences decisions in Washington. The will of the people was eliminated from Operation Desert Storm, and it is, arguably, no longer a factor in America’s wars. In the view of the White House and the Pentagon, this is the ideal. However, political and military leaders are shortsighted. They focus on the operational level of war too closely to see the larger strategic environment.

As Bacevich argues, does being an American simply mean that we get to consume more than any other people on Earth, drive bigger gas-guzzling cars, live in bigger houses, use more credit, amass more debt, and eat more than other people? Is this what American uniqueness means? The lesson of Republican Rome looms for us now:

Between the early centuries of the Republic’s expansion, when the grant of citizenship was used again as a means to hold the state together, citizenship essentially was a status, which conveyed certain legal powers or benefits. It was also a moral demand in that, out of historical and contemporary ethical belief and practice, it placed before a man a schedule of his responsibilities toward the patria.

Historically, citizenship had called for a payment of taxes; now Rome was so rich those taxes were no longer required.

Moreover, that same wealth did away with the military service every Roman owed his patria. Citizen mercenaries recruited from the lower classes [and foreigners], now filled the ranks and gave their allegiance to Marius, Sulla, or some other general or politician [or corporation] who promised them good pay and retirement benefits.¹⁸

Is this what we have become? Are we following the path to decline paved by the Romans?

Our Strategic Reality

The Armed Forces of the United States, specifically the Army and Marine Corps, are too small to do all that is required and are focused on the wrong threats, the least significant threats. The United States needs to reinstitute conscription and refocus its major resources on the larger threats confronting the Nation and the world. This is a matter of national security. The expenditure of 10 billion dollars a month in Iraq is irresponsible. The expenditure of a billion dollars on one aircraft is inexcusable, irresponsible, and stupid. The arguments against conscription are not as strong as the arguments for it. I believe that if the American people have pertinent information regarding today’s threats and the condition of the Army and Marine Corps, they will respond dutifully, if not enthusiastically, to conscription.

The consequences of maintaining the current policy are a deteriorating Army and Marine Corps ill-trained to perform conventional combat operations, resenting the people they serve, and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, family problems, divorces, and a rising suicide rate. The risks to the country are failure in Afghanistan, Iraq, or some other part of the world; the inability to confront China and Russia with credible deterrent forces that preclude adventurism; and the inability to challenge aggression, short of nuclear weapons. Again, Riesenbergs reminds us that—

In citizenship, the passions normally dedicated to self and kin are directed to a higher purpose, the public good. Citizenship has survived so long and served in so many political environments because of its great inspirational challenge to individuals to make their neighbors, their fellow citizen’s life better and, by so doing, make their own

nobler. Such an aspiration made sense to Greeks and Romans in their cities just as it makes sense to us today in our vastly different environment.¹⁹

The war in Iraq was not worth the resources the United States committed to it. However, now that we are there, now that we have initiated war based on “false intelligence” and have torn the country apart, the problem is no longer an issue of resources. We have obligations. We have to deal with the situation we now face, and that situation requires a significantly larger Army. What we absolutely cannot do is leave Iraq the way we departed Vietnam.

Tom Brokaw coined the term “The Greatest Generation” to characterize the generation of Americans that suffered and lived through the Great Depression, fought World War II, and took the initial stand against the rise of international communism. This generation was not great because of how much it consumed, how big its cars and homes were, or how much credit it used. It was great because of the character of its people and its leaders. Fifty or sixty years from now, what will they call the current generation? “The Me Generation?” Life is a test of character. Is America suffering from a character deficit? **MR**

NOTES

1. Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power* (New York: Henry Holt, 2008), 173.
2. General George W. Casey, “Chief of Staff of the Army Statement on the Army’s Strategic Imperatives,” before the Senate Armed Services Committee United States House of Representatives, 15 November 2007.
3. Adrian R. Lewis, *The American Culture of War* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 36.
4. Matthew Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper, 1956), 191.
5. The U.S. Army Center of Military History provided the figures on Army manpower strength and numbers of divisions.
6. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 456.
7. Bacevich, 173.
8. Mortimer B. Zuckerman, Editor-in-Chief, *U.S. News & World Report*, 27 October 2008, 92.
9. Lewis, 29.
10. *Ibid.*, 31, 32.
11. Robert Osgood, *Limited War* (IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 33.
12. Michael J. Weiss, *The Clustered World* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 10.
13. Robert R. Palmer, “Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bulow: From Dynastic to National War,” *Makers of Modern Strategy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 92.
14. See Peter W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); and Dina Rasor and Robert Bauman, *Betraying our Troops: The Destructive Results of Privatizing War* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).
15. Harry Truman, *Memoirs of Harry S. Truman 1945*, vol. 1 (New York: Da Capo, 1986), 506.
16. Bacevich, 153.
17. At the same time, the Marine Corps has grown to look more like the Army. As its budget expands, as it acquires more machines, as its technology becomes more sophisticated, it necessarily acquires more war-managers and more war-technicians who replace the heroic-warriors.
18. Peter Reisenberg, *Citizenship in the Western Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).
19. *Ibid.*, xi.

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