

Drafting Women Is a Charade, Not a Necessity

The Armed Services Committee (ASC) recently approved a measure requiring American women aged 18 to 26 to register for the draft and sent it to the full House for consideration. If this measure becomes law it will do nothing to enhance gender equality in the Department of Defense that recently lifted a ban on women serving in combat.

The ASC's action typifies the inanity extant in the legislative branch. Although the measure passed by a vote of 32 to 30, Representative Duncan Hunter, the Republican head of the committee who submitted the measure, voted against it. If it becomes a bill and makes it to the White House, President Obama will sign it. Why is it inane?

First, it has been 43 years since anyone has been drafted. Over those years the Army shrank from over 1,000,000 active duty soldiers to half that number and is on track to dip to 420,000 by 2017. Additionally, the Department of Defense claims the all-volunteer force works well. Indeed it does.

Second, modern conscription of citizen soldiers began with the French Revolution's *Levee en Masse* in 1793 to raise a citizen's army to oppose European monarchial armies marching to crush revolutionary France. Conscription also was used during the American Civil War—though unpopular on both sides. North and South allowed bounties for substitutes and many Confederate states refused to support the draft.

Washington and Richmond turned to conscription because Civil War battles were deadly confrontations between armed masses where the latest technological advances like rifled musketry and rifled artillery fostered previously unimagined slaughter.

Third, by 1914 the Industrial Age factories and transportation

systems made it possible for major powers to raise, train, equip, feed and then transport immense armies. Further advances in military technology to include machine guns, rapid-fire rifles, chemical weapons and combat aircraft escalated the carnage.

Conscription heightened by nationalism and driven by competing ethnic and ideological dispositions drove armies into battles that consumed humans at a rate that made the first half of the 20th century the world's bloodiest. In 1945, at end of World War II, the atomic bomb and later the proliferation of nuclear weapons made that kind of warfare almost impossible for the handful of powers able to raise and sustain such armies because using them was no longer necessary or desirable given that the ultimate ridiculous conclusion would be mutual nuclear annihilation.

Fourth, while North Korea, China, and to some extent Russia, still field modified examples of large Industrial Age armed forces, the United States does not. North Korea chooses to have an army of 1,000,000 (twice the size of the U.S. Army) because its sole reason for being is to overwhelm South Korea. The armed forces of China and Russia are much more sophisticated but also large because these countries are major land powers sharing the same Eurasian continent.

The armed forces of the United States are transitioning to Information Age and Cyber Age warfare. The United States can use smaller forces to dominate battle spaces extending from space to the ocean's depths. These forces rely on speed, stealth, information dominance and precision munitions to find, fix and annihilate opposing forces.

Even if needed, the United States could not generate a million-person Industrial Age armed force because America lacks the heavy industrial capacity and the wealth to do so. Given the cost of modern weapons, purchasing enough to support a force a quarter the size of our Industrial Age armies would

be prohibitive. Beyond that, being nearly \$20 trillion in debt means that the United States cannot afford a massive military buildup. In any case, Beijing is unlikely to lend Washington the money to fight it.

Conscription makes about as much sense as poodle skirts in the age of pant suits and eight-barrel carburetors in the era of fuel-injected engines. As for gender equality, current policies allow women who want to serve to do so in any military capacity for which they physically and mentally qualify.

Furthermore, given the size of the modern battle space, female service members have been in combat since Desert Storm, when two were captured, neither of them at the time involved in what would be considered a “combat” operation. Today’s battlefield is multi-dimensional, not linear with the “front” and “rear” areas that previously existed. Ultimately, the issue of conscripting women is a political charade.

Republicans support it to avoid being accused of starting a “war on women.” Democrats do so as a matter of social justice and social engineering and not national security. Either way, drafting women is inane.

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Dr. Earl Tilford is a military historian and fellow for the Middle East & terrorism with The Center for Vision & Values at Grove City College. He currently lives in Tuscaloosa, Alabama where he is writing a history of the University of Alabama in the 1960s. A retired Air Force intelligence officer, Dr. Tilford earned his PhD in American and European military history at George Washington University. From 1993 to 2001, he served as Director of Research at the U.S. Army’s Strategic Studies Institute. In 2001, he left Government service for a professorship at Grove City College, where he taught courses in military history, national security, and international and

domestic terrorism and counter-terrorism.