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Critical Writing – ENG 120

Professor Wattley

Assignment # 3

Topic # 1

An Assessment of the 21st Century Draft

 It is true that many Americans hold the viewpoint that the United States military needs serious help. For example, former U.S. army officer, Phillip Carter, and writer, Paul Glastris, possess this view regarding a lack of volunteers for the military and fully develop it in their essay: “The Case for the Draft.” These authors state that “America’s all-volunteer military simply cannot deploy and sustain enough troops to succeed…while still deterring threats elsewhere in the world” (531). The essay continues by claiming that the U.S. military doesn’t only need more people in order to be successful, but it also needs a wide selection of “trained soldiers” (531). So what is their proposed solution to this problematic issue? Carter and Glastris have turned to the only resolution that they deem possible and effective: a draft. However, as I will explain throughout this essay, there are opposing viewpoints, held by other military experts, that state that the draft is really not the only option left for the United States military.

The proposal of the 21st Century draft would be more modernized than those used in the past, such as during World War II or Vietnam (531). With Carter and Glastris’ plan, “no four-year college or university would be allowed to accept a student, male or female, unless and until that student had completed a 12-month to two-year term of service” (539). Also unlike traditional drafts, young people would choose their line of service from three options: national service programs like AmeriCorps, homeland security, or the military (539). This means that the draft would strengthen U.S. forces “without requiring any American to carry a gun who did not choose to do so” (540). Furthermore, because the service would be made up of “college-bound” individuals, these volunteer recruits would be able to attain knowledge quickly, making training a smoother process (539). The authors claim that the 21st century draft would also “instill a new ethic of service in that sector of society, the college-bound, most likely to reap the fruits of American prosperity” (539-540). This statement means that the younger population of society would learn valuable lessons from their required service, which will prepare them and allow them to be more able to bring success to the United States in the future.

One may ask: why do Carter and Glastris view the draft as the only sufficient option? In their essay, they discuss five proposed options besides the draft; however, they continue by creating an argument against each. First, the authors explain that because the United States is a considerable world power, it cannot rely on other countries for support as some may believe that it can (536). Next, Carter and Glastris argue that the use of private military contractors can be expensive and that rivalry and tension amongst each other will lead to a lack in focus (536). Additionally, the authors argue that if the U.S. were to follow the advice of professionals by radically forming the military, it would not help all that much because there may be a need for all lines of service in the future (536). Also, by increasing the active force, Carter and Glastris argue that costs would be too excessive and still may not lure in the needed amount of soldiers (537). Finally, the problem with building search capacity into reserves is that there is a need to fix resources and that “under the all-volunteer army system it’s hard to fix the short-term problem (too few troops now) without creating long-term problems (too many troops later)” (537).

Although Carter’s and Glastris’ arguments against each of these alternative options to the draft may be logical and valid, these authors did not consider the opposing views to their own proposal, meaning that they did not take any objections to the “21st century draft” into account when writing. Therefore, even though Carter and Glastris spent pages describing the draft and why it is needed, because they failed to refute or even mention conflicting views, their argument does not have full strength.

In order to further and sufficiently evaluate the proposal of the 21st century draft, there are necessary questions to be answered about the argument presented. First, are more soldiers really so desperately needed by the military? Donald Rumsfeld, secretary of defense for the Bush administration, explains in his essay, “New Model Army,” that a draft is not necessary at the current time. “Since September 2001 we have increased active force levels above authorized levels – by 33,000, or more at times (529),” which was without the use of a draft as Rumsfeld further discusses. He continues by saying that the problem is not the size of the military but it is the management of the forces (529). Carter and Glastris mention Rumsfeld in their essay when they claim that his “Modular Army” idea was a “mistake” to follow (531). If Rumsfeld’s plan was such a “mistake,” then why would there be data, such as the aforementioned, to support the use of the “Modular Army?” An audience could easily argue that there is no need to change something that is already shown to be effective. Also, Rumsfeld claims that international participation in Iraq and Afghanistan has helped in the war effort, differing entirely from what Carter and Glastris argued in their essay (529). Therefore, not all military experts would agree that the problem that Carter and Glastris try to solve in their proposal argument is really a problem. In fact, Rumsfeld does not even see a need for more troops, especially not from a mandatory draft of college-bound students.

Additionally, it should be discussed whether the 21st century draft is even an effective solution. In their essay, “An All-Volunteer Army? Recruitment and Its Problems,” authors Lawrence Korb and Sean Duggan discuss reasons as to why a draft would be ineffective in today’s society. They mention that the costs of high drafts can be excessive and that the education experience level of troops will eventually weaken (542). Also, it is discussed that draftees rarely re-enlist and do not usually stay for the needed time for full training (542). This would mean that any investments made in the drafted individuals would be wasteful because they are not likely to remain to be educated to their full potential. As officials begin to see that the amount of time, effort and resources used to train these short-term troops is not worthwhile, the education administered to these draftees would eventually decline. Therefore, the troops would not become fully prepared for service, which could leave the soldiers themselves at great risk for their own lives but also the safety of the United States as a country would be at stake. There would in turn be no long-term benefit to the military, which would leave the efforts of the 21st century draft completely unproductive. These statements demonstrate the downfalls to the use of the draft. Therefore, the 21st century draft proposed by Carter and Glastris would most certainly not be effective for our nation because of these basic disadvantages that drafts cause for societies.

Yet another question that should be addressed is whether an audience will view the 21st century draft proposal as being too costly. According to David Wood of *Politics Daily,* the cost of military benefits and pay is currently becoming “unsustainable” for the economy. The article continues with the following unfortunate statistics: “The military's ‘all volunteer force’ concept…has been a resounding success, but at a resounding cost. In the past decade, the Army's personnel costs have more than doubled, from $27.7 billion in 2001 to a projected $59.1 billion for 2011” (Wood). This is an astounding amount of money for our country, already deep in debt, to be paying to its military. If Carter’s and Glastris’ proposal were to become true, then there would be “28 million young Americans of draft age” that would demand to be paid in addition to the current combat force (538). With the United States still trying to recover from a major recession, from where will all of this money for stipends and GI Bill-type college grants come? More importantly, will such demand for money put our country further into debt? If this is so, more harm will be done to society because the economy would greatly suffer which would cause the citizens of the United States to endure the consequences.

Finally, as the examples listed earlier have examined, there really is no immediate need for an overflowing of additional troops such as the 21st century draft would bring. Therefore, our current policies on military recruitment, the “Modular” and all-volunteer army strategies, can be considered as “counterproposals” to what is provided by Carter and Glastris in their essay. This is because these current policies are functioning suitably for the United States. For instance, the “Modular Army” is formed from “smaller, self-contained brigades that are interchangeable and available to work for any Division” (530). This idea, as aforementioned, was proposed by Donald Rumsfeld when he was Secretary of Defense and has since then been used by the U.S. military (531). Also, the all-volunteer army is a current strategy that basically involves no force upon people to join; it is where recruitment is strictly based on volunteers. This aforesaid strategy was proposed by Korb and Duggan where they agreed with Rumsfeld that a “draft does not seem to be an option supported by military leadership or the American people” (547). If the United States is having difficulties sustaining the military now, a surplus of more soldiers from a draft would only cause more harm to our society. Anything harmful to society would definitely be opposed by the American public.

Moreover, there are other concerns that would need to be addressed before any motion towards the enactment of a 21st century draft is taken. It must be understood that a draft which requires service from both males and females has never before been in effect in the United States. Therefore, such an action may have effects on society that the country may not have expected or for which they were not prepared. For example, by delaying both males and females from beginning their college educations on time, society will be negatively affected by the lack of young people who will not be admitted into the workplace as each graduating generation normally does. It would also keep young people from innovating new ideas that could possibly employ growth in the economy. Furthermore, it may be possible that four-year universities would not be able to last without attendance or incoming funds while the young people are away at service. Therefore, the education would quickly dwindle and quite possibly no longer exist when the men and women would come back from their required service. This would be detrimental to society because it would fully prevent younger generations from gaining a worthwhile college experience and leave them unequipped and without specialized skills needed in the workplace.

Therefore, it seems that even though Carter and Glastris are knowledgeable in the military field and have done much research in creating their proposal, there is also much evidence against their viewpoints. Their proposal argument may have been more convincing to the audience if they had taken possible objections into consideration and refuted them within their argument. Their lack in explaining vital information, such as the various effects such a draft would have on society and how the country could deal with them, leaves their proposal incomplete and easy to attack. Therefore, it is not likely that their idea will be implemented while such important questions are left unanswered. From this and the rest of the analysis of Carters and Glastris’ proposal argument, it can be said that their 21st century draft may not entirely be needed. Even if it were, the draft would not be the most effective option and especially not the only possibility for the United States military.

Works Cited

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