

Why It Might Be Time to Bring Back Mandatory Citizen Militias

I received some fascinating responses and comments regarding my recent column about [how the West can save masculinity](#). One email in particular caught my attention. It was from a friend of mine named Troy, a socially conservative, politically libertarian member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Troy is happily married with three young children and has been working in the IT field on the East Coast. However, he is feeling torn between his desire to serve in the military and his need to continue working a job that supports his family but leaves him feeling bereft of purpose and masculinity.

Troy was recently accepted into the Green Berets and is weighing his options. Although he badly wants to serve the country, he told me he doesn't believe that the military will allow him enough time with his young children. He also disagrees with many of America's current military deployments overseas.

"I lament that there is almost no place for a man to be a part of an actual fighting force, a homeland-defense force," Troy said in his email. "Instead, your only options are an over-inflated military that demands too much of your time at the expense of your family and then sends you off to foreign wars where you shouldn't be in the first place."

Troy got me thinking when he suggested that one solution might be compulsory domestic national service, aimed purely at the defense of the country. He writes:

I think society would be much better off if we created a civilian-militia force in every state. That all able-bodied

men were required to join, and were trained in basic military skills and tasks, including the basics of weapons handling and infantry maneuvers. Men of various backgrounds could then be assigned to various jobs within the militia, such as tech jobs, maintenance, etc. There could be a minimum time requirement, with the option to get paid more for extra volunteer time. The militia would not have to require too much time away from family, and each unit would have a camaraderie and brotherhood. And the only purpose of the entire militia body would be to defend the homeland; no cross-border invasions or shipping off to foreign soil for invasion-wars like Afghanistan or Iraq.

The National Guard, of course, serves as a form of domestic militia, but can be federalized in wartime and [ordered on foreign tours](#), as has been done extensively in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Numerous National Guard troops have also been deployed to the U.S.-Mexico border in the operation formerly known as [Faithful Patriot](#), which Troy does agree with.

Baltic states have been bolstering their regular forces with [volunteer citizen soldiers](#) to help deter Russian hostilities, so this is far from a random or far-out idea. And it's been proposed in various forms over the past few decades. A vaguely defined compulsory (or at least highly encouraged) term of national service at age 18 is currently [being pitched](#) by Democratic presidential contender and Afghanistan veteran Pete Buttigieg as a way to bring Americans together and teach them valuable skills.

Of course, there are pros and cons. On the downside, a compulsory domestic force would upset many libertarians and religious pacifists (Amish, Mennonites, and others who presumably would be granted a non-military option for national service). It could be politicized, creating an atmosphere in which one half of the country opposes it on principle.

What it would do is teach teamwork, life skills, and psychological and physical toughness. It would foster a sense of connected identity, camaraderie, and unit cohesion. It would put together individuals from myriad social classes and backgrounds and—if done right—help make those differences subordinate to a unified national identity and mission. By making service the norm, the nation could define patriotic duty above purely voluntary choice and eliminate the anxiety and insecurity of young people wondering what to do after high school. It could help those who feel that their only options are low-paid jobs and college.

For his part, Troy believes that society is putting men between a rock and a hard place.

“It just makes me mad because, yet again, our modern society has succeeded at making true manliness impossible: you can work a meaningless job and be able to raise your children, or you can join the military and never see your kids (and morally question all the work you do),” Troy writes. “The happy balance is just not available anymore—unless you create it yourself through hard work, entrepreneurship and creativity. So, I guess that’s my challenge right now.”

Meanwhile, as he weighs whether or not to enter the Green Berets, Troy is struggling with the emptiness of modern corporate culture. He continues:

I don't want my body to atrophy. I don't want lower back pain from sitting at a desk all day. I don't want diminishing eyesight from hours of glaring at screens. I don't want a puddle for a brain from years of unimportant business emails and combing over spreadsheet rows and columns. Even the men in my office who do go to the gym—they are not developing useful strength. They focus on bicep curls and chest presses so they look good. But put those men in a combat or emergency situation where they had to fight to defend somebody or scramble out of a falling building while dragging their co-

worker out—and they simply could not do it. You're right about men losing themselves—this whole world is full of bland, faceless men who lose their hearts and minds in their jobs. And I do not want to be a part of it, of that, of them.

I'm interested to see what the reaction to Troy's idea is, and whether readers think it would help solidify public dedication to family and nation or lead to further social division and civil strife.

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