



By: *Catriona M. Munro, TA Editor in Chief*

# To fight or not to fight



Most people would agree that geopolitically, we currently live in a febrile and volatile atmosphere, and it is the first time I recollect any British politician suggesting that citizens of a certain age need to submit to military conscription, or the “draft” as the Americans used to call it.

I imagine it would be a huge body blow for the likes of me, having only gone through a Cold War and the equally abstract War Against Terror. Except that surely I am too old to be of any use physically or mentally.

Of course the likelihood of anyone 10 years one older or younger than me being invited to join the Armed Forces is a strange concept.

I know there are now more women in the Armed Forces overall than there were before. (16,740; 11%). Doing some research for this article, I found a Cambridge University Press [article](#) lauding the role of “women ex-combatants for use in rebellion matters in post-conflict peace”. This is all a bit nebulous.

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A British General rather lit the torchpaper by recently saying that British people should be prepared to go to war if necessary as this would be a “whole of nation undertaking”.

His argument was that Western top brass countries had spent last summer, if not preparing for war, laying the kind of groundwork the military likes to lay.

Social media of course took up a sea of arms. There was a slew of commentaries about the irony of admonishing the younger generation as “snowflakes” - too effete to fight or too mature and sophisticated to waste time and resources on war.

## Citizen's Army

Unlike the Irish, the UK has not widely experimented with a Citizens' Army. A citizens' army of course consists of volunteer members who are also home-based soldiers.

Another general in retirement - an admiral on this occasion - has also spoken out about our soon likely need for mobilisation. No need for conscription; the military seem confident we will step up to the plate, snowflakes or otherwise.

Last year, a think tank of military minded MP's came up with a “civic” national scheme for 16 year olds - that's me right off the hook.

There is, of course, the route of the conscientious objector and the cruel and inhumane treatment of deserters during the First World War - they were frequently hung.

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These people, who refused to fight in the war, simply too disturbed and traumatised to continue, had to appear at a military tribunal to defend their pacifism, ironically.

If the person in question refused every bit of fighting on principle, they might manage to get a non-combative role or if not, they faced fines, or prison.

One advantage was if you were an actor, comedian or other kind of artist. Many entertainers who managed to join the Entertainment Corps, or the Entertainment National Service Association, where they found fame and opportunities in had a successful career in radio broadcasts.

There are probably several people who was surprised to find themselves in some far-flung environment making a bunch of soldiers laugh. Good for them.