

Obama drafts 310 million Americans, rhetorically

By Neil Munro - The Daily Caller Published: 7:32 PM 02/03/2012 | Updated: 3:09 PM 02/04/2012

President [Barack Obama](#) is urging Americans citizens to act like soldiers on a domestic economic battlefield, presumably under his generalship. Soldiers “work as a team [and] personify the very best that America has to offer,” Obama declared during a Feb. 3 press event at a Virginia firehouse. “That’s true on the battlefield. ... It’s also true on the home front,” said Obama, who used the event to highlight new federal job-creation programs for veterans.

Obama’s comparison of civilians to soldiers is a mistake, said David Boaz, the executive vice president of the Cato Institute.

“The military is a team, a football team is a team, a company can work a team... but 310 million people don’t have a single purpose,” he told The Daily Caller.

“We have many different purposes and goals,” he said.

For example, “I want a job and you want to the same job, I want to sell more pizza in Nashville and so do you... that’s competition, and that’s a completely different kind of of society that one with a single purpose,” he said.

Obama used similar military language in his Jan. 24 State of the Union speech.

“At a time when too many of our institutions have let us down, [soldiers] exceed all expectations... they don’t obsess over their differences. They focus on the mission at hand. They work together,” he declared. [\(RELATED: Full coverage of the Obama presidency\)](#)

“This nation is great because we worked as a team... because we get each other’s backs,” he said. “If we hold fast to that truth, in this moment of trial, there is no challenge too great; no mission too hard.”

At his Feb 3 speech in the Arlington, Va. firehouse, Obama began by saying the firehouse had responded to the 9/11 attack, and then cited the military’s emphasis on teamwork.

Americans, he said, “should also learn from them.... act as a team. Finish the job. That’s what we’ve got to do when it comes to our nation’s recovery.”

Soldiers “remind us that when we come together as one people and as one community, one nation, then we prevail... Those are values that this fire station understands. We’ve got to make sure that we return to those values.”

This martial pitch matches his repeated calls for Americans to agree with his progressive policies, which emphasize top-down expert guidance of the economy, including the financial, medical, auto-manufacturing, energy, educational, transport and social elements in American society.

Other progressives have used a similar government led mobilization of the economy, especially in wartime. During World War I and then World War II, Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt urged military-style direction by the federal government.

Obama downplays teamwork, however, when the teams are not part of his political coalition, or do not want to be led by a federal government.

On Jan 20., for example, his administration announced that religious employees at church-run schools, hospitals and universities would not be regarded as part of churches’ teams, which are exempt from some health sector regulations. Instead, Obama directed they be separated and treated as routine commercial employees, subject to routine federal health-sector regulations.

Similarly, progressives have objected strongly to other groups of American acting in coordination, including the tea party movement, gun-rights supporters, pro-life groups, social conservative movements and advocates for property rights.

Conservatives, in contrast, argue that a large variety of voluntary social groups can promote freedom and prosperity by curbing and shrinking the federal government’s expanding ambitions. These varied groups should include states and localities, families and individuals, churches, companies and non-profits, private schools and charities, say social conservatives and free-market conservatives.

Obama is likely using his military language because it gets a good reaction in polling, said Tevi Troy, a former deputy secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services in President George W. Bush’s administration. In general, “everybody loves ‘teamwork,’ it’s a great concept,” he said.

But Bush wouldn’t have used such military language when advocated domestic goals because it is “mindless,” he said, “America is not a great country because of this notion of teamwork... were our best inventions made by groups of people or by individuals competing to get their inventions out first?”

More important the teamwork, he said are “ingenuity, freedom, bringing the smartest people to our shores and pluck.”