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THE ROLE OF THE
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY OFFICER
IN THE PRESERVATION OF THE REPUBLIC

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The subject I have been asked to discuss is both broad and intricate. In fact, the role played by America's professional military officers has paralleled and significantly influenced the growth and development of the United States from a loose collection of autonomous states to a superpower of major world influence. That being the case, I would like to begin by trying to narrow the subject to manageable proportions.

First, I will use the term "military" in the limited sense of army. Of course, the other services have made major contributions, but I do not feel competent to discuss them properly.

Next, the term "professional officer" implies three things. One is technical proficiency. A second is professional attitude. By that, I mean an overriding concern is the accomplishment of the assigned mission, in the sense of putting duty before personal considerations and also in the sense of being essentially an instrument of the policies of the lawful authorities, not an author of those policies. Some might call this mercenary; the soldier calls it loyalty.

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—Editor
This does not mean that the American officer obeys blindly or slavishly. He also has an obligation, before a policy is formally adopted, to consider the issues clearly and objectively, however unpalatable this may be, and to make his views known to his superior. If they are disregarded, he has the further duty to state his best judgment of the consequences of pursuing the policy he questions. But if he is still overruled, it is his duty to carry out that policy with as much enthusiasm and energy as if it reflected his own views; and if he cannot do that, it is his duty to ask to be relieved.

Both proficiency and attitude, of course, are essential to professionalism. My third caveat is that the officer I am discussing is a career soldier — service in the army is his life’s work. This is neither a prerequisite to nor an absolute guarantee of professionalism. However, it is the role of the standing army that is involved here, so I am necessarily discussing the career officer rather than the officer who comes into the army solely during mobilization.

Now, as for the “preservation of the Republic,” I will naturally be speaking chiefly about armed conflicts. Some of these have been major wars, requiring the nation’s full strength to be marshalled. A number of others have been less familiar operations, but always demanding and often hazardous, handled without mobilization. Contrary to a common impression, these have occurred frequently throughout United States history. The only significant gap in such operations, in fact, and the longest period of uninterrupted garrison duty which the army has ever experienced, was the roughly twenty years between World War I and World War II.

But I also want to make passing mention of another role, even though it is outside my assigned scope. I have in mind the army’s contribution in many fields not related to combat.

One such field has been exploring unknown territory — expeditions in the west led by army officers such as Lewis and Clark, Zebulon Pike, Benjamin Bonneville, and John C. Frémont; and, in Alaska, by Frederick Schwatka and Adolphus Greely. Related to these was the establishment of the roads, the communications, and the centers of necessary facilities which made settlement possible. Similarly, the army has made major scientific contributions, one of the most conspicuous, of course, being Major Walter Reed’s work leading to the conquest of yellow fever. This helped make possible the construction, under army supervision, of the Panama Canal. Other engineering achievements include the establishment of the Alaskan Communications System, the Alaska Highway, and a prominent role in the con-
struction of the first transcontinental railway. There has been work of vital importance in major natural disasters — General Frederick Funston's vigorous initiatives at the time of the San Francisco earthquake and fire come most readily to mind. On a different plane, there have been the semimilitary, semidiplomatic activities carried out by army officers, such as General Winfield Scott's numerous missions to conclude treaties with Indian tribes and his defusing of tensions along the Canadian border resulting from invasion threats by American-based Fenians; among more recent instances, there was the work of General Frank McCoy, a Pennsylvanian originally from Lewistown, in ending the war between Bolivia and Paraguay and in settling the dispute over the Nicaraguan boundary — work in which Captain Matthew Ridgway had an active part. Then, there are the cases of what can best be called civil administration — in Cuba, the Philippines, and Vera Cruz, and in the occupations of Germany and Japan. There was the operation of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Finally, there is the host of the army's active efforts aimed not so much at winning wars as at preserving peace on acceptable terms.

If I leave only one thought with you, I hope it will be the realization that the United States Army has been not merely an instrument for maintaining America's security, but a positive force for the progress and development of this nation throughout its existence.

The main burden of my remarks, however, will concern the purely military role of the standing army and its officers. United States policy has been to maintain a small standing army in peacetime. For reasons of economy, this army has usually been kept too small to meet the country's needs when war broke out. As a result, the standing army has often had to deal with overwhelming military requirements, trying to buy time during which the country's vast resources could be mobilized. In this, the career officer's role has been, first, to provide the leadership for the initial and often desperate efforts to fend off defeat; and, second, to provide the reservoir of military knowledge and the foundation of planning to permit the mobilization of the strength needed to deal with the crisis that has developed.

Now, such a statement seems so elementary that it sounds like a truism. It was not always thus.

Between June and November 1783, the Continental army was rapidly disbanded. By January 1784, only 700 troops were still in the service. And on June 2, Congress adopted a resolution by Elbridge
Gerry, which stated in part that "... standing armies in time of peace, are inconsistent with the principles of republican Governments, dangerous to the liberties of a free people, and generally converted into destructive engines for establishing despotism. ..." Accordingly, Congress directed that all troops be discharged except for twenty-five here at Fort Pitt and fifty-five at West Point, to guard the military supplies located at those places. For the future, instead of a national military force, the United States planned to depend on recommending to the various states that they supply men from their respective militia organizations to serve temporary tours of active duty. This approach was consistent with the view of the country, under the Articles of Confederation that were in force, as an essentially cooperative association of sovereign states.

However, there was a generally recognized need for some sort of national military capability. The British were still maintaining garrisons on American territory at Niagara, Oswego, Mackinac, and Detroit. Pressure for westward settlement was mushrooming; but the Indians north of the Ohio River, with British encouragement, were resisting the movement of settlers into that area. The Spanish in Florida and Louisiana were playing the same game in the south and southwest.

Consequently, on the day after it disbanded the 700 remaining Continentals, Congress authorized a force of the same size, to be called the First American Regiment. However, these 700 men were to be enlisted for one year only. Also, they were to be raised by specified states, and to be, in effect, state forces on temporary loan to the national government. The requests — not requisitions — were for 165 men each from Connecticut and New York, 110 from New Jersey, and 260 from Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania reached its quota promptly, and by the end of September 1784, the men had started marching from Philadelphia to Fort Pitt. But New Jersey raised barely half its quota, Connecticut did not even begin recruiting until 1785, and New York chose to ignore the recommendation of Congress altogether.

Furthermore, many of the men who were recruited were not the most desirable characters. One of the Pennsylvania contingent, John

1 Gaillard Hunt, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington, 1928), 27: 518, 524. Gerry, consistent only in his radicalism and his suspicion of central authority and all its work, was an implacable opponent of military effectiveness but an ardent advocate of war against Britain in 1812. He is best remembered, of course, for his identification with the term "gerrymander."
2 Ibid., 539.
Shaw, left an account of his service. He was a veteran of the Revolution; in fact, he was a sort of double veteran, having served first in the British army, then defecting to the American. He wrote that when the troops reached Shippensburg, "... we flogged two men for desertion. ... We proceeded to Chambersburg, and here we flogged one man for desertion. ..." Moving on, they halted for several days at Bedford. There, Shaw and some others got drunk and pulled down a garden fence so that livestock got in and ate up the vegetables. Shaw, staggering off, fell down a twenty-foot-deep well. Eventually an officer pulled him out. He was unhurt and apparently went unpunished. The next day, four other soldiers looted a shop and beat up the shopkeeper. Unlike Shaw, they were punished, being awarded a hundred lashes apiece. Shaw observed sanctimoniously that "... so hardened were these villains in wickedness, that they bore [their punishment] with a fortitude worthy of a better cause. ..."  

Some officers behaved little better. Arthur Lee, a member of a congressional commission sent to negotiate a treaty with the Indians, was at Fort McIntosh (modern Beaver, Pennsylvania), on December 28, 1784. Some of the artillery officers, he said, became "very merry late at night," ordered out a gun crew, and told the men to begin firing. The first round brought the post commander boiling out of his quarters, and he countermanded the order. The artillery captain defied him, and was promptly placed under arrest. The poor cannoneers were confused as to whose orders they should obey, and the next senior artillery officer was no help, because he merely told the men to do as they thought best. When they began loading a second round, the post commander ran one of them through with his sword. Lee observed that "this soon produced a withdrawal of the artillery." But the entire garrison was now under arms, and, Lee reported, pandemonium reigned, with "... drunken officers ... giving contrary orders, swearing at and confusing the men."  

Calm was finally restored and, presumably, retribution was had.  

For a number of years, the army continued to lead a hand-to-mouth existence, being given a short-term extension each time the current enlistments expired. The authorized 700-man level for the First American Regiment was never actually reached, but Congress continued to cling to the arrangement whereby the national army remained a collection of state troops temporarily in national service. In

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time, the tiny army was stretched thinner and thinner, manning a chain of forts from Pittsburgh all the way to Louisville.

The inadequacy of the system was obvious. On the other hand, Elbridge Gerry’s 1784 resolution reflected the fundamental conviction of many Americans. From the standpoint of maintaining the autonomy of individual states, a standing army, controlled by a national authority, certainly represented a potential for coercion. Furthermore, in order to pay a national standing army, the national government would have to have the authority to impose taxes — and with an army under its control, it would have the capability to enforce their collection. What was at stake was no less than the survival of the concept of at least semisovereign states rather than a federal republic in which the national authority was in fact supreme. Indeed, a number of modern scholars have seen the requirement for a professional army large enough at least to provide a degree of security on the frontier as being a critical factor, if not necessarily the one key consideration, which brought the acceptance of the Constitution — and a basic reorientation of the dominant American philosophy of government. Thus, I suppose it could be said that the basic contribution of the standing army to the preservation of the Republic was the Republic’s actual creation.

Not that this proved easy. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, our old friend Elbridge Gerry wanted the Constitution to specify that the national army being proposed should be limited to 3,000 men. George Washington, presiding over the convention, of course could not take part in the debate. But, according to one story, Washington loudly whispered a plea for someone to offer a motion to make it unconstitutional for any enemy to invade with more than 5,000 troops.

Adoption of the Constitution did bring into being a standing army genuinely in the national service, although it could not really be considered professional. Also, its total strength was barely 1,400 men. Although some 1,500 people were killed or captured by Indians between 1783 and 1790 in or on their way to Kentucky alone, Gerry and his followers insisted that the army be restricted to a size that would permit it to do no more than man the frontier forts, lest it be

6 Weigley, History, 85-86.
used as a threat to democratic liberties. For any actual campaigning in the field, the bulk of the troops were to be local militia levies.\textsuperscript{8} In sum, there was no acceptance of the idea that soldiering required any particular professional qualifications; with this, there was the conviction that "the regular soldier was . . . an idle and possibly sinister figure, not fully 'American.'"\textsuperscript{9}

This attitude persisted despite some bloody lessons. In October 1790, a force of about 300 regulars and 1,100 militia, under General Josiah Harmar, was ambushed. Most of the militia scattered. The regulars stood and fought, but they lost over 20 percent killed. Encouraged, the Indians grew bolder. For example, in January 1791, a family here in Allegheny County was carried off; and in February, all eleven members of the Russ family, living only twenty-three miles from Pittsburgh, were killed. The following autumn, General Arthur St. Clair experienced a defeat on the upper Wabash that was almost a carbon copy of Harmar's disaster the year before, except that the casualties were even heavier.

A few months later, in 1792, Congress passed the Militia Act which was to remain the basic law on the subject until 1903. It established mandatory service in the militia for every male citizen between eighteen and forty-five years of age and made provision for achieving uniform organization, training, and armament. With this law, the concept that Gerry and many other Americans supported could have been made to work, but it became a dead letter from the outset. There was no means of enforcing its provisions, and the states largely ignored them.

But another step taken in 1792 was Anthony Wayne's appointment to command the Regular Army — now increased to the impressive total of 2,600 troops! He went to work to develop a well-trained, thoroughly disciplined force, led by competent, responsible officers. Although he spent a good two years in the process, the result when he finally took the field was his resounding victory at Fallen Timbers.

It was Wayne, in fact, who created America's first genuinely professional army, led by a professionally capable officer corps. But the army's very success was its undoing. After Fallen Timbers, economy served as justification for steadily reducing army strength, and it was widely scattered in small detachments. The result was that officers

\textsuperscript{8} James Ripley Jacobs, \textit{The Beginnings of the U. S. Army} (Princeton, 1947), 124.
had little opportunity to learn, either formally or through experience, about handling anything beyond the most elementary and mundane military tasks. Occasionally there were flurries, such as the threatened war with France in 1798, which brought the temporary creation of new regiments. But these units were disbanded as soon as the crises ended. Also, these new organizations did not get even such little benefit as might have been available from the experience of officers already in the army. Commissions were valuable patronage plums, so the new regiments tended to be created *in toto*, with their officers from ensigns to colonels being appointed directly from civilian life.

Indeed, there were few incentives for *career* officers to develop or increase their competence. There was no retirement system, and officers continued in uniform for life. Promotion stagnated. There was no professional educational system and no rotation of types of assignments. There was not even much job security. In 1801, for example, numbers of officers were discharged summarily when the army was reduced from four regiments to two.

It is hardly surprising that many officers became mere time-servers, preoccupied with trivia. One controversy, which I admit has had some recent parallels, arose in 1801. An order directed that all personnel would have short hair; pigtails were no longer permitted. This was deeply resented — one officer called it an "imperious and arbitrary mandate." Colonel Thomas Butler, who had served as a captain in the Third Pennsylvania Continentals during the Revolution, flatly refused to obey. In 1804 he was tried by court-martial and reprimanded; but he still defied the order, and was tried again. This time he was sentenced to one year's suspension from pay and command, to commence on September 20. He won out in the end, though, for on September 7 he died of yellow fever. It is said that a hole was bored in his coffin so that the queue he still wore when he was buried could stick out.10

During this period, however, a major development took place. That was the establishment, in 1802, of the United States Military

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10 Jacobs, *Beginnings*, 262. Military resistance to short hair was not limited to the United States. Abolition of pigtails in the British army was not directed until 1808, when it set off in one regiment a protest movement whose entire ramifications were not finally resolved until 1834. The outcome was that the king's permission was granted for the officers (eventually, all ranks) of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers to wear as a permanent part of the uniform the "flash" — a fan of five black ribbons extending from under the back of the coat collar — as a vestigial remnant of the bow originally used to secure the queue. See H. Avray Tipping, *The Story of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers* (New York, 1916), 200-2.
Academy at West Point, although a good many years would pass before its influence would begin to be felt. In founding the academy, Thomas Jefferson saw it as a source only of artillery and engineer officers. The general feeling was that so far as infantry or cavalry fighting was concerned, every American was a natural-born soldier. In 1808, for example, Congressman John W. Eppes declared that "I am in favor of putting arms in the hands of our citizens and let them defend themselves. . . . I have never yet voted for a regular army or soldier in time of peace. Whenever an opportunity has offered, I have voted them down; and so help me God! I will, so long as I live." 11

But war was drawing closer, and despite Eppes, some expansion took place in 1808. To fill the higher ranks, however, men were again appointed from civilian life; the only qualification they had, other than political influence, was that they were veterans of the Revolution, which by now was twenty-five years in the past.

By early 1812, war was clearly imminent. As yet, however, the United States had never hammered out a clear military policy, let alone one that could be implemented. In January 1812, Congress tried to expand the Regular Army to twenty-four regiments, but few recruits came forward. So, in February, Congress authorized enlistment of 30,000 men in short-term volunteer units, but again there were few recruits. A number of generals were appointed — again directly — and one or two of them did in time turn out to be able men. But as for troops, Congress had to fall back on a request to the state governors to have their militias "ready to march at a moment's notice." Apart from the fact that the militia was essentially unorganized and such organized militia as did exist was untrained and ill equipped, there was a widely-held view that a militia unit could not legally operate outside the boundaries of its own state.

Thus, after war was declared in June and William Hull tried to invade Canada, 20 percent of his militiamen refused to cross the border. When President Madison called for militia from the northeastern states, the governors of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont replied that their states were not threatened by invasion; they refused to send a single man, on grounds that to do so would be unconstitutional. In October, when

11 Henry Adams, History of the United States During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (New York, 1921), 4: 211-12. Eppes, of Virginia, was both nephew and son-in-law to Thomas Jefferson. Like Gerry, he staunchly opposed military strength, but was reelected to Congress in 1812 as a strong advocate of war with Britain.
General Stephen Van Rensselaer wanted to cross the Niagara River and attack Queenstown Heights, only 225 men — regulars — obeyed the order. They took the heights, then beat off a succession of attacks by superior British forces until they were finally overwhelmed. While this was going on, 2,500 New York militiamen watched the proceedings from the American side with considerable interest, but refused all appeals for help.

Obviously, the militia system as it had been allowed to deteriorate was not effective. The expedient followed for the rest of the war, therefore, was to raise, from scratch, a large number of regiments, called regulars, but only because they were enlisted in the national service. These had major defects — in part because they had no leavening of any trained personnel, and even more because it was assumed that a man became a qualified soldier simply by being issued a musket and a uniform.

In 1813, General Wade Hampton marched with 5,000 such men against Montreal, which was held by 800 British troops. The British commander, outnumbered as he was, distributed his buglers over a wide area and had them sound various calls. This terrified Hampton, so he retreated without even making contact, convinced that he was facing a vastly superior force.

But as the war progressed, some younger officers were advanced to top rank on the basis of demonstrated ability. General Zebulon Pike captured Toronto, although he and almost 300 of his men were killed when the Canadians’ powder magazine blew up. General Andrew Jackson defeated the Creek Indians in the south. General Winfield Scott, commanding a brigade of newly recruited regulars, was able to withhold them from action until he had carried out an intensive training program; in their first engagement, on July 5, 1814, he won the Battle of Chippewa against a superior force of British regulars. The British General Riall, watching the steady advance of Scott’s men, exclaimed in dismay, “Those are Regulars, by God!” On July 25 came the bloody Battle of Lundy’s Lane, where Scott’s brigade and a similarly trained brigade under E. W. Ripley fought the enemy to a standstill.

This battle ended in a draw, but it proved the quality of American soldiers once they had acquired training and discipline and when they were courageously and capably led. Pointing up their deficiencies when these conditions did not prevail was the Battle of Bladensburg, just outside Washington, only a month after Lundy’s Lane. Whatever chance the untrained Americans might have had was seriously reduced
when, prior to the action, James Monroe, the Secretary of State, took it upon himself to redeploy the successive ranks of the defending troops so that they were too far apart to provide mutual support. How much blame belongs to Monroe can be argued. In any case, the outcome was a shameful rout for the Americans and the partial burning of Washington by the British.

The record of the War of 1812 on land provided ample evidence to dispel the popular notion that the only protection America required was an armed citizenry. The picture of the war as a whole is mixed at best, and much of it is acutely embarrassing for Americans. Even so, it brought an upsurge of national feeling and it certainly led to some significant improvements in the approach taken to the development of a United States military posture. My own view is that the establishment of a genuinely professional officer corps, with at least respectable quality throughout and a progressive and fairly consistent program of professional development, really dates from this period.

In part, this was due to the growing influence of West Point, as more and more of its graduates came into the service and began to rise in rank and influence. Even more important was the fact that some of the men who had risen through ability during the War of 1812 achieved positions in which they could continue to influence army policy. Finally, there were occasional episodes which required the army to test theory in actual practice. One was the Black Hawk War of 1832. Another was the Seminole War, from late 1835 until 1842. Like Vietnam, this was a very trying experience, and did few reputations much good. However, it did prove to be highly educational.

During this same time there was considerable development of what were called “volunteer militia” units. While the general militia was in essence the male population at large, the volunteer militia was formed into actual companies and regiments. To a large extent, they were preoccupied with social and ceremonial activities, but they did provide some basic military training.

By 1846, on the eve of the Mexican War, the situation was far different from early 1812, although not so much in terms of strength: with only 5,300 men in uniform, the Regular Army was at its lowest level since 1808. But a large proportion of its officers had recent and extensive combat experience. Almost 600 of them, mostly lieutenants and captains, were West Pointers. Their contribution was not only the skill which they themselves possessed, but the standards which, by their performance, they set for the officer corps as a whole. Speaking of the regular units on the Texas border when the Mexican War broke out,
Ulysses Grant wrote in his memoirs that "a better army, man for man, probably never faced an enemy. . . . Every officer, from the highest to the lowest, was educated for his profession." 12

To augment the regulars, President Polk called out 50,000 volunteers for twelve months. While these volunteer regiments were maintained as separate entities, a number of their officers were drawn from young ex-regulars, many of them West Pointers, who had resigned their regular commissions after a few years of service. Many, too, were drawn from the volunteer militia units I mentioned, or from the numerous private military academies that had sprung up over the previous thirty years, and thus had at least a modicum of proficiency. This made an enormous difference in performance. Russell F. Weigley, a prominent military historian, has written that the United States Army now demonstrated that "the leadership and example of a relatively small number of officers and n.c.o.'s who knew the business of soldiering could make good soldiers out of willing citizens in a remarkably short time." 13

In brief, the Mexican War consisted of one spectacular American success after another, in every case against numerically superior forces. There was only one interruption to this victorious progress. That came during the midst of the final campaign, when the volunteers' twelve-month enlistments were up and many of them demanded to be sent home. General Scott, deep in enemy territory, had to suspend operations and wait for three months until new volunteers could arrive and complete a course of training.

Many Americans have tended to apologize for the war with Mexico, although in recent years scholars have convincingly refuted the traditional interpretation of a tough young bully of a United States picking on poor little Mexico, pointing out that the initiatives for the war came from the Mexicans14 and that both they and the European military observers of the day were completely confident that they would make short work of the United States forces. But in contrast to the War of 1812, there is no need to feel apologetic about the combat performance of the army. Many things could have been done better, and some modifications in national military policy certainly were indicated. But if the War of 1812 showed the complete inadequacy of the amateur

approach, the Mexican War was a triumphant demonstration of the vital importance of professionally competent leadership and training.

After the war, the army reverted to frontier patrol duties, but now with a vastly larger area to cover and, as was normal, with a considerable reduction in size. Even so, strength levels were maintained above anything previously existing in peacetime. By 1861, the army numbered about 16,000, of whom 1,108 were officers. Southerners represented a disproportionate number of the officers, but even so, only 313 — or 28 percent — resigned to join the Confederates.\(^\text{15}\) Thus, a considerable nucleus was available to build the wartime army.

In forming that army, the professionals could have been best used as cadres for newly recruited volunteers, but the policy adopted was to keep the regular units intact. On an individual basis, numbers of regular officers were released to accept commissions in state volunteer regiments, but this was not done on an organized or systematic basis. As state units, volunteer regiments were officered by men appointed by the governors, and in the beginning, at least, the patronage involved was too great for the governors to resist. One result was that the intact regular units were invaluable in saving defeats from becoming disasters by covering the retreat of raw volunteer units, as at First Bull Run. On the other hand, if competent professionals had been seeded through the newly formed units, and if time had been taken to provide a reasonable degree of training, it could be argued that the defeats might not have occurred in the first place. The record of the regulars and ex-regulars who did serve with the volunteers amply demonstrates the importance of their contributions. During the course of the war, no fewer than 106 became colonels, 91 more rose to brigadier generals, and another 51 became major generals.\(^\text{16}\)

In time, the volunteer regiments which made up the overwhelming mass of the army acquired the necessary skill and discipline. Partly through formal training and even more through actual field experience, officers and men became professional in every respect except that they were not career soldiers. The price that was paid for their education, however, represents one of the greatest tragedies in American history.

After Appomattox, demobilization was rapid. In 1866, the Regular Army strength was fixed at ten regiments of cavalry, five of artillery, and forty-five of infantry. Even though recruiting was slow and the actual number of regulars in uniform totaled less than 39,000, this was

\(^{15}\) Weigley, History, 199.
\(^{16}\) Ganoe, History, 252-53.
by far the largest peacetime force in American history. At the same time, the tasks facing the army were staggering.

Napoleon III was in the midst of his adventure in Mexico, trying to establish Maximilian as his puppet emperor. This required a large force of American troops to be rushed to patrol the Texas border. There was also serious trouble to the north, where Fenians — supported by Irish-Americans — were again trying to invade Canada. Troops were required there to bring that situation under control. Occupation forces were required in the former Confederate states. Numbers of soldiers were involved in operating the Freedmen's Bureau, trying to provide for thousands of destitute ex-slaves and to help them develop self-sufficiency. Then, in December 1867, the United States acquired Alaska, and at least token garrisons were required to establish and uphold American sovereignty there.

On top of all this, the withdrawal of practically all forces from the frontier to the eastern theaters of war had left the Indians free to run riot for four years. In 1861 and 1862 alone, Indians killed 644 settlers. In 1868, Indians killed 107 settlers, wounded 57, captured twenty-eight women and children, murdered fourteen women, destroyed twenty-four ranches and settlements, attacked 111 stagecoaches, and wiped out four wagon trains.17

Fortunately, for about a year some volunteers remained in uniform, particularly on the Mexican border and in the occupation forces in the South. The problems eased somewhat when Napoleon III withdrew his support from Maximilian in January 1867. The Fenian threat to Canada was suppressed even earlier. Progress by the Freedmen's Bureau reduced the size of that problem.

But the Indian troubles continued. There was a surge of movement westward which brought — and was facilitated by — the extension of rail and telegraphic communications. This in turn increased the Indians' resistance, as it clearly represented a mortal threat to their way of life.

Despite the very sizable military requirements and the minimal military resources to meet them, what was touted as economy once more reared its head. On March 3, 1869, Congress imposed a drastic reduction on the army. Twenty of the forty-five infantry regiments were eliminated, and 750 officers were forced out.

As an indication of the scale of effort required of the truncated army, over 203 actions with Indians took place between this time

17 Ibid., 299, 321.
(1869) and 1875. But in 1874, the army’s strength was cut again, this time to 25,000 men. Most of the engagements were small, but others, such as the Battle of the Rosebud and the Battle of the Little Big Horn, involved substantial numbers. Nevertheless, in 1877 — the year following the Custer massacre — Congress failed to pass a military appropriations bill at all, and the army went unpaid for an entire year. In 1878, all promotions above captain were suspended, pay was cut, and the actual effective strength fell below 20,000 men. At that, the army was fortunate, because a move in Congress almost succeeded in reducing the army’s total strength to only 10,000.

For an officer to persist in a military career between 1865 and 1898, he had to have a great deal of dedication and a very limited amount of selfish ambition. To cite a typical example, General James N. Allison graduated from West Point in 1871 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Second Cavalry, serving on the northern plains against the Sioux and Cheyenne, among the fiercest of the Indian tribes. Until the Indian wars ended in 1891, he never had a single day of duty east of the Mississippi. In 1880, after nine years of service, he was finally promoted — to first lieutenant. In 1891, after twenty years’ service, he became a captain. He was finally promoted to major in 1898, after a period of time which by modern standards would put him within three years of mandatory retirement. At that, he did better than some. One 1898 newspaper account described a regular captain leading his charging company up San Juan Hill “with his long white beard waving in the breeze.”

Despite these circumstances, efforts to promote professional development persisted. New manuals of infantry and cavalry tactics and improved programs of marksmanship training were adopted, exploiting the capabilities of improved weapons, and money was obtained to permit a few of these improved weapons actually to be purchased. In 1881, the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry, which would evolve into the modern Command and General Staff College, was founded. Some scholars in uniform — General Emory Upton and Lieutenants Arthur L. Wagner and William E. Birkhimer, among others — gave careful and introspective thought to military problems and published their conclusions. Professional military journals for exchange of ideas began to appear.

The fact remained, however, that in 1898, with a total strength of less than 25,000 troops for a population of seventy-three million, the United States stood on the threshold of the Spanish-American War
with proportionally the smallest army it had ever had on the eve of any war since the Revolution.

One step which had been taken for American military capability had been the establishment, during the late 1860s, of state National Guard organizations. These absorbed the antebellum "volunteer militia" units, and were organized militia as distinct from the general militia of untrained and unorganized manpower. The National Guard had an organizational structure, some training, and a certain amount of equipment, but in all three it varied greatly from state to state. Also, it existed under the 1792 Militia Act — it could be called into national service for a maximum of only three months.

Thus, when war was declared, the National Guard as such could not be used. Instead, as in the Mexican and Civil wars, volunteer regiments, enlisted for two years, were formed. But in most cases they represented augmented versions of the prewar National Guard regiments, a fact which brought considerable benefits. Governor Edward Leedy of Kansas, however, had such a dislike for his state's National Guard that he ruled that no National Guardsman could be enrolled in the state's new volunteer regiments above the rank of private! (He was a Populist, and most of the Kansas Guard officers had been appointed by Leedy's Republican predecessors.) As in the Civil War, some regular officers were detached to accept higher temporary rank in volunteer units, but again this was not done systematically or on an extensive scale. Regular Army regiments were once more kept essentially intact.

It has been fashionable in some circles\(^{18}\) to ridicule American performance in the Spanish-American War. So far as combat action in Cuba and in the Philippine Insurrection which followed is concerned, such criticism is very unjust. However, what could be called the administrative support aspects of the war — the mobilization, equipment, and sustained supply efforts — were grossly inadequate at the beginning. It is hard to see what else could be expected, considering the decades of neglect and miserly treatment the army had experienced, and the lack of authorization to establish any mechanism, such as a general staff, to make even theoretical preparations for conducting a full-scale war. But with the sudden availability of resources and the demonstration of what was needed, corrective action was taken with remarkable speed. Also, the experience brought new demands. Over-

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18 See Walter Millis, The Martial Spirit (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), whose caustically witty but almost frivolous account has been uncritically parroted by numerous later writers.
night, the United States had become a world power with overseas territorial responsibilities. The military implications were clearly understood by professional soldiers. One result was that in the first decade of this century the army underwent what was nothing less than an intellectual and organizational renaissance.

With regard to basic military policy, the relationship between peacetime standing forces and the civilian components which would provide the great mass of a wartime army was clarified and codified, first by the Dick Act of 1903 and then by the National Defense Act of 1916. One of the most important innovations was that, after mobilization, personnel would be interchangeable among all components. Thus, maximum benefit could accrue from available skills.

In addition to these organizational arrangements, armament was improved, at least in prototype. A general staff was created to conduct planning and to permit coordinated direction of the complexities involved in orderly mobilization and the conduct of campaigns. Professional education was improved by extending the existing service schools and creating, at the apex of the system, the Army War College for officers chosen for the highest levels of responsibility.

In combination, these advances brought the first systematic approach to the peacetime advancement of military thought, and the creation of a real capability to handle the requirements of expansion for war and conduct of large-scale operations. It now became possible for the career officer to develop a degree of versatility far exceeding the journeyman level, which had been the limit imposed on most, simply by the nature of their assignments.

Despite all this, the United States faced a number of major disadvantages when it entered World War I in 1917. President Wilson’s determination to stay neutral until that time had kept the actual number of regulars in uniform small, and had severely limited the procurement of new weapons and equipment whose value was being demonstrated in France. The General Staff was limited by law to a total of only nineteen officers. And in 1916, when President Wilson learned that the General Staff, as a routine part of its functions, had prepared a contingency plan in case of war with Germany, he was outraged. He peremptorily ordered all such planning to cease forthwith, and directed that all existing war plans be destroyed!

At the same time, there were some major advantages. The National Defense Act of 1916 had provided a basis for extended federal use of the National Guard. Furthermore, the raid on American terri-
tory by the Mexican bandit, Pancho Villa, had led to the mobilization of practically the entire National Guard, which then spent over six months on active duty, patrolling the Mexican border while regular troops carried out a punitive expedition into Mexico itself. This experience proved to be enormously valuable when we entered World War I.

Neither the Germans nor the Allies had believed that the United States would be able to deploy more than token forces to Europe before 1919. But by January 1918, forty-two divisions had been organized and six of them were already overseas. By March, there were 250,000 American troops in France. In July, four American army corps were in being in the war zones. All told, the army grew from about 150,000 regulars to over three and a half million men.

Given the small number of genuinely qualified professionals, such great expansion was bound to be marked, despite the most careful planning, by some confusion, inefficiency, and mistakes. What is remarkable, however, is not that the job was not done better, but that it was done so exceptionally well. The only large-scale mobilizations the United States had experienced had been in 1861 and 1898, and neither could begin to compare with what was accomplished in 1917 and 1918.

Also, after the war it seemed that some fundamental lessons had been learned. In 1920, the National Defense Act of 1916 was amended. Among other things, this authorized the Regular Army a strength of 280,000 men, with some 17,000 officers in the combat arms, refined the 1916 delineations of the roles of the Regular Army and the National Guard, and created an Officers' Reserve Corps, to be drawn chiefly from the Reserve Officers' Training Corps that was to be established in colleges and universities, with Regular Army officers as instructors.

But the wave of disillusionment which followed the Armistice and the belief that the "war to end war" had in fact accomplished that purpose took rapid effect. In 1922, much of what had been provided only two years before was undone. The regular strength was reduced to 175,000. Over 5,000 officers were forced out of the service. All promotions were suspended for six months; when they were resumed, they took place at a snail's pace. Many officers were to spend as long as seventeen years as lieutenants.

In spite of the mundane level of experience to which their low rank was to consign them year after year, an impressive number of regular officers were to prove in World War II that they had matured professionally, developing the capability to skyrocket in 1940 and
1941 to positions of enormously expanded responsibility. A vast number of the men who were leading divisions in combat in 1944 had been serving as senior captains or junior majors only four years previously. This was attributable partly to conscientious and persistent self-study. It also resulted from the comprehensive school system which had been established — in branch specialties, at the higher tactical levels addressed by the Command and General Staff School, and in strategy and economic mobilization studied at the Army War College and the Army Industrial College.

But, from the standpoint of national interest, there was the impression which America's indifference to military capability gave of the national will. Whatever the actual state of national will, lack of military capability meant that, however the aggressions of Italy and Germany and Japan offended the American conscience, our government's effective response was limited to empty protests. As a result, despite the performance of the United States in 1918, the totalitarian dictators felt no need in 1939 to be inhibited by any opposition that might come from the United States.

Of course, they underestimated America's ability to marshal its resources for war. In fact, the army (including the Army Air Forces) mushroomed from fewer than 200,000 regulars in 1940 to a peak World War II active-duty strength of eight million. Certainly, a number of special factors contributed vitally to this achievement. One was that mobilization actually began in 1940, more than a year before the Pearl Harbor attack. Another was the remoteness provided by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Still another was the presence of hard-pressed but determined allies already in the field. Apart from all this, however, the fantastic mobilization of World War II was made possible by the careful planning and the extensive intellectual preparation on the part of professional military officers during the preceding years of peace.

But after the victories in Europe and Asia, the United States found itself facing the vastest military problems in its history. Aside from the worldwide responsibilities which had devolved upon us, there was the fact that weapons technology had made our own territory vulnerable to attack, and on a devastating scale. Furthermore, the differences that had arisen between the United States and the Soviet Union meant that we had to look upon such an attack as a real possibility. Necessarily, and in a sense that had never been true before, professional military officers were drawn into the process of national policy development — not, of course, as formulators of that
policy, but as advisers and as junior partners of the civilian leadership.

Obviously, there was a vastly increased premium on deterring war altogether. Many Americans assumed that aggression could be deterred merely by the threat of massive nuclear retaliation. Despite the tragic evidence of the Korean War, which once more found us, in the beginning, woefully understrength in the ground forces we needed, and notwithstanding the advice of professional army officers, this view persisted for a number of years. Although the 1960s brought political authorization for a more balanced capability, the long involvement in Indochina and the disillusion which followed have, in my view, somewhat clouded the issue of how best to meet the nation's requirements for military security in the modern world. The basic military challenge today continues to be to determine how that security can be maintained — if possible by deterring war altogether — on a basis which is realistic economically and politically as well as militarily.

From the standpoint of the army's role, the traditional reliance on a comparatively small standing army, to be augmented when necessary by trained manpower from the National Guard and the Reserve, continues to be accepted as our starting point. After 1945, the standing army consisted not only of career soldiers but also, until 1973, of substantial numbers of draftees. Now, however, Selective Service has been discontinued and the standing army reduced, which puts even greater responsibility on the National Guard and the Reserve. At the same time, the experience in Indochina raises a question of whether, for domestic political considerations, mobilization of the Reserve components for anything but a major war can be counted on, pragmatically, as a realistic possibility. And as for a major war, there is the question of how feasible any posthostilities mobilization could be. In a sense that has not been true before, the army in being at the outbreak of war may be what largely, or perhaps exclusively, determines the outcome.

Whatever the case, the role of the professional officer has lost none of its importance and, at least potentially, has gained in urgency. It is up to him to help chart the military aspects of the total effort to preserve our security and attain our national objectives. It is up to him to develop, realistically, the nucleus for such enlargement of forces as may be required — and possible — in case of war. And, in the final analysis, as it has been throughout our history, it is up to him to provide the leadership for that vital first line of defense which, through its dedication and too often its sacrifice, wins time to muster additional strength.
Again and again, this body of leadership has proved itself to be among the country's more valuable assets. With few exceptions, the beginning of a war has found the United States with inadequate force in being. A. E. Housman\textsuperscript{19} was writing of another army in a particular war, but he could have been speaking of our own throughout much of its history when he said

\begin{quote}
What God abandoned, these defended
And saved the sum of things for pay.
\end{quote}

I do not argue that professional military officers are paragons. Some are dedicated. Some have confused careerism with professionalism. Some are men of thought, some are men of action, quite a number are both. If they are mercenaries, it is in the sense that they are paid for their services, not in the sense that they are for sale. Whatever their strengths or their weaknesses — and they have both — as a group they have never been found wanting in the past. There is no basis for fearing that, within the limits of human capability, they will be found wanting in the future.

\textsuperscript{19} A. E. Housman, "Epitaph to an Army of Mercenaries."
IN COMMEMORATION
CONTRIBUTION
IN MEMORY OF
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FROM
THE
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