

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 10
Number 1 *Parameters* 1980

Article 17

7-4-1980

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John M. Gates

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Recommended Citation

John M. Gates, "THE ALLEGED ISOLATION OF US ARMY OFFICERS IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY," *Parameters* 10, no. 1 (1980), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1212.

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THE ALLEGED ISOLATION OF US ARMY OFFICERS IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

by

JOHN M. GATES

Many scholars believe that the American Army in the late-19th century was isolated from the society which it served. Russell F. Weigley, for example, has characterized the period from 1865 to 1898 as "years of physical isolation on the frontier and deeper isolation from the main currents of American life." More recently, Robert Utley observes that "Sherman's frontier regulars endured not only the physical isolation of service at remote posts," but also an isolation "in attitudes, interests, and spirit from other institutions of government and society and, indeed, from the American people

themselves." In a study of the 1906 occupation of Cuba, Allan Millett speaks of the Army as a "semicloistered" institution that had "remained outside the main stream of civil life." One may easily find similar statements drawing attention to the isolation of the Army and its officers in the work of other authors.¹ In fact, the notion of isolation has become a cliché, passed on uncritically from writer to writer.

The documentation and bibliographies of the works cited above indicate that both the portrayal of post-Civil War officers as isolated and the argument that isolation stimulated professional development within the officer corps derive primarily from the work of Samuel P. Huntington, in particular *The Soldier and the State* published in 1957. According to Huntington, the officers who served in the Army during the last quarter of the 19th century went about their work physically, socially, and intellectually isolated from civilian America. Huntington argues, however, that "isolation and rejection . . . made those same years the most fertile, creative, and formative in the history of the American armed forces." Isolation was "a prerequisite to professionalization," and "the withdrawal of the military from civilian society at the end of the nineteenth century produced the high standards of professional excellence essential to national success in the struggles of the twentieth century."²

Huntington describes the Army before

TABLE 1. Officers present for duty in the East,⁴ the urban West, and more isolated circumstances:

	1871	1876	1881	1886	1891	1896
Present for duty in all commands	1579	1464	1485	1604	1433	1518
Present in the East	533	400	260	295	285	435
Percentage	34	27	18	18	20	29
Present in the urban West	205	142	201	266	400	411
Percentage	13	10	14	17	28	27
Present in more isolated areas	841	922	1024	1043	748	672
Percentage	53	63	69	65	52	44

1890 as "strung out along the frontier fighting Indians" and, after the war with Spain, performing similarly isolated duty in overseas garrisons. "Both these missions," he writes, "divorced it from a nation which was rapidly becoming urbanized."³ A survey of readily available data, however, shows that Army officers were not as physically isolated as Huntington would have one believe. Moreover, other evidence exists to challenge claims that officers were socially and intellectually isolated.

The annual reports of the Adjutant General for 1867-97 indicate that from 17 to 44 percent of all officers present for duty in established Army commands during the 30-year period were serving in the Department of the East or its equivalents, living in the most settled region of the United States, often on the Atlantic seaboard. Furthermore, although the majority of officers were posted to the Army's western departments, many

TABLE 2. Officers present for duty in or near urban areas of significant size in commands other than the Department of the East or its equivalents:

	1871	1876	1881	1886	1891	1896
Chicago	12	15	12	17	53	61
Denver					21	52
Detroit					17	16
Los Angeles					17	
Omaha	41	27	33	40	48	10
Portland, Oregon	20	12	27	45	41	40
St. Louis ⁴	2					21
St. Paul	20	16	30	38	50	48
Salt Lake City	18	8	12	28	27	29
San Antonio	23	16	20	33	53	49
San Francisco	55	48	67	65	73	85
Total	191	142	201	266	400	411
Percentage of all officers on duty outside the Department of the East	18	13	16	20	35	38

TABLE 3. Officers assigned to commands but not present for duty:

	1871	1876	1881	1886	1891	1896
Number assigned to commands	1902	1854	1865	1913	1816	1885
Total not present for duty	323	390	380	309	383	367
Percent not present for duty	17	21	20	16	21	19

men found themselves stationed in or near growing urban areas which provided numerous opportunities for contact with civilians and access to civilian culture (see Table 1).

As early as 1871, for example, two-thirds of the officers in the Department of California (55 of the 80 present) were on duty in or near San Francisco, and by 1896 almost all of the officers in the department (85 of 89) were so situated. In other western departments the percentage of officers posted to urban areas was smaller, but the total of all officers in such stations was relatively high (see Table 2). In a nation that numbered only 100 cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants in the 1880 census, some of the western cities in which officers found themselves were of significant size.

To find the actual percentage of officers serving in isolation one must also consider the large number of men who were not present for duty, an average of 20 percent of the officer corps during the last third of the 19th century (see Table 3). In fact, the situation reached scandalous proportions by the 1870's, when the captain of D Company of the Third Cavalry, testifying before the House Military Affairs Committee, observed: "I am absent on sick-leave; my first lieutenant is absent on recruiting service; my second lieutenant is an aide-de-camp to General Crook; and there is not an officer on duty with the company." At about the same time, Colonel Wesley Merritt noted that of 12 first lieutenants, only one was present for duty with his Fifth Cavalry regiment, while "the Seventh Cavalry went into the Battle of

the Little Bighorn with fifteen of its forty-three officers absent, including the colonel, two majors, and four captains."⁶ Although some absent officers were only moving from one station to another, others were on leave visiting relatives in the East or traveling abroad (often for periods of several months at a time). More significant for an assessment of Huntington's thesis, officers listed as not present for duty included many men on assignments which placed them in close contact with civilians: teaching military science and other subjects; recruiting in eastern cities; serving as military attachés; advising state National Guard units; or representing the Army at such special events as the Columbia Exposition which opened in Chicago in 1893.

After making adjustments for officers stationed in the East, those serving in close proximity to urban centers in the West, and those not present for duty, the number of officers actually on duty at isolated frontier posts seems considerably smaller than Huntington's assertions would indicate. At no time between the Civil War and 1898 does the Adjutant General's report show more than 50 percent of the Army's officers on duty in circumstances that physically isolated them from civilian society (see Table 4). In fact, the percentage of officers living in or near a large urban center may have been greater than that for the civilian population they served.⁷

Alternatives to the isolation of frontier service were available to more than a select few of the Army's officers. By 1898, for example, most of the cadets graduating from West Point from 1875 through 1879, a total

TABLE 4. Officers present for duty in isolation as a percentage of the entire officer corps:

	1871	1876	1881	1886	1891	1896
Number of officers	2105	2151	2181	2102	2052	2169
Total serving in isolation	856	922	1024	1043	748	672
Percent serving in isolation	41	43	47	50	36	31

TABLE 5. Percentage of pre-Spanish-American War careers of 1875-79 West Point graduates spent in locations other than the United States west of the Mississippi:

Percent of service outside the West	90-99	75-89	50-74	25-49	1-24	0
Officers in the entire sample (277)	37	22	24	48	60	86
Percentage	13	8	9	17	22	31
Officers still in the Army in 1898 (178)	21	19	17	44	51	26
Percentage	12	11	10	25	29	15

of 277 officers in five graduating classes, had served at least some of their time in the eastern United States, and roughly 30 percent had spent half or more of their careers there⁸ (see Table 5). Special assignments placing officers in close contact with civilians were well distributed throughout the group surveyed, with 85 of the 263 non-engineering officers (33 percent) having had them. Engineers, of course, spent virtually their entire careers working with civilians on a variety of public works projects.

An interesting pattern emerges from a comparison of statistics for the entire five-year group of West Point graduates with statistics for those graduates who were still in the Army in 1898. As one might expect, attrition from death, disability, and resignation was highest among men serving on the frontier. The result was an increase in the percentage of officers having served a portion of their careers in the East and a marked decrease in the percentage who had spent the entire time between graduation and the Spanish-American War in the West (see Table 5). Further, although the reason is not clear, non-engineering officers who served a year or more in close contact with civilians were more likely to be in the Army in 1898 than their classmates. Although the attrition rate for the entire group of 277 graduates was 36 percent over the period surveyed, that for officers with "civilian" assignments was only nine percent. Thus, the claim that the Army officer corps was physically removed from the civilian community which it served is not

supported by the available evidence; indeed, the men who helped guide the Army's professional development before World War I appear to be those officers who were least rather than most isolated.

The sample of officers used to determine probable career patterns was not chosen randomly. The West Point classes of 1875-79 were selected deliberately to provide officers whose early careers fell within the period that Huntington and others have identified as being that of the Army's isolation. Furthermore, officers in the sample years may have contributed more than their share to the professional development of the officer corps.⁹

One crucial question in any evaluation of Huntington's argument concerns whether the large number of officers who were not physically isolated made use of the opportunities presented to establish closer contact with the civilians living near them. Unfortunately, the extant evidence is much more fragmentary and open to subjective interpretation than that on the geographic distribution of officer assignments, but material drawn from private papers, autobiographies, biographies, and miscellaneous secondary works indicates that officers became involved in their civilian surroundings more than was required by the circumstances of their assignments.

Detached service as a professor of military science, a position held by 32 percent of the men graduating from the US Military Academy between 1875 and 1879 and still on active duty in 1898, provided some of the best opportunities for officers to involve themselves in civilian activities. In his biography of General Robert Lee Bullard, Allan Millett observes that "as members of the solid middle class, army officers valued the social life of a college community, and some used the assignment to do academic work or investigate business opportunities."¹⁰ John J. Pershing, for example, enrolled in the University of Nebraska's new law school while at the university as a professor of military science from 1891 to 1895, and he became friends with several

local lawyers, including Charles G. Dawes and Charles E. Magoon. Like several other professors of military science, Pershing taught in one of the university's academic departments. In his case it was mathematics; subjects taught by officers at other institutions included rhetoric, French, drawing, law, and forestry.¹¹

However, officers did not have to find themselves stationed at universities to partake of the educational opportunities available in many urban areas, and the ways officers became involved in civilian communities were as varied as the personalities of the individuals concerned. Pershing's friend and classmate, Avery D. Andrews, attended law school in Washington, D.C. while on assignment with the War Department, and George P. Ahern, on recruiting duty in the East, enrolled in the senior class of the Yale Law School, completing a thesis on "The Necessity for Forestry Legislation" before returning to duty with his regiment in the West. Ahern then used whatever spare time he could muster while on duty in Montana to spread the gospel of conservation before representatives of mining and lumber interests.¹²

Social contact between officers and civilians seems to have been a part of military life in both urban and frontier assignments. T. Bentley Mott, aide-de-camp to General Wesley Merritt, noted that when the General was in Chicago they took their meals at "the famous Round Table" with "Marshall Field, George Pullman, Potter Palmer, John Clark, Robert Lincoln, and all the rest." Later, when the General moved to New York, Mott renewed his acquaintance with "the Sloanes, the J. P. Morgans, the Hamilton Fishes, and other New York people" whom he had met during his time as an instructor at West Point. Frank Vandiver's description of Pershing's work as aide to General Nelson A. Miles reinforces the impression given by Mott that the many junior officers who served as generals' aides often found themselves in the presence of powerful and prestigious civilians. General Adolphus Greely's reminiscences, as well as more recent studies of the friction between various commanding

generals in the Army and the heads of staff bureaus, indicate that staff service in Washington provided an astonishing array of opportunities for the integration of Army officers into American civilian and political life.¹³

Although it helped, high rank was not a prerequisite to social contact between officers and civilians, nor was it necessary for an officer to be stationed in the East or even in a large city. Comments showing considerable involvement in social activities with civilians can be found in almost all of the reminiscences written by the wives of officers stationed in the West, no matter what their husbands' ranks might have been at the time. The *Army and Navy Journal* contained regular accounts of social affairs at frontier posts where officers and civilians could be found together.¹⁴

The way in which officers used political pull to obtain favorable assignments, transfers, and promotions provides further evidence of interaction between officers and civilians. Millett's biography of Bullard and that of General Henry T. Allen by Heath Twitchell provide excellent descriptions of the phenomenon.¹⁵ Especially apparent is the willingness of civilians in high positions to aid the officers with whom they were acquainted. One doubts that the use of political influence would have been so pervasive if the officer corps had been as isolated as Huntington claims.

Huntington believes that, being drawn from the middle class, the officer corps was "representative of everyone" and therefore "affiliated with no one"; but officers actually had more in common with the ruling elite than with any other societal group in the nation.¹⁶ The process for the selection of cadets entering West Point worked to insure that the vast majority of officers would come from families with better than average incomes, connections, or both. Successful applicants needed political pull or, at the very least, acceptability in the eyes of their home community's political elite. Perhaps equally important in a nation where only a small percentage of young men received formal

education past elementary school, candidates for West Point were subjected to a rigorous entrance examination. Over a third of the men selected for appointment failed this examination, and of the successful group that entered the Military Academy only three in five graduated.¹⁷ The hurdles that preceded a young man's entry into West Point required a certain degree of prior socialization of a non-military sort which would have occurred most often in the nation's middle and upper classes, and which was very unlikely in any young man who did not aspire to membership in those classes.

At a time when less than two percent of the eligible age group received a baccalaureate, graduation from West Point had considerable status attached to it. Even though many cadets entered the Military Academy motivated by a desire for a free education rather than a military career, their decision represented a recognition that graduation from West Point would provide something not available to most of their contemporaries, the certification of formal scientific training in a nation enamored with the possibilities of science and technology. Furthermore, during their West Point years, cadets found themselves torn from their parochial communal roots and brought into the small but growing group of Americans for whom national and even international affairs were more important than local ones. In his study of Bullard, Millett notes that upon graduation, cadets became "part of a new, national, college-educated elite based on

John M. Gates is Professor of History at The College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio where he teaches military, American, and Latin American history. He received a B.A. in history from Stanford University in 1959 and an M.A. from the Stanford School of Education in 1960. He began his college teaching career at Wooster following completion of a Ph.D. in history at Duke University in 1967. Professor Gates is the author of *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army in the Philippines, 1898-1902* (1973).



academic merit." In the process, "they had broken with their family past and local culture forever."¹⁸ At the same time, as one officer observed long after his own graduation, there was also the eventual recognition that political influence counted for too much for an officer to be safe in turning his back completely on his home and local community.¹⁹ Thus officers maintained their contacts with home, but in a context defined by their new status as West Point graduates.

In describing the isolation of the officer corps, Huntington and others focus on the many difficulties facing military reformers in a Congress unwilling to spend money on modernization or expansion of the Army. As with most other political issues at the time, however, the nation's leaders were not of one mind. As Lester Langley has observed, "In the late 1870's and early 1880's, editors, writers, and a few congressmen endeavored to illustrate to a skeptical public and Congress the importance of the military as a molder of unity, a force of national integration." The goal of this pro-military group was to convince Americans that the Army was "a useful power and not a constant threat to the viability of republican government." While at the University of Nebraska in the 1890's, Pershing found himself well supported by the chancellor, a man who saw the importance of military training as "a means of inculcating a sense of loyalty and responsibility among students."²⁰ The acceptance of Army officers as men worthy of teaching regular academic subjects in addition to their military specialty was a further indicator that officers were seen as socially and intellectually respectable; though there was no obligation to do so, schools frequently supplemented the salaries of the officers detailed to them.²¹ Neither the Army nor its officers lacked a firm base of civilian support during the long years of supposed isolation.

In his study of *The Image of the Army Officer in America* (1973), C. Robert Kemble, although accepting Huntington's views regarding the officers' isolation,

concludes that civilian attitudes toward officers in the period following the Civil War varied considerably. Despite the fact that social theorists such as William Graham Sumner saw war as wasteful and anachronistic, they continued to admire and respect traditional military values such as the stress on honorable character and discipline. Civilian opponents of the military often objected more to war or the way in which the Army was used by political authorities than to its officers. Thus, pacifists such as Andrew Carnegie and anti-imperialists such as Mark Twain were critical of Regular Army officers only because of the belief that war and imperialism would be impossible without them. American labor leaders saw military officers as tools of capitalists seeking to destroy the nation's infant labor movement. Kemble concludes that "although postbellum criticism of officership was considerable, respect for the profession of arms remained firm and outspoken in important areas of American society. Influential voices frequently, publicly, and enthusiastically declared their appreciation for the military leaders."²²

Thus, contrary to the image presented by Huntington, Army officers in the last quarter of the 19th century appear to have been no more isolated socially than they were physically. The evidence, mostly fragmentary, suggests that contact between officers and civilians was widespread; more significant, perhaps, many of the civilians with whom officers interacted were extremely well placed, often the political, economic, and intellectual leaders of the nation. In looking at the relationship between military and civilian leaders at the end of the 19th century, one does not find the "complete, unrelenting hostility of virtually all the American community toward virtually all things military" that Huntington claims.²³ To the extent that military officers and their families sometimes demonstrated a tendency toward the creation of a self-contained social world on their military posts, the primary motivation for such action does not seem to have been their rejection by civilians. More likely, it flowed from the shared concerns and

interests of people who increasingly saw themselves as members of the same profession. When officers and their dependents chose to spend their free time together rather than in the company of civilians, it was probably because they had so much in common and their residences were in closer proximity than those of people in most other occupations. Such self-imposed isolation is hardly unique among professional groups, civilian or military.

For Huntington and others the most important result of the supposed physical and social isolation of the officer corps was the way in which it sheltered officers from civilian intellectual influences. Officers, isolated from the main currents of American thought, are said to have developed their own uniquely military outlook, a set of views “fundamentally at odds” with those of the civilians around them.²⁴ However, just as the evidence presented thus far challenges the view of the officer corps as physically and socially isolated from civilian America, other evidence raises serious questions regarding Huntington’s view of the relationship of officers to the major intellectual currents in civilian society.

At the time that Huntington undertook his survey of officer attitudes, based primarily on an analysis of the contents of military periodicals such as the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, little work had been done on the subject. In fact, the only study of any significance was Richard C. Brown’s doctoral thesis in 1951 on “Social Attitudes of American Generals, 1898-1940,” which reached a conclusion diametrically opposed to that later reached by Huntington. According to Brown, the “basic social attitudes” of American military leaders did not differ from the attitudes held by “other leaders in American life.” Brown concludes not only that military and civilian leaders had common social origins and therefore comparable early development, but also that “the training of the military leader [did] little to change the social attitudes he already had.”²⁵ Morris Janowitz’s sociological study

of American officers, *The Professional Soldier* (1960), lends support to Brown’s conclusions, which Janowitz accepts, rather than those of Huntington. According to Janowitz, “The political beliefs of the military are not distinct from those that operate in civilian society. On the contrary,” he says, “they are a refraction of civilian society wrought by the recruitment system, and by the education and military experiences of a professional career.”²⁶

Building upon the work of Brown and Janowitz, as well as his own research into the history of conservatism in America, Allen Guttman fashioned a direct refutation of Huntington’s assertion that officers held beliefs antagonistic to those of civilians. In particular, Guttman rejects Huntington’s characterization of officers as anti-business, apolitical, and opposed to the nation’s liberal democratic tradition. In a wide-ranging article that draws upon such examples of American military leadership as William T. Sherman, Leonard Wood, John Pershing, Douglas MacArthur, Omar Bradley, George Patton, and Matthew Ridgway, Guttman concludes that, while Huntington’s book contains “much brilliant historical and sociological analysis” of the military, it is actually “a passionate projection of attitudes, a model of the military ethic that is an almost literary construct.”²⁷ Guttman joins Janowitz in asserting that “the political beliefs of the military are not distinct from those that operate in civilian society.”

Despite the lack of corroboration from sociologists and others studying the officer corps, Huntington’s ideas held their ground. The belief that American officers benefited from isolation in the period between the Civil War and World War I, and that the development of a unique military outlook as well as the professionalization of the nation’s military institutions resulted from that isolation, soon became the accepted wisdom of an entire generation of military historians. One reason was that Brown, Janowitz, and Guttman had all focused their efforts on the 20th century. At no time did they directly challenge

Huntington's characterization of officers as isolated before World War I. If anything, they contributed to the acceptance of Huntington's view of the 19th century by implying that the demands of modern war in the next century contributed significantly to the increasing similarity they found between military and civilian attitudes.

Recently, however, Huntington's characterization of post-Civil War officer attitudes as divergent from those of American civilians has been challenged by a few historians. If their studies are accurate, the actions and attitudes of officers involved in the professionalization and modernization of the Army in the late-19th century corresponded much more closely to those in civilian circles than Huntington recognizes. Scholars studying situations in which Army officers were called upon to perform tasks that were more civilian than military (the administration of the insular governments established during the Spanish-American War, for example) have found that officers performed such tasks exactly as one would have expected civilians to have performed them, raising even greater doubts about the validity of Huntington's conclusions.

Widespread agreement exists among military historians that the period of the late-19th and early-20th centuries was one of great intellectual ferment in the United States in which officer-reformers called for the modernization and reorganization of the Army and stressed the importance for officers to engage in systematic study of war. Huntington would have one believe that the wave of professional activity and modernization sweeping the Army by the end of the 19th century eventuated without any stimulus from "social-political currents at work in society at large." This view of professional developments within the Army, however, is certainly open to question.

In his excellent overview of professional developments within the armed forces, Peter Karsten acknowledges that "the services could never have reorganized themselves without the sustained support of civilian allies in the Army or Navy Leagues,

the Congress and the Executive, the world of agriculture, commerce, banking, and war-related industries." Not only did officers become "deft public relations men and lobbyists" in their struggle to reform the Army, but they also recognized that at least part of the work they were doing bore a distinct relationship to similar work being done by American civilians. Thus one finds a well-known reformer such as Lieutenant Colonel William H. Carter observing that Army officers were much like railroad directors: "groups of men whose principal work was to observe rival lines, to consider state and local laws, and to prepare their systems to derive all possible advantage from future growth."²⁸

Implicit throughout Karsten's survey is a recognition that the activities of Army officers mirrored those of many reform-minded civilians seen at the time and by subsequent historians as "progressives." Karsten identifies his officer-reformers as "Armed Progressives"; shortly after his work appeared, Jack Lane drew an even more explicit connection between civilian progressives and members of the Army's officer corps. Similarly, in a study of the turn-of-the-century military government of Manila, the present author found it fitting to label the American officer participants as "Progressives in Uniform."²⁹

Observing that "military professional reform paralleled precisely the early phase of the Progressive movement [which] one historian has termed 'business progressivism,'" Lane argues that military and civilian reform based on similar principles and occurring simultaneously was not coincidental. In an era characterized in some civilian quarters by a keen interest in "scientific" management, "Army promotion and retirement reforms, the officer's examination program, and the efficiency report system all fitted closely with the progressive's drive for organization, efficiency, and the desire to provide leadership of the competent." Lane, of course, was not the first scholar to observe that the General Staff Act of 1903 was "a major piece of progressive 'efficiency'

legislation." It was seen as such by civilians at the time. Russell Weigley has noted the connection between military and civilian reform, although he understates the degree to which Army officers had led the way in the reform of their own institution, attributing the creation of the General Staff to the civilian Secretary of War, Elihu Root, instead.³⁰

Although overlooked by Huntington, much of what was being done to reform the Army in the last years of the 19th century represented the application of efficient American techniques of organization and administration to the business of running the Army. Officers such as Lieutenant Colonel Carter saw the reforms in that light, arguing that "the war business of a nation requires trained men just as does that of great corporations," particularly if they were "to operate the army in an economical and business-like way."³¹

If one important characteristic of civilian progressives at the turn of the century was an emphasis on the application of science, technology, and businesslike systems for efficient organization and management to a wide variety of situations, another was the emphasis on reforms calculated to improve American living standards, distribute the benefits of economic and scientific progress more widely, and protect those Americans who were too weak, disabled, or disadvantaged to provide for their own protection. In the area of social reform one sees Army officers at work on projects with a zeal, spirit, and commitment comparable to that of many civilian progressives. In the military governments established during the Spanish-American War, Army officers instituted numerous reforms comparable to those being implemented in America at roughly the same time. Their work in the islands occupied during the war went far beyond President William McKinley's general instructions and the military necessities of the situation.³² For example, in the field of public health and sanitation American efforts to provide medical care for indigents, improve public water systems, and

clean up major cities exceeded requirements for protecting the health of American troops or preventing epidemics. Efforts by Army officers to revitalize educational systems also exceeded the requirements of the situation and the responsibilities of the military governments: existing school systems were repaired and enlarged; new schools were opened; and soldiers were used as instructors to compensate for teacher shortages. Much of the officers' activity indicated that improvement of education per se rather than indoctrination was their goal.³³

Officers in the military governments also embarked on significant economic and administrative reforms, revising customs regulations and tariff schedules and eliminating head taxes and similar exactions which fell most heavily on the poor. The spirit of the utopian tax reformer Henry George seemed very much in evidence in Puerto Rico, where officers attempted to classify land as to its type and usage, with a view to altering taxes accordingly.³⁴ Part of the tax revenue collected by the military was regularly devoted to public works projects, including installation of streetlights, improvement of public water and transportation systems, and repair of bridges, buildings, and public monuments.

In all of the areas under the Army's control, judicial and penal systems were brought into line with those American practices designed to protect the rights of the accused and minimize corruption. Other reforms, such as the legalization of divorce or the recognition of secular marriage, simply substituted what officers assumed to be "enlightened" American practices for "backward" Hispanic ones. Prisoners were released where insufficient evidence existed for their incarceration; chains were removed from inmates; and jails were thoroughly cleaned and repaired. Everywhere, officers sought to bring the systems they administered up to the highest standards one might find advocated by proponents of legal and prison reform in the United States. Officers even attempted to reform public morals. Although the regulation of prostitution and alcoholic beverages was undertaken primarily to

protect American soldiers, the prohibition of cockfighting, closing of gambling houses, abolition of lotteries, and abrogation of the opium contracts previously issued by the Spanish government in the Philippines demonstrated an equal concern for the welfare of the civilians under military control. Virtually all of these activities fell outside the scope of the officers' instructions or the demands of military necessity. The initiation of all such work could easily have been postponed until the inauguration of a civilian government, whether independent or colonial, and it certainly would have been deferred had officers not been imbued with reformist zeal comparable to that manifested by contemporary civilian activists. Reformers in the United States strove for changes that would alleviate the ills of society and afford greater economic, political, and social justice to a larger segment of the American people. At the same time the American officers in control of Havana, Manila, and other cities occupied by the Army engaged in efforts to promote public health, judicial reform, tax equalization, honest government, and public education mirroring the work done in those same fields by progressive reformers at home.

The work of American officers during the Spanish-American War was not an isolated event. The progressive nature of the officer corps manifested itself on other occasions. In its contact with the American Negro and the Indian, the Army had acquired a reputation for fair treatment and efficient administration. During Reconstruction and the Indian Wars, many officers had exhibited the same humanitarian traits and reform impulses as those shown overseas in 1898.³⁵ The same was true in city administration. Major William Ludlow's reorganization of the Philadelphia Water Department in the 1880's was "praised by all lovers of honesty and efficiency in municipal affairs," and a more recent study notes that "reform literature often cited the District of Columbia, largely administered by the Army Corps of Engineers, as an excellent example of good government."³⁶ More significantly, perhaps, American military interventions in

the Caribbean in the early 20th century resembled the 1898 model in their attention to important political, economic, and social matters and in the interest shown by officers in reform. Between 1906 and 1908, officers in the Army of Cuban Pacification attempted reforms that went far beyond the intentions of the government in Washington; when American troops landed in Veracruz in 1914 they undertook progressive measures nearly identical to those begun in Havana and Manila. Many of the officers participating in these later operations had gained their original civil affairs experience in 1898, and their work was often motivated by other than strictly military considerations. Wherever and whenever they intervened, American officers attempted widespread social and governmental reform.³⁷

Herbert Croly, a well-known progressive author, wrote in 1910 that the Spanish-American War gave "a tremendous impulse to the work of national reform."³⁸ He could easily have included the international aspects of such work evident in the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, for the same spirit was as prevalent in the Army officer corps as in any other group in America. Thus, contrary to the view presented by Huntington, officers were not isolated from the main currents of American thought and action; they were, in fact, a leading force for change in many of the same areas as the civilians being called progressive at home. At the turn of the century, as the United States entered an era of reform, its spirit was transmitted abroad by the members of the American expeditionary force.

Although not intended as a commentary on the nature of the officer corps, H. Duane Hampton's study of *How the U.S. Cavalry Saved Our National Parks* provides another example of how Army officers operated in an important area of civilian concern. As early as 1875, officers could be found among those people trying to save the wonders of Yellowstone National Park from destruction by tourists; in 1882 America's premier preservationist John Muir and his protégé Robert Underwood Johnson both lauded the work of the Army in the parks. One author in

the *Sierra Club Bulletin* even suggested that military administration be extended to "all the national domain."³⁹ According to Hampton, the National Park Service and similar agencies in other countries adopted much of the work initiated by Army officers. In park administration, as in colonial government, officers demonstrated clearly that their beliefs were in harmony with those of many progressive civilians.

When faced with civilian administrative tasks, whether in national parks at home or in military government abroad, American Army officers acted as one would have expected members of the civilian elite to act, indicating that intellectually and philosophically the officers were very much a part of the American mainstream. If anything, they often behaved not just as any civilians, but as the most progressive of the nation's leaders, and they earned the praise of many American reformers for their work.

In a recent study of the Army's role in the railroad strikes of 1877 and 1894, Jerry M. Cooper provides further evidence of the harmony that existed between the nation's military and civilian leaders.⁴⁰ Articles in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* during the 1880's and 1890's confirm the growing attention by Army officers to the problems of urban unrest and violence generated by the conflict between capital and labor. Although reluctant to condemn laborers as a group, officers opposed any radical solution to the problems of American industrialization, rejecting socialism, anarchism, and "its kindred fallacies."⁴¹

Cooper concludes that in the 19th-century conflict between capital and labor, "the officer corps, imbued with middle class values concerning the sanctity of property and the necessity of social order, all too readily identified itself with the propertied classes and negated any opportunity for the Army to appear as a third party." The broader implications of such a conclusion did not escape the author. "Despite the contentions of Samuel P. Huntington and to a lesser extent Russell F. Weigley," writes

Cooper, "it is evident that the United States Army officer corps was not an isolated social group developing a set of values and social perceptions which differed sharply from those of the dominant middle and upper classes."⁴² Thus, in almost every quarter, Huntington's vision of the officer corps seems under attack, either implicitly in studies such as Hampton's or explicitly in work such as Cooper's.

In a recent article in *Military Affairs*, Jack Lane calls attention to the need for "new approaches" in the study of the American military past. He observes that "more work needs to be done in the areas of harmony and agreement between the trends in society and developments in the military establishment." Lane criticizes Huntington for being "too abstract and too theoretical,"⁴³ but a more pointed criticism would seem to be in order. Simply put, Huntington is wrong. The officer corps was not isolated in the last quarter of the 19th century. It was not a group apart, nurtured in isolation and acting primarily from corporate or strictly military motives. Though many scholars have been reluctant to accept such a conclusion, there appear to have been few significant differences between members of the officer corps and their civilian counterparts. The differences that did exist seem to be specifically related to the military tasks which officers performed as a function of their occupation. The stimulus for the professionalization of the Army, the roots of attitudes officers held in common, and explanations for the behavior of officers in the Spanish-American War or thereafter must be sought elsewhere. Answers to many questions about those officers may be found only in studies of civilian society and trends, not in works focusing solely on the military.

Despite the emerging body of evidence that Army officers and the civilian leaders of the American nation had more in common than at variance, no new synthesis has emerged to replace Huntington's characterization of the officer corps. As with their civilian counterparts, the Army's progressives in uniform remain an

elusive but intriguing group; perhaps one can do little more than agree with Millett:

Although the prerequisites of combat leadership (physical and moral courage, physical stamina, and competence in inspiring men and using weapons) did differentiate the officer from the civilian bureaucrat, it is doubtful that even long-term professional socialization produced a coherent philosophical point of view that was uniquely military.⁴⁴

Participants in the debate concerning the proper role of the military officer in the 1970's and 1980's have frequently based their arguments on the assumption that officers in the late-19th century benefited from an isolation which served to protect them from the corruption of their professional military ethic by materialistic civilian influences. Then Lieutenant Colonel Frederic J. Brown, writing in *Military Review* in 1972, saw "the stimulus to overinvolvement" in civilian affairs as "the greatest current danger to the Army," and he opted instead for "the traditional isolation which has served to preserve the professional ethic." Civilian social scientists have shown a similar tendency to accept Huntington's view of the officer corps, and even those who argue that isolation is impossible or undesirable tend to accept the view that officers in the past were isolated. Although he rejects the notion that isolation now would be beneficial to officers, military sociologist Charles C. Moskos Jr. accepts the view that before World War II American officers lived and worked in a "self-contained institution markedly separated from civilian society."⁴⁵

Thus much of the discussion over whether officers should seek a rebirth of professional commitment through increased isolation from civilians and civilian-type tasks now appears to be based on a faulty premise. There were no "good old days" in which splendid isolation from civilian America contributed to the professional growth of the officer corps and strengthened its commitment to "Duty—Honor—Country." The Golden Age of professional

development in the Army came during a time of continuous interaction between officers and the civilian elite, when officers frequently performed jobs that were more civilian than military. Descriptions of convergence between civilian and military roles in the 20th century may be accurate, but they are also overdrawn. The convergence has not been as great as assumed because significant divergence did not exist prior to it. A more fruitful area of research might well be the changing social origins of officers and the impact of changes in civilian society on the military institutions and officers nurtured by it. What happens, for example, when officers become more representative of American society in general? The type of professional officer corps that existed in the Army before World War I may have been possible only because officers were drawn principally from the established families of a self-consciously progressive society. Recreating that officer corps may be as impossible as recreating the elitist society that gave birth to it.

The possibility that members of the Army officer corps at the start of the 20th century were not readily distinguishable from the nation's civilian elites, except, of course, in their primary concern with military affairs and their own career interests within the military context, presents military historians with a particularly difficult problem. Few of them, I suspect, really want to deal with the morass of conflicting historical interpretations that presently exist concerning the proper characterization of American civilian leaders in the so-called Progressive Period. Probably no area in the study of American history is in such a state of confusion, and many military historians might tend to shy away from such questions as whether or not one can speak of progressives, who they were (if they existed at all), what motivated the many Americans engaged in the varied efforts to come to terms with the disturbing implications of the urban-industrial society, and where their ideas may have originated. Even though such difficult questions may be those which are most important to an understanding of the officer corps at the time, probably few military historians will

wish to brave the historiographical obstacles set by scholars studying the civilian history of the period, and one can hardly blame any historian for wanting to avoid what one author has called "an overgrown and treacherous field of historical controversy."⁴⁶ However, to understand the officer corps at the turn of the century, and probably at other times as well, one may have to spend much more time in such uninviting places as the historiographical no-man's-land created by the indefatigable and garrulous students of the Progressive Period. That thought is enough to make many people wish they could go back to the trenches and curl up in their dugouts with well worn copies of Huntington.

NOTES

1. Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 265; Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 59; Allan Reed Millett, *The Politics of Intervention: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906-1909* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 1. For other examples see Barton C. Hacker, "The United States Army as a National Police Force: The Federal Policing of Labor Disputes, 1877-1898," *Military Affairs*, 33 (April 1969), 256, 262 in particular; C. Robert Kemble, *The Image of the Army Officer in America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1973), p. 97; Heath Twichell, *Allen: The Biography of an Army Officer, 1859-1930* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1974), p. 291 n.; Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1978), p. 148.
2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), p. 229.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
4. For 1871 the East consists of the Division of the Atlantic and the Division of the South; 1876, the Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the Gulf within the Division of the Missouri; 1881, the Division of the Atlantic; 1886, the Division of the Atlantic; 1891 and 1896, the Department of the East. Officers listed for the urban West include those officers belonging to western commands but stationed in Chicago and Detroit. Statistics were gathered and percentages computed for all years, 1867-97. The sample data in Tables 1-4 are representative.
5. Officers at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis were on recruiting duty and therefore not shown on the Adjutant General's strength report of Army commands. Later the 3d Cavalry was also stationed there. The figure of 21 shown for 1896 includes only the 3d Cavalry officers.
6. Utley, p. 17.
7. The US Census showed the percentage of the civilian population living in cities with over 8000 inhabitants to be 22.57 in 1880 and 29.2 in 1890.
8. Career data have been taken from George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy*, 3d ed. (Boston: J. F. Trow, 1891-1920). Percentages here and elsewhere are approximate, based on a rough count of the years of service in various kinds of assignments categorized as eastern, western, and "civilian." Owing to the unofficial nature of the source used, the number of very short assignments, considerable leave time, and many possibilities for human error in accumulating such data, the results obtained are only indicative of probable career patterns and are not definitive.
9. Of the 32 West Point graduates mentioned specifically by name in Peter Karsten, "Armed Progressives: The Military Reorganizes for the American Century," in Jerry Israel, ed., *Building the Organizational Society* (New York: Free Press, 1972), pp. 197-232, over a third graduated between 1875 and 1879. Statistics compiled for a control group, graduates between 1870 and 1874, indicate more officers with military science instructorships among the 1875-79 group (24 percent vs. 21 percent for the 1870-74 group) and fewer officers whose only duty among civilians was recruiting (7 percent for 1875-79 graduates vs. 25 percent for the control group). The 1875-79 group also had a lower attrition rate (36 percent vs. 48 percent). In a more general sense, however, the two groups were similar, and if one includes eastern recruiting service as duty in a civilian environment, then the 1870-74 graduates had as high a percentage of such duty as did graduates of 1875-79.
10. Allan Millett, *The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1975), pp. 78-79.
11. Donald Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Scribner's, 1973), pp. 27-37; and Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1977), I, 113-15.
12. Avery D. Andrews, *My Friend and Classmate John J. Pershing* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing, 1939), p. 49; Lawrence Rakestraw, "Forest Missionary: George Patrick Ahern, 1894-1899," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History*, 9 (1959), 36-44.
13. T. Bentley Mott, *Twenty Years as a Military Attaché* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937), pp. 49-50; Vandiver, I, 157-68; A. W. Greely, *Reminiscences of Adventure and Service* (New York: Scribner's, 1927), chaps. 13-16. The political connections of such a powerful figure as Adjutant General Fred C. Ainsworth were almost legendary. See Mabel E. Deutrich, *The Struggle for Supremacy: The Career of General Fred C. Ainsworth* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1962).
14. For examples see Mrs. Orsemus B. Boyd, *Cavalry Life in Tent and Field* (New York: J. J. Tate, 1894), p. 233; Frances M. A. Roe, *Army Letters from an Officer's Wife, 1871-1888* (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), p. 332; Martha Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona: Recollections of My Army Life*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife, 3d ed. (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1939), pp. 297-98; Lydia Spencer Lane, *I Married a Soldier* (Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, 1964), p. 183; and William Haymond Bisbee, *Through Four American Wars: The Impressions and Experiences of Brigadier General William Henry Bisbee* (Boston: Meador, 1931), pp. 215-26.
15. Millett, *The General*, pp. 80, 82, 94, 155-62, 227; Twichell, pp. 29, 90, 273-74. For comments by officers involved see Thomas Cruse, *Apache Days and After* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1941), pp. 253-56; Greely, p. 276; Hugh L. Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: Century, 1928), pp. 24-26.
16. Huntington, p. 227.
17. P. S. Michie, "Education in Its Relation to the Military Profession," *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, 1 (1880), 158-59 for the period 1838-79 (cited hereafter as *JMSIUS*).
18. Millett, *The General*, pp. 41-42.
19. James Harrison Wilson, *Under the Old Flag* (New York: D. Appleton, 1912), I, 30-31.

20. Lester Langley, "The Democratic Tradition and Military Reform, 1878-1885," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, 48 (1967), 192; Vandiver, I, 107.
21. Ira L. Reeves, *Military Education in the United States* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press, 1914), p. 62.
22. Kemble, pp. 110, 133, 143-46.
23. Huntington, pp. 226-27.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
25. Richard C. Brown, *Social Attitudes of American Generals, 1898-1940* (New York: Arno, 1979), p. 38.
26. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: Free Press, 1971 ed.), p. 234.
27. Allen Guttman, "Political Ideals and the Military Ethic," *American Scholar*, 34 (1965), 226. For a short survey of other works on the professionalization of military officers, see George A. Kourvetaris and Betty A. Dobratz, "The State and Development of Sociology of the Military," in George A. Kourvetaris and Betty A. Dobratz, eds., *World Perspectives in the Sociology of the Military* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1977), pp. 11-22.
28. Karsten, pp. 197, 222.
29. Jack C. Lane, "The Military Profession's Search for Identity," *Marine Corps Gazette*, 57 (June 1973), 36-42; John M. Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army in the Philippines, 1898-1902* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), chap. 2.
30. Lane, "The Military Profession's Search for Identity," pp. 39-42; Russell F. Weigley, "The Elihu Root Reforms and the Progressive Era," in William Geffen, ed., *Command and Commanders in Modern Warfare* (Colorado Springs: US Air Force Academy, 1969), pp. 11-27.
31. William H. Carter, "The Training of Army Officers," *The United Service*, 2 (1902), 341-42. See also "The General Staff" by "An Army Officer" in *The United Service*, 5 (1904), 1; and Timothy K. Nenner, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881-1918* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1978), pp. 7-8.
32. Except where otherwise indicated the summary of the Army's work in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines that follows is taken primarily from annual reports of the War Department for fiscal years 1898-1902. A scholarly treatment of the soldiers' work in Cuba is in David F. Healey, *The United States in Cuba 1898-1902: Generals, Politicians, and the Search for Policy* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1963), in particular chaps. 5, 6, and 15. See also Lane, *Armed Progressive*, chaps. 5-8. On the Army's work in Manila, see Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags*. For Puerto Rico, see H. K. Carroll, "What Has Been Done for Porto Rico under Military Rule," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 20 (1899), 705-09; and Edward J. Berbusse, *The United States in Puerto Rico, 1898-1900* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1966), chap. 3 in particular. For McKinley's instructions, issued on 18 July 1898 after the occupation of Santiago, see *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain, April 15, 1898-July 30, 1902* (Washington: GPO, 1902), I, 161-63.
33. James H. Hitchman came to the same conclusion in *Leonard Wood and Cuban Independence, 1898-1902* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), p. 56.
34. Leo Rowe, *The United States and Porto Rico* (New York: Longman's, Green, 1904), pp. 189-91.
35. For examples of Army humanitarianism in the Indian Wars, see George Crook, "The Apache Problem," *JMSIUS*, 7 (1886), 257-69; and Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1964). Richard N. Ellis has argued that in their dealings with the Indians of North America officers often manifested "humanitarian attitudes," and he characterized commanders such as O. O. Howard, George Crook, and John Pope as "sincere and benevolent men performing a difficult job." See "The Humanitarian Generals," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 3 (1972), 178. In another article Ellis concluded that such humanitarian attitudes were not limited to general officers. See "The Humanitarian Soldiers," *Journal of Arizona History*, 10 (1969), 55-62. See also Gilbert C. Fite, "The United States Army and Relief to Pioneer Settlers, 1874-1875," *Journal of the West*, 6 (1967), 99-107; and James T. King, "George Crook, Indian Fighter and Humanitarian," *Arizona and the West*, 10 (1968), 333-48. On the Army during Reconstruction, see John and LaWanda Cox, "General O. O. Howard and the Misrepresented Bureau," *Journal of Southern History*, 19 (1953), 427-56; and James E. Sefton, *The United States Army and Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1967).
36. Captain William V. Judson in *The Centennial of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, 1802-1902*, compiled by Edward S. Holden and W. L. Ostrander (Washington: GPO, 1904), p. 849; Stanley K. Schultz and Clay McShane, "To Engineer the Metropolis: Sewers, Sanitation, and City Planning in Late-Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of American History*, 65 (1978), 400.
37. Robert E. Quirk, *An Affair of Honor: Woodrow Wilson and the Occupation of Vera Cruz* (Lexington, Ky.: Norton, 1962), chap. 4, contains an excellent description of the Army's work in that city. For a thorough treatment of the work of the Army of Cuban Pacification see Millett, *The Politics of Intervention*.
38. Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p. 169.
39. H. Duane Hampton, *How the U.S. Cavalry Saved Our National Parks* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1971), p. 151.
40. Jerry M. Cooper, "The Army as Strikebreaker—The Railroad Strikes of 1877 and 1894," *Labor History*, 18 (1977), 179-96. Cooper's argument appears in greater detail in his *The Army and Civil Disorder: Federal Military Intervention in Labor Disputes, 1877-1900* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1980).
41. Richard W. Young, "Legal and Tactical Considerations Affecting the Employment of the Military in the Suppression of Mobs," *JMSIUS*, 9 (1888), 250.
42. Cooper, "The Army as Strikebreaker," p. 195.
43. Jack C. Lane, "American Military Past: The Need for New Approaches," *Military Affairs*, 41 (1977), 110-11.
44. Millett, *The General*, p. 8.
45. Frederic J. Brown, "The Army and Society," in Richard G. Head and Ervin J. Rokke, eds., *American Defense Policy*, 3d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 603, 610. Charles C. Moskos Jr., "The Emergent Military: Civil, Traditional, or Pluralistic?" in John E. Endicott and Roy Stafford Jr., eds., *American Defense Policy*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 528, 535. For similar views by other officers and civilian scholars, see William L. Hauser, *America's Army in Crisis: A Study in Civil-Military Relations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), p. 202; John H. Garrison, "The Political Dimension of Military Professionalism," in Endicott and Stafford, p. 578; Philip S. Kronenberg, "The Greening of the Brass: Emerging Civil-Military Relations," in John P. Lovell and Philip S. Kronenberg, eds., *New Civil-Military Relations: The Agonies of Adjustment to Post-Vietnam Realities* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1974), pp. 322-23, 338.
46. Peter G. Filene, "An Obituary for 'The Progressive Movement,'" *American Quarterly*, 22 (1970), 20.