Whose Army?

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Abstract: The ideal of civilian control vis-à-vis actual civil-military relations corresponds to the ideal of the common good vis-à-vis actual politics. It represents an aspiration rather than a fact. It will never define reality. A competitive and frequently unseemly relationship between senior U.S. military officers and senior American civilian officials is inevitable. Meanwhile, an unharmonious relationship between the military and society is not inevitable. Here, Americans should view dysfunction as intolerable. Yet since the demise of the tradition of the citizen-soldier, dysfunction in this realm has become endemic and pervasive, contributing to the widespread and misguided militarization of U.S. policy. If Americans are unhappy with the way their army is used, they need to reclaim it. This outcome can arise only by reasserting the connection between citizenship and military service.

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As a public policy issue, U.S. civil-military relations suffer from perennial neglect. Given the importance that the United States assigns to maintaining and wielding military power, such neglect is not only surprising but deeply unfortunate.

Civilians and soldiers interact in two distinct domains. On the one hand is the relationship between senior military officers and senior civilian officials. We might call these interactions "elite" or "inside the Beltway" civil-military relations. On the other hand is the relationship between the U.S. armed forces and American society as a whole. These civil-military relations for the rest of us take place, for the most part, beyond the Washington Beltway.

At the elite level, the well-known principle of civilian control, implemented jointly by Congress and the chief executive, is said to exercise a governing influence. Article I, section 8, of the Constitution assigns the legislative branch the power to declare war and to raise, support, and regulate the nation's armed forces. Article II, section 2, designates the president as commander in chief of federal forces and state troops "when called into the actual Service of the United States." The president

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also commissions and promotes officers, albeit with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Adherence to the principle of civilian control by no means guarantees effective national security policy. It does, however, guard against takeover by a military dictatorship. In this sense, students of civil-military relations view civilian control as foundational – as that which needs to be preserved and protected at all costs.

In the realm of civil-military relations for the rest of us, another well-known principle once exercised a governing influence: namely, the conviction that national defense qualifies as a collective responsibility. According to this principle, citizenship and military service are inextricably linked. In 1783, General George Washington put it this way: "It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a free Government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defence of it."[1] In 1792, President Washington signed legislation that incorporated this principle into law. The Uniform Militia Act declared that "each and every free able-bodied white male citizen of the respective States, resident therein, who is or shall be of age of eighteen years, and under the age of forty-five years . . . shall severally and respectively be enrolled in the militia."[2]

In the implementation of these principles, Americans have always played fast and loose. Whether in the elite domain or out in the hustings, the realities of civil-military relations have seldom conformed to the reigning theories. For example, Americans have never, in practice, paid much attention to ensuring that the commander in chief has an unambiguously civilian identity. They have routinely voted for and sometimes elected as president former generals, several of whom evinced few qualifications for high office other than having achieved passing fame as war heroes. Winning a World Series, a Nobel Prize, or an Olympic medal won't earn you a place in the quadrennial White House sweepstakes, but have a hand in winning a war, and you can be sure to see your name floated as a potential chief executive.

Moreover, although General Washington himself conscientiously deferred to civilian authority during his tenure in command of the Continental Army, the history of the United States features any number of examples of senior officers who have marched to a decidedly different drumbeat. Some dabbled in partisan politics or bridled against the temerity of civilians who would meddle in military matters. Others asserted the prerogative of deciding exactly what U.S. policy ought to be. A partial list of offenders includes such outsized personalities as Andrew Jackson, Winfield Scott, George McClellan, Fighting Joe Hooker, Nelson Miles, Leonard Wood, Billy Mitchell, and, most persistently and notoriously, Douglas MacArthur.

Likewise, in terms of the bond between the military and society, principle has tended to be honored in the breach. Note that the citizen's obligation to serve, as legislated in 1792, mandated enrollment in the militia, not in the regular army. This stipulation is significant for several reasons, most of them lost to memory. To begin, from the founding of the Republic until World War II, the militia was the nation's primary fighting force. Americans relied chiefly on the militia (today's National Guard), not on the regular army to defend the country and its institutions. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, the U.S. Army was neither organized nor equipped for serious large-scale combat.

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It served chiefly as a constabulary force, assisting in the project of territorial expansion and internal development. If the militia was the varsity in the eyes of most Americans, the small regular army qualified as the B team.

Yet the varsity seldom suited up and almost never practiced. Existing threats to the United States ranged from negligible to nonexistent; thus, Americans had little incentive to treat seriously the requirement to keep the militia in fighting trim. Although imposing enough on paper, its actual capabilities were few, a fact that suited most citizens just fine. They didn't much cotton to armies as such anyway, didn't want to spend money supporting them, and fancied themselves a peace-loving people to boot.

Even peace-loving Americans periodically waged war: launching ethnic cleansing campaigns against Native Americans or giving in to the impulse to invade Canada, Mexico, or Cuba, for example. In these cases, they extemporized the forces needed for the task at hand. Rather than relying on none-too-ready militiamen or barely more capable army regulars, federal authorities called on volunteers to rally to the colors. Notwithstanding their general antipathy for things military, Americans responded to each such summons with surprising alacrity. Never was this more vividly the case than in 1861, when Americans from the South and the North formed two very large volunteer armies and spent the next four years killing one another in staggering numbers. In short, when the nation required a fighting force, it conjured one up. When the exigency passed, the citizen army vanished, and Americans returned to other more pressing priorities.

For all its evident inefficiencies, this arrangement worked tolerably well. The country prospered. Except perhaps on the far edges of the frontier, Americans slept soundly, unworried about a possible invasion by alien hordes. Practically speaking, for most Americans most of the time, the notion of a civic obligation to defend the country was more symbolic than real. Yet the obligation to serve retained a psychic significance (much as the idea of obligatory Sunday Mass remained a hallmark of Roman Catholicism long after most self-identified Catholics had ceased to honor any such obligation). Although largely ignored and unenforced, the Militia Act remained the law of the land for more than a century, the basis of a military system that, in a formal sense, hardly qualified as a system at all.

The small regular army produced a few dissenters who railed against this system. One such dissident, Emory Upton, is an important but largely forgotten figure in U.S. military history. A fascinating, charismatic, and ultimately tragic individual, Upton graduated from West Point in 1861 and, as a young officer, performed great feats of heroism during the Civil War. Yet the bloodletting Upton had witnessed appalled him. Amateurism and sheer incompetence, in his view, had needlessly wasted tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of lives. He advocated replacing the tradition of the citizen-soldier with a much larger professional army. The point was to put officers who devoted their lives to the study of war in charge of conducting it.

Upton dedicated the remainder of his life to a crusade that aimed to junk the existing military system and replace it with a new one – this at a time when the American people were as interested in military reform as most are today in reciting Elizabethan poetry. The few people Upton persuaded included members of the officer corps itself. Succeeding generations of army regulars came to regard him as a prophet; Upton's aspirations

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became theirs.[3] In the country as a whole, however, Upton's legacy was negligible. In America, "We the People" – not hired guns or mercenaries – continued to bear primary responsibility for safeguarding the nation.

In the first half of the twentieth century, U.S. participation in two successive world wars transformed America's role in world politics. It also transformed American civil-military relations. Both inside the Beltway and far removed from Washington's orbit, the implications proved to be enormous – and almost entirely problematic.

Change did not come all at once. At the conclusion of World War II, for example, consistent with past practice, the citizen army raised up to fight Germany and Japan almost instantly dissolved. American citizen-soldiers responded to the end of hostilities in 1945 much as they had in 1848, 1865, 1898, and 1918: they clamored to shed their uniforms and go home. Yet events soon revealed this to be a valedictory homage to a tradition that would soon be obsolete.

During World War II, military elites had gained access to the inner circles of American power, obtaining an influence they would not willingly surrender. After 1945, Washington's newly asserted role in global leadership affirmed the elevated status that senior admirals and generals had acquired in the war. These officers used their positions to press for the creation of a large and powerful *standing* military establishment, an institution that was entirely alien to the American experience.

Rather than a sometime thing, war was becoming an anytime thing in their estimation. Instead of raising up forces in response to a particular emergency, the brass (and their civilian allies) saw a need for forces held ready for rapid deployment. During the first half-decade of the postwar era, military demands (the term is not inappropriate) produced continuous and remarkably open discord between the leadership of the armed services and the president. Issues that became the subject of civil-military conflict included the size of the Pentagon budget, the design and procurement of major weapons, control of the nation's nuclear arsenal, service roles and missions, and even racial integration.

Faced with decisions or guidance not to their liking, military leaders complained, stalled, shirked, or simply disobeyed. The Navy and Marine Corps waged bureaucratic warfare to frustrate President Harry Truman's efforts to unify the armed services. The Air Force likewise strove to prevent the newly established Atomic Energy Commission from taking possession of the nation's stockpile of atomic bombs. For their part, Army leaders took umbrage when the commander in chief ordered the Pentagon to abolish racial separation and, at first, made only token efforts toward integrating the Army's ranks.

Only with the onset of the Korean War in Summer 1950, and Truman's approval of major increases in military spending, did civil-military conflict subside. The views promoted by senior military leaders had prevailed, and U.S. foreign policy became unambiguously militarized. As the United States garrisoned forces around the world, it built a global presence, configuring each of the armed services as an instrument of global power projection. The United States developed a penchant for global intervention, both overt and covert, with mere national defense amounting to an afterthought. This "sacred trinity" of military practice became the hallmark of American statecraft during the Cold War, and it remains fully intact today, never having been subjected to serious reconsideration.

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The vast apparatus of the national security state affirmed and institutionalized the exalted status that senior military officers now enjoyed. In the 1950s and 1960s, when presidents ventured into the White House Rose Garden to make portentous national security announcements, they took care to have the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), festooned with ribbons, lined up behind them. The message was clear: "Look," the photo op seemed to say, "I have consulted the Chiefs; they concur; therefore, my decision deserves to be treated with respect."

That the ultimate loyalty of the officer corps to the Constitution remained intact was beyond question. Yet the implausibility of an outright coup made all manner of shenanigans permissible. Like the married man who flirts outrageously with women, aware that he could never actually cheat on his wife, as long as top officials adhered to some neat, legalistic definition of what wrongdoing entailed, their integrity remained intact. Within that self-defined boundary, they were free to do as they pleased.

If civil-military disharmony eased after 1950, it by no means disappeared. Indeed, the civil-military tug-of-war enshrined itself as a permanent feature of Washington politics. At the upper echelons of the military profession, effectiveness has come to require political savvy. The "simple soldier" – if such a creature ever existed – will not go far in the E-Ring of the Pentagon. The making of national security policy is nothing if not political, with blood and treasure, power and access, ego and ambition all on the line. Senior officers learn to lobby, leak, ally with strange bedfellows, manipulate the media, and play Congress against the White House. In Washington, that's how the game is played.

Theoretically, the top brass should place national interest above parochial concerns, render disinterested advice when asked, and loyally implement whatever decisions competent civilian authorities may make. For their part, civilian authorities should treat their military counterparts with the respect owed to professionals. They should allow the military wide latitude in matters pertaining to war. To use a term that acquired all manner of negative connotations during the Vietnam era, civilians should avoid "meddling" in soldiers' business. Theory, however, does not conform to reality. Conflict exists between the top brass and top civilian officials for precisely the same reason that conflict pits Republicans against Democrats, the White House against Capitol Hill, and the Senate against the House of Representatives: because power is at stake.

Reality is, for instance, the fact that when Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki speculated to a Senate committee – just prior to the invasion of Iraq – that occupying the country could well turn out to be a costly mess requiring "several hundred thousand troops," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his Deputy Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, instantly retaliated, publicly rebuking Shinseki and declaring him persona non grata within the Pentagon (an object lesson to officers inclined to speak their minds). Reality is also the chorus of retired and retiring senior officers who subsequently saddled Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz with the blame for everything that went wrong in Iraq, giving the generals in command a free pass.

Reality is the fact that General Stanley McChrystal's highly sensitive assessment of how to proceed in Afghanistan somehow found its way into the hands of *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward, thereby hijacking the Obama administration's internal review process. Furthermore, reality is McChrystal's enlisting various known commodities from Washington

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think tanks as "consultants" to promote his views in op-eds and television talk show appearances; it's McChrystal's public presentations – including a speech in London and an interview on *60 Minutes* – in which he declared that alternatives to his plan simply did not exist. In this way, the general handcuffed the president. And when the Pentagon responded to Obama's request for options on Afghanistan, it offered three variations of a single path: the one McChrystal insisted on implementing.

The ideal of civilian control relates to actual civil-military interactions in the same way that the principle of the common good relates to actual politics: it is an aspiration, not a fact; it will never define reality. Both sides are to blame for this unhappy circumstance. To insist that senior officers and senior civilians should find a way to work in harmony recalls Rodney King's plaintive appeal during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, when the now-famous victim of police brutality asked, "Can't we all just get along?" When applied to politics, any such expectation of human behavior flies in the face of history. In the same way poverty endures, so, too, will the competition for power persist.

When generals overreach, they deserve to have their hands slapped; indeed, Obama eventually handed General McChrystal his walking papers.[4] When ignorant or arrogant civilians ignore their military advisers and thereby commit costly blunders, they, too, should be held accountable. To the delight of the officer corps, George W. Bush ultimately replaced the bumbling Donald Rumsfeld as Pentagon chief. Yet inside the Beltway, civil-military conflict is not a problem to be solved; it is a situation to be managed.

Elite civil-military relations require constant policing. Whenever evidence of inappropriate conduct leading to defective policy becomes evident, op-ed writers and commentators decry the latest civil-military "crisis." This is necessary and honorable work. Once critics raise a sufficient ruckus, the system's mechanism for internal self-correction kicks in. The same corrective force applies to public objections to unrepaired potholes or lousy service at the bureau of motor vehicles. To quiet complaints (and preserve their status and prerogatives), those in charge eventually respond.

Indeed, the decades since World War II have seen recurring efforts to find legislative remedies to civil-military dysfunction. At regular intervals, Congress has passed "landmark" legislation aimed at bolstering civilian control while providing policy-makers with improved access to cogent, timely military advice and creating mechanisms to ensure the effective conduct of war. Three themes have dominated these efforts: concentrating ever-greater authority in the hands of the secretary of defense; empowering the chairman of the JCS at the expense of the service chiefs; and emphasizing "jointness" as the antidote to crippling parochialism among military branches.[5]

With the 1986 passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, this penchant for institutional tinkering reached a climax. The reorganization stripped the service chiefs of their advisory function, designating the JCS chairman as the principal military adviser to the secretary of defense and the president. It also enhanced the standing of senior field commanders, who since then have reported directly to the secretary of defense. Finally, it elevated *jointness* to the level of theological precept. Henceforth, the armed services were to be "intellectually, operationally, organizationally, doctrinally, and technically" joint, the operative assumption being that "jointness" provided "the key to op-

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erational success in the future."[6] For a time during the 1990s, Washington persuaded itself that it had fixed the problem. However, events since 9/11 have told a different story, with calls for a "Goldwater-Nichols II" the predictable result.[7]

My point is not that legislative efforts have been a waste of time. Rather, the dilemma is that results routinely fall short of reformers' promises. The earnestly sought panacea remains elusive. Still, even if corrective action is only partial or cosmetic, reforms initiated in Washington suffice to quiet the clamor and restore a semblance of order. Those outcomes are probably the best we can hope for regarding civil-military relations inside the Beltway. Yet there is a larger point to be made here: that is, the preoccupation with dysfunction in elite civil-military relations distracts attention from the more significant problem of dysfunction in the realm of civil-military relations for the rest of us.

Put simply, more or less contentious civil-military relations within the Beltway are inevitable. Within limits, such contention is also tolerable. Meanwhile, an unharmonious relationship between the military and society is *not* inevitable. Here, Americans *should* view dysfunction – which has become endemic and pervasive – as intolerable.

Consider the story of George C. Marshall, army chief of staff throughout World War II, and his old friend John McAuley Palmer. A great soldier, Marshall was also an adept politician. Long before the war's end was visible and without consulting his civilian masters, Marshall began to put in place his own plan for postwar U.S. civil-military relations. Rather than address how his successors would interact with presidents and cabinet secretaries, he instead sought to strengthen the connection between the U.S. Army and the American people. Toward that end, Marshall enlisted the help of Palmer, a retired brigadier general who had long before been put out to pasture. Marshall restored Palmer to active duty and charged him with laying the basis for a postwar military establishment.

Palmer contributed to American *military* thought and practice what union leader and prominent socialist Eugene V. Debs bestowed on American *political* thought and practice. Like Debs, he was a romantic and a radical of gentle mien; he diligently argued against tendencies that, in his eyes, subverted authentic American ideals; and, though his substantive impact turned out to be negligible, he left behind an intellectual legacy worth pondering.

Also like Debs, Palmer was a son of the Middle Border. He was born in 1870 in downstate Illinois to a family that played a prominent role in state politics. Instead of entering the family trade, however, John McAuley graduated from West Point in 1892 and entered the military profession. There he found considerable satisfaction and achieved modest success even as he cultivated views that were at odds with the prevailing beliefs of the officer corps. The army to which Palmer devoted several decades of service was well into its Uptonian moment. Indeed, Elihu Root, a reform-minded secretary of war from 1899 to 1904, had drawn explicitly on Upton's writings in reorganizing and modernizing the War Department. The prophet had received a posthumous vindication.

Among regular officers, Palmer was a rare anti-Uptonian. With a passion equal to Upton's, he defended the citizen-soldier tradition. Not only was that tradition sound, Palmer insisted, it also expressed fundamental and irreplaceable American ideals. Advocating for and striving to update the citizen-soldier tradition be-

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came his life's work. In his 1916 book *An Army of the People*, his first work on the subject, Palmer spun a tale in which the United States embraced the Swiss concept of the people in arms as the basis of an impregnable defense.

Neither the army's leadership nor President Woodrow Wilson was much interested in impregnable defenses, however. Within a year, the United States was raising up a new army of citizen-soldiers. Yet this army's purpose was not to defend America per se, but to fight Germans in far-off France, a campaign in which Palmer himself participated.

Following World War I, the issue of military reform briefly commanded attention in Congress. Palmer's views had made him sufficiently well known that, in 1919, he was seconded to the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, where he assisted in drafting the bill that became the National Defense Act of 1920. Much to the dismay of the Uptonians, this legislation reaffirmed the primacy of the citizen-soldier. With that issue settled, Congress proceeded to ignore the practical requirements of national defense, and the United States' military readiness declined during the interwar period. The National Guard, repository for the citizen-soldier tradition, was underfunded, untrained, and unready; the regular army, now with its own reserve, was too small and too poorly equipped to qualify as a serious fighting force.

When Palmer retired from the Army in 1926, he turned full time to campaigning for a modern and capable citizen-soldier army and published a series of books that might be classified as "advocacy history." Essentially, he ransacked the past, telling different versions of the same story and reaching the same conclusion every time. As he argues in his 1927 book *Statesmanship or War*:

> From the dawn of history wise men have seen that the perpetuation of free institutions depends on the power of self-defense. To be permanent, democratic political institutions must include a democratic system of military security. . . . A free state cannot continue to be democratic in peace and autocratic in war. Standing armies threaten government by the people, not because they consciously seek to pervert liberty, but because they relieve the people themselves of the duty of self-defense. A people accustomed to let a special class defend them must sooner or later become unfit for liberty. An enduring government by the people must include an army of the people among its vital institutions. For this reason, the maintenance of a single professional soldier more than necessary threatens the very groundwork of free institutions.[8]

In Palmer's view, recent German history provided an example of what the United States needed to avoid: that is, as Germany's "military power extended, its political aims expanded."[9] To maintain military power in excess of that needed for self-defense was to pave the way for militarism and empire. However inadvertently, means could end up dictating – and perverting – ends. The citizen-soldier, in Palmer's view, served not only as a safeguard of democracy but also as a bulwark against imperial adventurism. Americans, Palmer wrote in 1930, had to choose one of two military visions: that of "[George] Washington or [Emory] Upton."[10]

In *America in Arms*, published on the eve of U.S. entry into World War II, Palmer declared, "We should never maintain professionals to do things that can be done effectively by citizen soldiers."[11] Military policy that looked to the regular army as the primary instrument of national defense, he insisted, "could have

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no congenial place among the political institutions of a self-governing free people." Such an approach was at odds with the dictum that "a nation's military institutions should be in harmony with its political traditions."[12]

Given the paper trail that Palmer had left over a period of three decades, George Marshall knew what to expect when he recruited his old comrade to define the parameters of postwar military policy. The seventy-year-old Palmer holed up in a small office in the Library of Congress and went to work. The results of his labors appeared in "Military Establishment," or, more prosaically, War Department Circular 347, a document issued over Marshall's signature on August 25, 1944. At a moment when the war was far from over in either Europe or the Pacific, Circular 347 declared:

> There are two types of organization through which the manpower of a nation may be developed. One of these is the standing army type.... This is the system of Germany and Japan. It produces highly efficient armies. But it is open to political objections.... It, therefore, has no place among the institutions of a modern democratic state based on the conception of government by the people.
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> The second type of military institution ... is based upon the conception of a professional peace establishment (no larger than necessary to meet normal peacetime requirements) to be reinforced in time of emergency by organized units drawn from a citizen army reserve, effectively organized for this purpose in time of peace.... This is the type of army which President Washington proposed to the First Congress as one of the essential foundations of the new American Republic.... It will therefore be made the basis for all plans for a post-war peace establishment.[13]

Notably, Palmer's use of the term "peace establishment" echoes George Washington's 1783 writing, "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment."

In his final report as chief of staff, Marshall expanded on Palmer's admonition. "War has been defined by a people who have thought a lot about it – the Germans," he wrote. The German view held that "an invincible offensive military force ... could win any political argument." He continued:

> This is the doctrine Hitler carried to the verge of complete success. It is the doctrine of Japan. It is a criminal doctrine, and like other forms of crime, it has cropped up again and again since man began to live with his neighbors in communities and nations. There has long been an effort to outlaw war for exactly the same reason that man has outlawed murder. But the law prohibiting murder does not of itself prevent murder. It must be enforced. The enforcing power, however, must be maintained on a strictly democratic basis. There must not be a large standing army subject to the behest of a group of schemers. The citizen-soldier is the guarantee against such a misuse of power.[14]

Creating a citizen army reserve would require Universal Military Training (UMT). The idea was not to turn every able-bodied citizen into a fully equipped warrior, but to provide individuals with rudimentary training, thereby facilitating the mobilization of the citizen reserve when it was needed. Palmer described the concept thus:

> [E]very able-bodied young American should have a course of recruit training during his nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first summer. After his recruit training he would be enrolled in one of the local units of the National Guard or the Organized Reserves formed in the vicinity of his

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home. Twice during this four-year period each soldier in the Organized Reserves would be required to attend maneuvers for two weeks with his company.[15]

General Marshall also fervently believed that UMT should form the cornerstone of U.S. military policy after World War II. He considered it the key to harmonizing a new military establishment with American political traditions. "The entire idea," one historian has aptly written, "resembled the old nineteenth-century militia program, except it would be run by the national government rather than the states."[16]

By the end of World War II, Marshall had persuaded President Truman, himself a former citizen-soldier from Missouri, to sign on. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who succeeded Marshall as army chief of staff, concurred, albeit with reservations. But the idea went nowhere in Congress; UMT was stillborn. The United States instead chose the course that spelled the demise of the citizen-soldier tradition: that is, rather than a peace establishment, Americans opted for a war establishment. Over time, the concept of a standing army lost its negative connotations. Moreover, creating an impregnable defense was no longer enough. The phrase *national security*, which was displacing *national defense* in the lexicon of everyday political discourse, implied more expansive and ambitious requirements. The prospect of creating "an invincible offensive military force" that "could win any political argument" found favor with many Americans.

Why did efforts by Palmer and Marshall to revise and sustain the citizen-soldier concept fail? Two factors stand out as especially important. First, in spite of its merits in forging a harmonious relationship between the armed forces and society, UMT could not satisfy immediate military requirements. As World War II came to an end, the United States had to station large occupation forces in Europe and the Pacific. UMT could not have fulfilled this mission. The onset of the Cold War further emphasized this shortcoming as the forward deployment of U.S. forces became a core element of national security policy.

Second, although proponents described UMT as inherently democratic and a safeguard against militarism, wary Americans did not necessarily subscribe to that view. After all, UMT implied compulsion. In the eyes of critics, it looked like a backdoor way of impressing the entire male population into military service, making permanent the system of conscription that Americans had accepted as a wartime emergency measure. In short, UMT was hard to explain and hard to sell; thus, Congress rejected it. Responding to the perceived imperatives of the Cold War, it opted instead for "Selective Service," a system of peacetime conscription that was not universal and eventually proved to be anything but democratic.

Selective Service provided federal authorities with mechanisms to manage the entire military-age male population. The prospect of being drafted spurred some young Americans to volunteer for military service; meanwhile, General Lewis Hershey, director of the Selective Service System, protected others with deferments and augmented the supply of willing recruits by adjusting monthly draft quotas upward or downward. In this guise, a vestige of the citizen-soldier tradition survived through the 1950s and into the 1960s (this was the era of Sergeant Elvis Presley, after all). Yet it was a system that neither George Washington nor Emory Upton would likely have found completely satisfactory.

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Then came Vietnam. Under the strain of an unpopular and protracted war, the entire system collapsed. Vietnam handed Emory Upton a belated triumph and dealt John McAuley Palmer a seemingly decisive defeat. President Richard M. Nixon killed the citizen-soldier tradition once and for all. Disregarding concerns voiced by the Joint Chiefs, he persuaded Congress to terminate the draft.

Out of the wreckage of Vietnam emerged the so-called all-volunteer force. This was a standing army par excellence, existing apart from American society. For a time, divorcing the American military from the American people seemed a masterstroke. Rather than harmonizing military policy with political values, the all-volunteer force appeared to resolve a much thornier issue. It reconciled American culture, which had come to celebrate unencumbered individual autonomy, with political elites' dogged insistence that exercising global leadership made it essential for the United States to have available for immediate use immensely capable armed forces. Rather than a state-based militia activated in emergencies, the National Guard became an adjunct of the standing military. In the Pentagon's view, guardsmen were part-time regulars, expected to conform fully to professional standards. This, at least, was the premise informing the so-called Total Force doctrine.

The creation of a new class of warrior-professionals made everyone happy. Those residing outside the Beltway could live their lives, unbothered by the prospect of receiving a telegram from the likes of General Hershey. Inside the Beltway, meanwhile, elites could still find satisfaction in sending American soldiers to Beirut, Panama, Somalia, or elsewhere. By the 1990s, something close to unanimity existed: the military created after Vietnam was perhaps the most successful federal innovation since the self-adhesive postage stamp.

In 2004 and 2005, after 9/11 and in the wake of two unpopular and protracted wars – one in Iraq and another in Afghanistan – Americans began awakening to the real implications of having deep-sixed the citizen-soldier. Inside the Beltway, it became apparent that the United States faced the problem of having too much war and too few warriors. To ease the burden on a badly overstretched force, and with few allies stepping up to the plate to help, the Pentagon turned increasingly to mercenaries, referred to euphemistically as "private security firms." No one much cared for the result except the contractors who raked in huge profits at taxpayer expense. Even then, sending troops back for a third or fourth combat tour became commonplace, and the sustainability of the situation seemed precarious.

Outside the Beltway, the American people retained negligible say in the employment of an army over which they had forfeited any ownership. Long since cast as spectators, citizens found that they had little voice in deciding when Team America suited up or where it played. If there remained any doubts on that score, President Barack Obama's decision to escalate the Afghanistan War in December 2009 ended them. Having promised to "change the way Washington works," Obama instead conformed to the dictates of standard practice.

"We the People" need to understand: it's no longer *our* army; it hasn't been for years; it's *theirs* and they intend to keep it. The American military belongs to Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright, to George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, to Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates. Civilian leaders will continue to employ the military as they see fit. If Americans do not like the way the army is used, they

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should reclaim it, resuscitating the tradition of the citizen-soldier and reasserting the connection between citizenship and military service. Bluntly, Americans should heed the counsel of George Washington, George Marshall, and John McAuley Palmer.

The likelihood of such an outcome is nearly nil. With rare exceptions, members of the national security establishment remain wedded to the all-volunteer force and adamantly oppose any measure that would increase popular influence on policy. Worse, American civic culture continues to evince a very low tolerance for anything that smacks of collective obligation. The few willing to entertain the notion that military service should constitute an obligation tend to be long in the tooth – aging veterans of World War II, mostly.

Yet as long as the tradition of the citizen-soldier remains moribund, reversing the militarization of U.S. foreign policy will be a pipe dream. In the nation's capital, the halls will resound with calls for peace, but war is likely to remain a permanent condition. In Washington, people will wring their hands over the unseemly state of relations between civilian and military elites, as brass hats and politicians maneuver against the other for advantage. That's *their* problem.

The problem for the rest of us is a far greater one: grasping the implications, moral as well as political, of sending the few to engage in endless war while the many stand by – passive, mute, and yet, whether they like it or not, deeply complicit.

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ENDNOTES

1 George Washington, "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" (1783), http://www.potowmack.org/washsent.html (accessed May 11, 2010).

2 U.S. Congress, The Militia Act of 1792, 2nd Cong., 1st sess., May 8, 1792, http://www.constitution.org/mil/mil_act_1792.htm (accessed May 11, 2010).

3 The Uptonian bible is *The Military Policy of the United States*, a history left unfinished at the time of Upton's death and published several decades later at the behest of Secretary of War Elihu Root; Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904).

4 What cost General McChrystal his job was not aggressive policy promotion but a willingness to tolerate among his immediate subordinates casual expressions of contempt for senior civilians. For the *Rolling Stone* article that led to his firing, see http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/17390/119236 (accessed November 30, 2010).

5 Although not included in the official *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, *jointness* identifies seamless inter-service collaboration as the sine qua non of military effectiveness.

6 U.S. Congress, Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, 99th Cong., 2nd sess., October 1, 1986; available at the National Defense University Library, http://www.ndu.edu/library/goldnich/goldnich.html (accessed December 22, 2010).

7 See Beyond Goldwater-Nichols, a project undertaken by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, http://csis.org/program/beyond-goldwater-nichols (accessed November 30, 2010).

8 John McAuley Palmer, *Statesmanship or War* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1927), 74.

9 Ibid., 29.

[10] John McAuley Palmer, *Washington, Lincoln, Wilson: Three War Statesmen* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1930), 361.

[11] John McAuley Palmer, *America in Arms: The Experience of the United States with Military Organization* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1941), 203.

[12] Quoted in I. B. Holley, Jr., *General John M. Palmer, Citizen Soldiers, and the Army of a Democracy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 89. This volume combines Palmer's unfinished and previously unpublished memoir with a biography that takes up where the memoir leaves off.

[13] Ibid., 659 – 660.

[14] United States War Department General Staff, *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945, to the Secretary of War* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1945), 117.

[15] Palmer, *America in Arms*, 174.

[16] George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940 – 1973* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 90.

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