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IMAGE OF THE U.S. MILITARY, 1750-1980

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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The question of the image of the military has gained increasing interest since the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. It is imperative that the military foster a positive image if it is to be successful in filling the ranks with qualified personnel. This thesis states that Americans have traditionally held negative perceptions about the armed forces and that many of these perceptions exist today. The problem is studied from 1750 to 1980 and an attempt is made to identify specific causes for the negative image. The factors which have influenced the development of a negative image include the question for the need of a standing military force, the quality of enlisted personnel, effects of peace movements, the military's participation in unpopular wars, antipathy toward West Point, and the armed forces' lack of preparedness for some conflicts.

In the most recent years, studies and statistical data suggest that the present image continues less than favorable. The attitude of youth toward military service and the increasing alienation of military people from society are cited as specific causes for negative aspects of the military's image. Obviously, the initial step in solving any problem is the recognition of the problem itself. This study concludes by recommending additional study on the question of the image of the military and the formulation of a program to upgrade that image.

Image of the U.S. Military, 1750-1980.

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

IMAGE OF THE U.S. MILITARY, 1750-1980, by Major John F. Carney, USA, 50 pages.

The question of the image of the military has gained increasing interest since the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. It is imperative that the military foster a positive image if it is to be successful in filling the ranks with qualified personnel. This thesis states that Americans have traditionally held negative perceptions about the armed forces and that many of these perceptions exist today. The problem is studied from 1750 to 1980 and an attempt is made to identify specific causes for the negative image. The factors which have influenced the development of a negative image include the question for the need of a standing military force, the quality of enlisted personnel, effects of peace movements, the military's participation in unpopular wars, antipathy toward West Point, and the armed forces' lack of preparedness for some conflicts.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Soldiering: To make a pretense of working, while doing only enough to escape punishment or discharge; to malinger.[1]
>
> --Webster

This thesis states that the American people have traditionally held negative perceptions about the military forces of the United States. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the validity of this thesis, to describe these perceptions, to present the current image, and to discuss the possible effects of current perceptions on the maintenance of the all volunteer force. Perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of Americans are examined as they pertain to the institutions of the armed forces and to the profession of being a soldier.

From the first days of the United States, American citizens disliked a professional military and openly distrusted a standing army. Although this distrust may well have been a legacy of British rule,[2] these attitudes have prevailed in American civil-military relations from

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[1] Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language (cited hereinafter as Webster's), 2d ed., unabridged, 1954, s.v. "soldier."

[2] Stephen E. Ambrose and James A. Barber, Jr., eds., The Military and American Society: Essays & Readings (New York: Free Press, 1972), p. 299.

that time to the present.

After the Revolution, the new Americans protected themselves with a very small standing army and relied on the principle of the universal responsibility of every able-bodied, male citizen to protect the fledgling nation. During the period 1829 to 1861, the nation's military policy was "a projection of that which had been obtained in earlier years, that is, distrust of a standing army, parsimony in military expenditure, and reliance upon the militia or volunteers in emergency.[3]

During the Civil War, more than three million soldiers served in the armed forces for the Union and the Confederacy. When the war was over, both sides expressed great appreciation to their soldiers in that most bloody war between brothers; however, the skeptical view of the American people toward the professional army and the military caste did not change. Americans viewed themselves as honest and peace-loving people who were insulated from any threat by two great oceans. So, after the fires of the Civil War were extinguished, Northerners went back to the mills, Southerners went back to the farm, and adventurers headed west.

The standing army of 37,000 men again became a frontier army with the mission of defending citizens from hostile Indians.[4] That

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[3]Leonard D. White, The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1829-1861 (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 187.

[4]U.S., Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United

period was probably the low point in America's perception of its military. The image of a soldier deteriorated to that of a worthless individual who drank too much, worked too little, spent his abundant idle time with the lowliest women, and fought Indians only on rare occasions. That may have been the time when this chapter's epigraph became one of the definitions of soldiering.

During the First and Second World Wars, most Americans believed the nation faced a mortal threat from abroad. A feeling of national unity was prevalent, and the armed forces earned some credit and increased greatly in prestige with the public. In both of these great wars, Americans felt a moral and ethical obligation to participate. Also, the advent of conscription for both wars insured that the military consisted of a force that was generally representative of the American population.

Unfortunately, America's love affair with her army was short-lived. From 1965 to the present, the public's perception of its armed forces has significantly deteriorated. The Viet Nam War has been a major factor in this deterioration, and many Americans placed blame for that war on the military establishment. Many of the most vocal members of the intellectual community were of the liberal persuasion and seemed to be unanimous in placing total blame for Viet Nam on the military.[5]

States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 1142.

[5]Ambrose and Barber, p. 308.

Even as the memories of the Viet Nam War begin to fade, it appears that the public image of the military continues to be poor. Recent surveys indicate that young people in particular hold the military in disdain. Also, in the last few years, the degree of alienation between members of the military and the society appears to have increased.

It seems that the general feeling of the American people toward their military forces is less than favorable. To most Americans the words army and military do not conjure the idea of a well-organized, efficient, well-trained, and dedicated fighting force. The intent here is not to propose that the military services are the epitome of organization and efficiency. To the contrary, military organizations, like all large bureaucracies, have a number of counterproductive and inefficient personnel, complicated regulations and procedures, and miles of "red tape." That military organizations are not unique in these problems in no way exonerates them, but, in all fairness, the military services also have a rich tradition of selfless service and great sacrifice for the United States. Most members of the defense forces are hard-working and productive men and women who deserve a fair measure of respect from their fellow citizens.

The importance of this problem of negative perceptions of the armed forces is obvious. If Americans believe their forces consist of unwilling members who are under the leadership of incompetents, all performing unnecessary activities, the military services will not

attract quality recruits. Conversely, if Americans think highly of military service, well-qualified and talented young people will be interested in serving. The option to draft talent for the military services ended when the all volunteer force came into being. Therefore, one aspect of defense preparedness of the United States, manpower, rests largely on how Americans perceive military service.

A survey of the related literature did not reveal any work that specifically addressed the problem of erroneous perceptions of the U.S. Army or the U.S. Armed Forces. This is somewhat incredible when one considers the detrimental effects of ill-founded, negative perceptions on the all volunteer force. Surely a nation that spends 126+ billion dollars on defense (more than one-half of which is dedicated to manpower related costs)[6] needs to insure that its defense is in the hands of quality men and women who are respected by most citizens.

This study makes a positive contribution to the defense establishment by defining the current image of the military and viewing that image in its historical perspective. Hopefully, it may serve to convince some influential leaders that the image of the military is not favorable and that steps must be taken to improve it.

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[6]Joseph A. Pechman, ed., Setting National Priorities: The 1979 Budget (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1978), p. 215.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

> Image: To represent to the mental vision; to form a likeness of by the fancy or recollection; to conceive; imagine.[1]
>
> --Webster

> Perception: An immediate or intuitive cognition or judgment; . . . often implying nice observation or subtle discrimination; . . . .[2]
>
> --Webster

In dealing with images and perceptions, it is very difficult to offer scientific evidence that will support or refute a given thesis. By their very definitions, images and perceptions are intangibles that do not offer themselves to systematic scrutiny. The use of statistics and poll-taking did provide some insight for the study; however, the use of these techniques in ascertaining public opinion is a relatively recent development, and few statistical data were compiled on this subject between 1750 and 1930. Therefore, in the main, the historical method or approach was used to provide an assessment.

That is not to imply that the historical approach is faulty. On the contrary, the entire function of history is to help explain the

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[1] Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, 2d ed., unabridged, 1954, s.v. "image."

[2] Ibid., s.v. "perception."

present in the light of the past and to "explain the facts of which we are witness."[3] It is through the eyes of various authors that this study views the development of the image of the military and, although a number of works indicate a high public regard for military service, the greatest number hold the opposite view. Time and again, throughout the nation's history, the military is depicted as a force composed of undesirable ruffians, and this may be the historical context from which many present-day images of the military have evolved. "The social scientist . . . seeks generalization and laws, and thus he looks to the recurrent, whether of short or long duration, for the comparisons necessary to establish patterns."[4]

In addition to the survey of related literature, some use was made of opinion polls, especially those since 1970. Also, recent professional military journals and publications were examined and are referenced frequently.

The methodology of this study has some obvious limitations. Ideally, more data representing a cross-section of American opinion should be included. Unfortunately, providing a more comprehensive and complete picture was beyond the scope of the thesis and the resources of the author. Time, funds, and the very magnitude of the subject limited the scope of this research.

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[3]G. J. Renier, History: Its Purpose and Method (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p. 258.

[4]Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 244-45.

CHAPTER III

PUBLIC'S VIEW OF THE MILITARY, 1750-1939

> As to the protection of our frontiers, it would seem best to leave it to the people themselves, as hath ever been the case. . . . This will always secure to us a hardy set of men on the frontiers. . . . [Ellipses not mine.] Whereas, if they are protected by regulars, security will necessarily produce inattention to arms, and the whole of our people becoming disused to War, render the Curse of a standing Army Necessary.[1]
>
> --Richard Henry Lee, 1784

Revolutionary War Period

From the earliest days of the United States, most citizens agreed that a standing army was something to be distrusted, watched very carefully, and, if possible, totally avoided. In that period four major factors emerged which heavily influenced early Americans concerning regular military forces. Those factors were a distaste for the regular British Army, the quality of Revolutionary War volunteers, the question of the necessity for a standing army, and the existence of a peace movement. They combined to convince most citizens that a standing military force may be more of a danger than a safeguard.

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[1]Richard H. Kohn, Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802 (New York: Free Press, 1975), p. 54.

British Army

The distrust of the military began well before the war itself. The colonists were accustomed to seeing British regulars walk the streets of America and were often forced by law to billet them in their homes. The presence of the British Army would not have caused dissension had the colonists believed the soldiers were based in America to protect and defend them. The troops, however, were intended to serve the strategic interests of the British Empire by counterpointing French expansionism in North America and perhaps to assist in expansion of the British Empire.[2]

General distaste for the British Army heightened when the colonists perceived it as being incapable of effective action in North America. They believed regular armies were "not only supercilious but also ineffectual, in American conditions."[3] Braddock's defeat at the Monongahela River in 1755 and the failure of Abercrombie's attack on Fort Ticonderoga reinforced that view. As the colonies matured economically and politically, the presence of more than 10,000 British soldiers became a great problem. Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Adams agreed in 1770 that Britain had no authority to base a standing army in America without permission of the colonists.[4]

Although the Revolutionary War was not fought on the basis of

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[2]Marcus Cunliffe, Soldiers & Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865 (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 38.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 39.

opposition to the presence of a British army in America, that presence was a contributing cause. The attitudes and distaste the colonists acquired for standing armies and a professional military caste have influenced civil-military relations in the United States ever since.[5]

America's First Soldiers

After the Declaration of Independence, the new nation was in obvious need of an organized force to convince Britain of its sincerity. George Washington was appointed commander-in-chief. His responsibility was to raise and organize an army that was strong enough to defeat the British. Although many colonists favored independence, few were willing to put aside their plows and join Washington's army for the duration of the conflict.

> The recruiting at first went on slowly. Those who offered to enlist . . . were for the most part loose, idle persons without house or home, some without shoes or stockings, some shirtless and many without a coat or waistcoat.[6]

Thus, many of America's first soldiers did not represent the typical colonist and were probably as poorly regarded as the British soldiers. The large number of more typical colonists who served as soldiers in the Revolutionary War returned to the farm, the mill, or a civilian occupa-

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[5]Stephen E. Ambrose and James A. Barber, Jr., eds., The Military and American Society: Essays & Readings (New York: Free Press, 1972), p. 299.

[6]Washington Irving, George Washington: A Biography, abridged; ed. Charles Neider (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1976), p. 28.

tion as soon as the war ended. Those who remained in uniform were generally regarded as ruffians and misfits, a judgment that was probably accurate.

Standing Army

The idea of a standing army after the revolution again raised the emotional temperature of many Americans. Some of the Founding Fathers believed a standing army might be more of a danger to liberty than a protector of it. However, having recently seen the successful completion of a costly and bloody war, delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 could hardly ignore the issue of national security.[7]

Not all Americans opposed the existence of an efficient and standing force of regulars. Many early political leaders who may have shared the traditional American distaste for a regular army found themselves favoring a standing force because they were responsible for the protection of the nation. In 1783, George Washington recommended a peacetime standing army of regulars, creation of a national military academy for training officers, and establishment of military arsenals that should be strategically located to react to defense emergencies. Additionally, he suggested the creation of a well-organized militia chat was prepared to be called to active service in a short period of time.[8]

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[7]Ambrose and Barber, p. 300.

[8]John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington From the Original Manuscript Sources, Vol. 26 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1944), pp. 374-98.

Alexander Hamilton also advocated the establishment of a standing military force. In the famous Federalist Papers of 1787-1788, he argued that responsibility for national defense could not be equally divided among the thirteen states and that unity of effort and unity of command are essential attributes to military operations. Hamilton also held that only a standing and professional army could be expected to defend the nation against an opposing professional army. In Federalist Number 25, he asserted: "War, like most other things, is a science to be acquired and perfected by diligence, by perseverance, by time, and by practice."[9]

Although Washington, Hamilton, and some other prominent leaders were inclined toward a standing army, the opponents of such a force were numerous and more vocal. Many Americans were just as concerned with military "overlordship" as with military efficiency. "Geography and American patriotism were seen as an unbeatable combination. With the return of peace, a standing army--except for a handful of storekeepers and artillerists--was both undesirable and unnecessary."[10] That the Army of the United States numbered fewer than 700 in 1785 causes little wonder.

Peace Movement

Another factor that influenced opinions of the day was the existence of a peace movement. Although many Americans had, for

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[9]Cunliffe, p. 47. [10]Cunliffe, p. 42.

religious reasons, traditionally refused to serve under arms, not until 1793 did an organized peace movement emerge under the leadership of Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia medical doctor. He suggested abolition of military titles and uniforms and recommended the placing of signs over the office of the War Department reading: "Office for Butchering of the Human Species"; "Widow- and Orphan-Making Office."[11]

Rush represented the most extreme statement of the anti-military faction, but in the final analysis his effect was probably not very great. Nonetheless, he did have some impact on public opinion, and it is noteworthy that a "peace at any cost" movement is not a twentieth-century phenomenon. As America prepared to enter the nineteenth century, her standing army was miniscule and her soldiers were often thought of as idle and dangerous malcontents.

War of 1812

The question of a necessity of a standing army and the quality of American soldiery continued to impact on the public's opinion during and after the War of 1812. The highlight of that war was the absolute defeat of British regulars by Andrew Jackson at New Orleans in 1815. The British, under the command of Lord Pakenham, were seasoned soldiers who had fought well against French armies in Spain, while Jackson's forces consisted of regulars augmented by fresh recruits from the backwoods. The results of the battle were one-sided, more than 2,000

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[11]Cunliffe, p. 57.

British killed or wounded for only a handful of American casualties. The accurately placed fire of America's professional artillerists was the primary cause of the British defeat. By and large, however, the American public believed just the opposite, that the British were routed by "American backwoodsmen--men who were the antithesis of Pakenham's professionals."[12]

When the war ended, the American public expressed its belief that the individual "grit" of the American had once again conquered a standing army and that the men could return to the useful work of the farm instead of remaining in service at the expense of the taxpayer. In reality, the effective performance of the standing army plus augmentation by the militia won the war. Yet, the inaccuracies of the reporting of events reinforced the view that a standing army was useless, and again this factor influenced the formulation of a negative opinion of the "unnecessary" standing army.

Controversy over the quality of soldiers and military life also continued. Pay and allowances were so poor that few talented men considered an officer's career or enlisting as a volunteer. Indeed, for quite a period of time, society's least fortunate, destitute foreigners, saw the service as their only means of surviving and provided most of the enlisted volunteers. Stories of drunken soldiers abounded (many supported by fact), and cartoons and caricatures depicting drunken and

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[12]Cunliffe, p. 53.

slovenly attired soldiers were frequently printed in magazines and newspapers of the day.[13]

Attack on West Point

The next factor that influenced Americans' opinions of the regular military concerned the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. West Point became the major source of commissioned officers in the regular army, and the Academy and the Army were considered as one and the same. During the years between the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, the Academy was under constant attack from private citizens, Congressmen, state legislatures, and even militia conventions.[14]

The major criticism against the Academy was that it provided aristocratic officers with little or no empathy for the soldiers they were to command. Had it not been for Andrew Jackson, who was perhaps the most respected and influential American of the day, the Academy might have been terminated. In 1823 Jackson referred to it as "the best school in the world," but in the public's view it symbolized the entire Army and both were generally regarded in a negative sense. A former Academy superintendent who joined with the protesters, Alden Partridge, said:

> [T]here is not on the whole globe an establishment more monarchial, corrupt, and corrupting than this, the very organization of which is a palpable violation of the constitution and laws of the country,

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[13]Cunliffe, pp. 120-22. [14]Cunliffe, p. 106.

> and its direct tendency to introduce and build up a privileged order of the very worst class--a military aristocracy--in the United States.[15]

As for the officers who were commissioned upon graduation, Partridge said:

> [T]hese young men are to be gentlemen soldiers . . . . Yes, Fellow Citizens, they are intended for gentlemen soldiers--to sit high in authority, and exercise command, while you and your sons, who pay $200,000 annually for their education, must approach them cap in hand, and move at their nod. You and your sons are to march in the ranks; to carry the musket and knapsack; to be the drudges, yea, the mere pack-horses of military service. Are you prepared for this? If not, then prostrate this unconstitutional and aristocratical establishment, before the yoke is too firmly fixed on your necks to be shaken off.[16]

Sentiments of these kinds regarding the United States Military Academy added to the public's distaste and distrust of the standing army.

Mexican-American War

During the Mexican-American War in 1846, a new factor emerged which further contributed to the negative image of the standing military forces. For the first time, the military was held largely accountable for the political decision to fight in an unpopular war.

That the war was unpopular, there is little doubt. The majority of Americans believed, and many openly stated, that President James K. Polk contrived that military adventure only to expand the United States at the expense of Mexico. Abraham Lincoln held that Polk was "deeply conscious of being in the wrong; that he feels the blood of this war."[17]

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[15]Cunliffe, p. 106. [16]Cunliffe, p. 106.

[17]Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, ed., The Mexican War: Was It Manifest

Henry David Thoreau, writing in his famous Civil Disobedience, stated that the United States had sent an "invading army" to "unjustly overrun" and conquer Mexico.[18] Naturally enough, the war was tied to the generals and the generals to the army, resulting in the increased disenchantment of Americans with their standing military.[19]

Civil War

The Civil War encompassed all aspects of America, both North and South, and had a somewhat favorable impact on the manner in which Americans viewed their military forces. After the war, General Ulysses S. Grant was elected eighteenth President of the United States and Robert E. Lee was venerated in the southern states.

This favorable view toward professional soldiers was mitigated by the nature of the war itself. When the opening shots were fired, the standing army was split in two and, although most of the more notable commanders were professionals, the war was prosecuted primarily by groups of hastily recruited volunteers from both sides. Also, since "many of the professional politicians were amateur soldiers, and many of the professional soldiers were amateur politicians,"[20] the battlefield was controlled as much by civilian politicians as by professional generals.

Destiny? (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 8.

[18]Ruiz, p. 8. [19]Cunliffe, pp. 305-318. [20]Cunliffe, p. 334.

Post-Civil War

In the years following the Civil War, the army was fully employed with the reconstruction of the southern states and the expansion of the western frontier. In spite of the importance of these missions, the image of the military continued to be a poor one. The old themes of the poor quality of the volunteers and the lack of necessity for a professional army were very much in evidence.

Concerning the quality of the soldiers, a high percentage of personnel were drawn from recent and impoverished immigrants to America, especially Irish and Germans. These disfranchised men were often depicted as hired ruffians with little personal discipline who worked too little and drank too much.[21] Regarding the lack of necessity for a professional army, Senator John A. Logan of Tennessee, who had served as a major general in the Civil War, summed up the feelings of many Americans when he alleged that the American tradition and belief system repudiated the existence of a standing army as "professional armies were undemocratic, un-American, and almost unnecessary: caste-ridden, cliquish and hidebound."[22]

Spanish-American War

If the standing army was to share the blame for an unpopular war, it was not to receive any credit for a popular one. In fact, the Spanish-American War served to highlight the fact that the standing army

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[21] Cunliffe, pp. 120 & 264. [22] Cunliffe, p. 21.

was hopelessly unprepared and viewed with disdain by the public. These factors were to perpetuate the poor image of the military.

There can be no question that the Spanish-American War was a popular one. American support for the President's declaration of war was universal. In fact, the Congressional vote to approve funding for the conflict was unanimous.[23] The war was even dubbed "The Splendid Little War."[24] It lasted only three months and the American victory was total.

The standing army was certainly unprepared. Although more than 250,000 men were required to serve, only 57 supply experts were available to outfit them[25] and fewer than 2,200 officers were available to train them.[26] The problems of the miniscule professional army, after years of neglect, should have been understood. The public, however, had little empathy for its plight. Citizens were angered at the lack of readiness and "howls of protest condemned the services for their ineptitude."[27]

In addition to the lack of preparedness, the age-old problem of the poor public image of the regular army was again in focus. The policy of fusing militia units and other volunteers with the despised

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[23]R. A. Alger, The Spanish-American War (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1901), p. 6.

[24]H. Wayne Morgan, America's Road to Empire: The War with Spain and Overseas Expansion (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. ix.

[25]Ibid., p. 66. [26]Alger, p. 7. [27]Morgan, p. 67.

regulars caused many problems. Indeed, a New York militia regiment even refused to enter the war because of this. A member of the unit explained:

> One of the reasons that we would not go willingly into the Regular Army is that we would have to serve under West Pointers. For a self-respecting American of good family to serve as a private, corporal, or sergeant under a West Point lieutenant or captain is entirely out of the question. . . .
>
> To fight for my country as a volunteer in the regiment that I love would be a glorious pleasure, but to serve in the Regular Army . . . well, I would rather be excused.[28]

It would be difficult to find a more lucid example of the existence of the military's poor image.

Pre-World War I

At the turn of the century, a new factor appeared which served to lessen public respect for the military. A significant number of professional officers seemed to believe that aspects of a democratic society, e.g., free press and free speech, were impediments to the organization and discipline of an effective military force. These views were elaborated in a prize-winning essay published in 1906 in the principal professional journal of the American military, the Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States.

The essay, written by Lieutenant Colonel James S. Petit, clearly implied a disdain for democracy itself and it followed that "such

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[28]Gregory Mason, Remember the Maine (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1939), p. 76.

military hostility toward democratic institutions and the American national character could only aggravate the reciprocal hostility of much of civilian America toward the military."[29] To intensify an already poor image by such self-inflicted criticism spoke poorly of the professional officers of the day.

World War I

The effects of World War I on the public's view of the military were, for a change, mostly favorable. The foresight displayed by military leaders such as General Leonard Wood insured that America was at least aware of the need to prepare for future conflicts. However, the greatest factor that enhanced military prestige was probably the advent of conscription.

General Wood was the first great spokesman for a universal service obligation and a selective service system. He stated in 1915 that the United States had never been prepared to fight a war with a professional army. In all foreign wars the nation had fought, other matters had distracted the enemy. In the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the British were in simultaneous military conflict with the French, and the Mexican War and the War of 1898 did not offer a formidable military opponent. Wood firmly believed the United States required a well-organized standing force of conscripts with a credible reserve or

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[29]Russell F. Weigley, ed., The American Military: Readings in the History of the Military in American Society (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. xi.

militia as a backup. He held that a volunteer army which had to be trained after hostilities commenced was simply not acceptable, and he cited as reasons the increasing technology of war and the potential rapidity of military developments.[30]

In spite of that timely warning, the Selective Service Bill was not approved until May 1917, after war had been declared. That time, however, few blamed the military for lack of readiness. Wood and others had made themselves heard well before the crisis occurred.

When instituted, Selective Service worked rather smoothly. By June 1917, more than nine million men had registered. When World War I ended, more than 4 million had actually served and 24 million were on the rolls.[31] The public was pleased with both the Selective Service System and the performance of its soldiers.

Post-World War I

After the war, demobilization occurred more quickly than mobilization, and the nation once again reduced its standing military forces to a minimal level. Since sufficient volunteers existed to fill the ranks of the military, conscription was ended. The years between the two great world wars saw the military in a role of little significance.

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[30]Leonard Wood, The Military Obligation of Citizenship (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1915), pp. 50-76.

[31]John M. Blum and others, The National Experience: A History of the United States Since 1865, 2 vols., 2d ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), pt. 2, p. 593.

Americans, as in earlier times, did not perceive a threat from any foreign nation and were more concerned with internal matters, particularly during the years of the Great Depression.

One factor that influenced public opinion against the military during this period, however, was the quality of enlisted personnel. As in earlier times, the quality of the volunteers was low. Large numbers of recent immigrants and other economically deprived men filled the ranks, and the public exhibited little affection for them. General George S. Blanchard, a former commander-in-chief of the United States Army, Europe, in a reference to soldiers of the late 1930s, said: "Before World War II, soldiers were spat upon. . . . The quality [of the soldiers] was pathetic. . . . Many were people who couldn't get a job. . . . Some were drunks."[32]

Summary

During the first 160 years of the American experience, the people did not consider the military as one of the cornerstones of the democratic institution. A dislike of standing military forces, the question of the need for a standing military, the poor quality of soldiers, participation in unpopular wars, the existence of an alleged aristocratic military academy, and a strong dislike for professional officers were all significant factors that caused the public to view the

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[32]General George S. Blanchard, in an address before members of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kans., 19 February 1980.

military with disdain. Many citizens thought of the military services as organizations of malcontents who were unfit for worthwhile civilian employment. For a brief period between 1917 and 1918, the implementation of Selective Service and a somewhat universal selection of conscripts apparently helped in convincing the public that the military really represented the people it served. When the draft ended and the army once again became a volunteer force, it again fell into disfavor with a large segment of the American people.

CHAPTER IV

PUBLIC'S VIEW OF THE MILITARY, 1939-1972

> ¶ Stop for a moment to think about the next war, if there should be one. . . . There were destructive gases, there were methods of explosive destruction unheard of even during this war [World War I], which were just ready for use when the war ended--great projectiles that guided themselves and, shot into the heavens, went for a hundred miles and more and then burst tons of explosives upon helpless cities, something to which the guns with which the Germans bombarded Paris from a distance were not comparable. . . . Ask any soldier if he wants to go through a hell like that again. The soldiers know what the next war would be. They know what the inventions were that were just about to be used for the absolute destruction of mankind.[1]
>
> --Woodrow Wilson

Woodrow Wilson made a strong case for the abolition of war; regrettably, his hopes were not to be realized. In fact, the latest years of American history are much more conflict-ridden than earlier years. From 1775 to 1939, a period of 164 years, the United States was at war for a total of 23 years; from 1940 to 1972, the nation was at war for 20 years. War, then, is not only a constant of the American experience, it has become of increasing significance during the more recent years of the nation. As a consequence, the Armed Forces of the United States became more visible and more controversial to the American public.

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[1] Saul K. Padover, ed., Wilson's Ideals (Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942), p. 94.

In this chapter, the years from just prior to World War II to Viet Nam are analyzed. During that period, the military services earned a degree of respect as a result of World War II. However, the image credits that were built up in the world war were quickly expended in Korea and, to a larger degree, in Viet Nam. Participation in unpopular wars was the primary factor for the erosion of a favorable image.

World War II

World War II was probably the most popular war in American history. The Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor was the foremost reason Americans accepted that war so readily. Japan, in fact, delivered the war to the United States, and Hitler's Germany declared war on America several days later. Never before had the people been more united against a common foe.

Opposition to the war was almost non-existent. With the exception of a few Trotskyist groups and several poorly organized pacifist organizations, the American people were determined to fight and win.[2] The armed forces quickly swelled to more than 16 million men and women, and the economic and industrial potential of the nation totally geared to the war effort. Nearly everyone contributed. Citizens purchased war bonds, supported scrap and rubber collection drives, accepted rationing, and manned numerous service organizations to support military

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[2]Charles C. Moskos, Jr., ed., Public Opinion and the Military Establishment, Vol. 1 of Sage Research Progress Series on War, Revolution, and Peacekeeping (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1971), p. x.

personnel. The American people acted in unison, and the soldier, sailor, and marine were never more popular.[3]

When World War II ended, a term of demobilization followed. America would have enjoyed being secure in its victory and confident in the future; however, that was simply not to be. Unlike past conflicts, when the enemy was defeated and peace was restored, the years after World War II were accompanied by what was perceived as a new threat to the United States--the Soviet Union.

Korean War

The years immediately preceding the Korean War were formative ones for American national policy. The leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, had vowed to spread the teachings of Marx and Lenin throughout the world. In 1948-49 the Soviets engineered a communist coup in Czechoslovakia and blockaded the city of Berlin. In China, in 1949, the Chinese Communists defeated the American-supported nationalist forces and the worldwide spread of Communism seemed to be well underway.

On 24 June 1950, the North Koreans, supported by the Chinese Communists, crossed the 38th parallel to invade South Korea. America quickly reinforced the South Koreans, and the repulsion of the invaders seemed assured until the Chinese entered the war in November. The complexion of the war changed immediately, and the conflict was not

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[3]Philip N. Guyol, Democracy Fights: A History of New Hampshire in World War II (Hanover: Dartmouth Publications (for the State of New Hampshire), 1951), p. 224.

resolved until 1953.[4]

The objectives in Korea were certainly not as clear-cut as they were in World War II and, although many Americans perceived the ideological threat of the expansion of Communism, they did not perceive a military threat against the United States. Even the ideological threat seemed to become less ominous as the war continued and casualties increased. The war was also expensive. Military and security-related expenditures increased from $13 billion in 1949-50 to $22.5 billion in 1950-51, and the armed forces increased from 1.4 million personnel to 3.6 million in the same period of time.[5]

As disenchantment with the war increased, so did the desire of the public to serve in the armed forces. In May 1952, social scientists found that a number of Cornell University students were "essentially negative toward their military service obligations."[6] Of the 2,975 students sampled, 2,469 (83%) indicated a negative viewpoint on military service.[7]

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[4]27 July 1953 is the date the Korean armistice was signed. The conflict itself was not fully resolved by the armistice and, to the date of this writing, significant numbers of United States military personnel are based in South Korea. For the purpose of this study, however, the Korean War is considered as having ended on 27 July 1953.

[5]John M. Blum and others, The National Experience: A History of the United States Since 1865, 2 vols., 2d ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), pt. 2, p. 781.

[6]Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait (n.p.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), p. 226.

[7]Ibid.

The Presidential election of 1952 also made it clear that the nation was ready for peace. The platforms of both major political parties were based on the promise to finish the war, and, on 27 July 1953, just six months after President Dwight Eisenhower entered office, the armistice was signed.

Eisenhower Years

After the Korean War, America became more introspective. Internal problems and domestic issues dominated primary concerns of the times. Desegregation became the most important and burning question Americans confronted. The Cold War thawed somewhat, and relations between the United States and the Soviet Union improved slightly. From 1953 to 1960 the United States was the unquestioned military leader of the world, largely because of her vast and unchallenged nuclear arsenal.

While Americans did not completely disregard the Soviet Union, they were confident that the strategy of massive nuclear retaliation would dissuade the Russians from significant military adventures. In spite of this confidence, the draft was continued and the size of the armed forces remained large because of American military commitments. American occupation troops remained in Germany, Japan, and other locations, and the armed forces numbered 2.9 million personnel in 1955--by far the largest peacetime military force in America's history. The public's view of the military was vastly improved from earlier times, especially in regard to officers. Concerning prestige, however, the enlisted man did not fare very well (see Table 1).

TABLE 1.--Public Prestige of Military Profession, 1955: Esteem Relative to Other Occupations

National Adult Sample	Rank	Male Teen-Agers
Physician	1	Physician
Scientist	2	Scientist
College professor	3	Lawyer
Lawyer	4	College professor
Minister or Priest	5	OFFICER IN ARMED SERVICES
Public school teacher	6	Minister or Priest
OFFICER IN ARMED SERVICES	7	Radio or TV announcer
Farm owner	8	Public school teacher
Carpenter	9	Farm owner
Mail carrier	10	Owner of small store
Bookkeeper	11	Carpenter
Plumber	12	Garage mechanic
Radio or TV announcer	13	Bookkeeper
Owner of small store	14	ENLISTED MAN IN ARMED SERVICES
Garage mechanic	15	Mail carrier
ENLISTED MAN IN ARMED SERVICES	16	Plumber
Truck driver	17	. . . . .

SOURCE: Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait (n.p.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), p. 227.

Viet Nam War

In the early 1960s, the United States began to look again at the external threat of the Soviet Union. The Soviets had accomplished great scientific, technological, and military advances in the years since the strategy of massive nuclear retaliation had been announced. The launching of Sputnik I, the world's first manmade satellite, convinced most of the Soviets' superiority in the field of space. Advances in nuclear weaponry also made it clear that the Soviets would probably achieve nuclear parity, if not superiority, in the years ahead. No longer could the United States rely on massive retaliation. A new, more complex strategy of a "flexible response" to nuclear, conventional, or unconventional military situations became the new defense policy. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union deteriorated, and each side increased its military preparedness.

The crisis between the United States and the Soviet Union peaked with the Soviet buildup of nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962. After a tense period of diplomatic initiatives and military "saber-rattling," the Soviets agreed to remove the missiles.

The period of calm following the missile crisis was very brief. The Soviet Union continued to proclaim that Communism would become the new world order and Americans continued to feel threatened by such a possibility. As a result, more and more citizens became supportive of the need for a strong military. In a 1964 Gallup poll to determine what percentage of Americans were truly concerned with international threats,

90% felt there was a danger of war, 86% believed Communism posed a threat to America, and 74% insisted on "keeping our military strong."[8]

The United States decided to halt the spread of Communism in the Republic of Viet Nam. By 1965, the action had escalated to a major conflict and the United States began to introduce large numbers of ground troops.[9] In April 1969, United States troop strength reached a peak of 543,000; yet, the end was not in sight. The lists of killed and wounded lengthened, and the public became less and less confident of the optimistic views of the military's leadership. In the words of Walter Lippmann, Viet Nam became "the most unpopular war in American history."[10]

The public's visualization of American atrocities, biological devastation, and a degree of repression of troop dissent inevitably led to a growing negative perception of the armed forces and, "by an involuted leap of reasoning, whether one had a favorable or unfavorable perception of the American military was becoming the defining characteristic on how one stood on the war in Southeast Asia."[11] Many people who had admired the military in previous times suddenly expressed opposition to the armed forces as their vote against the war effort. Apparently

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[8]Ben J. Wattenberg, The Real America: A Surprising Examination of the State of the Union (Garden City, N. Y.: n.p., 1974), p. 204.

[9]The American combat experience actually began in 1961, when President Kennedy introduced a significant number of military advisors.

[10]Blum and others, pt. 2, p. 827.

[11]Moskos, p. xii.

many Americans failed to consider that the presence of American soldiers in Viet Nam was the result of decisions by the public's elected representatives, not decisions by the military organization itself. In any case, opposition to the war in general and the military in particular increased throughout the years of the Viet Nam War.

The manifestations of the public's diminishing respect for the armed forces could be seen everywhere, but particularly on the college campus. The campus became the base of operations against the war, and college students, joined by many professionals and the clergy, became the most vocal opponents of the war. A corresponding decline in the trust Americans placed in their military accompanied the anti-war opinion. Public opinion surveys have indicated that citizen confidence in the military fell from 62% to 27% between 1966 and 1971. While many other institutions also suffered a loss of trust, the decline was greatest in the military.[12]

The reason for the decline was obvious. The military had become the scapegoat of an unpopular war. Stephen E. Ambrose, while holding the Stephen B. Luce Chair at the Naval War College, expressed this view very forcibly. He claimed that the Viet Nam War was a result of United States foreign policy and that the military did not formulate such policy. He said:

> [O]pposition to the war in Viet Nam came in many cases to take the form of questioning of the legitimacy of dedicating one's life to

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[12]Wattenberg, p. 199.

> military service, and the characterization of the armed forces as the embodiment of all that is evil within American society.[13]

It is noteworthy that not all agreed that the Viet Nam War had a drastic effect on how Americans viewed their military services. Professors David R. Segal and John D. Blair of the University of Maryland concluded in 1976 that the esteem of the institution of the military did not decline as a result of the war. Only the "confidence in the people in charge of the military . . . declined."[14] Although this argument may have a degree of validity, the overwhelming evidence indicates that the war did have a negative impact on the military's image.

Summary

In the years between 1939 and 1972, the public image of the United States military hit both a new high and a new low. In this relatively short period of time, the nation was at war twenty years. The armed forces were applauded as heroes during and after World War II, lost some favor during the Korean War, and by the end of the Viet Nam War received little trust or support. The primary factor for this disintegration of popularity was participation in an unpopular war.

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[13]Stephen E. Ambrose and James A. Barber, Jr., eds., The Military and American Society: Essays & Readings (New York: Free Press, 1972), pp. 308-309.

[14]David R. Segal and John D. Blair, "Public Confidence in the U.S. Military," Armed Forces and Society, Fall 1976, p. 9.

CHAPTER V

PUBLIC'S VIEW OF THE MILITARY, 1972-1980

> I suppose my greatest frustration is the manner in which the military is looked upon in this country. So much is being done to downgrade the military . . . . People in the military are beginning to think that maybe they should be looking someplace else.[1]
>
> --Melvin Laird, 1972

This chapter provides an analysis of the public's view of the military during the recent years, with emphasis on the opinions of young people. Also, the increasing degree of alienation of the soldier from society is examined.

Attitude of Youth

Young men and women constitute the great majority of the volunteer force, and this group's image of the military is of special significance. A 1972 study, commissioned by the Secretary of Defense, examined a national sample of young people to determine how it felt concerning service in the military. The study included individuals from all economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds and concluded:

> Although there was some improvement in the attitude of youth toward military service between November 71 and June 72, a negative

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[1]Charles G. Schreiber, "The Public Image of the Military: A Historical Review and Analysis" (Report No. 4713, Air War College, April 1972), p. 3.

attitude toward military service was still held by almost 60% of American youth--increasingly because military service is perceived as interfering with their personal feeling or life style.[2]

A report by the U.S. Army Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences in April 1979 listed some interesting findings. Although most of the high school and college students surveyed believed the military was necessary to protect the nation (94% high school, 88% college),[3] very few felt their friends and parents had a "predominantly positive" opinion of the military.[4] The statistics were:

	Students	
Opinion of Military	High School	College
"predominantly positive" among friends	5.7%	2.2%
"predominantly positive" among parents	18.9%	18.0%

The studies mentioned above clearly demonstrate that the military does not enjoy a positive image among America's youth. Many military leaders had hoped that with the passing of time, memories of the Viet Nam experience would fade and young people would look on the

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[2]Allan H. Fisher, Jr., Attitudes of Youth Toward Military Service: Results of National Surveys Conducted in May 1971, November 1971, and June 1972, Consulting Report CR-D7-72-30, Prepared for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) (Alexandria, Va.: Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), August 1972), p. x.

[3]Jack M. Hicks, Terry Collins, and John I. Weldon, Youth Aspirations and Perceptions of ROTC/Military: A Comparison, Research Problem Review 79-2 (Alexandria, Va.: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, April 1979), p. 36. Only schools without an ROTC program of instruction were considered in this response.

[4]Ibid., p. 22. Only schools without an ROTC program of instruction were considered in this response.

armed forces in a more favorable light. Perhaps that has occurred to some extent, because the military services have managed to recruit close to 100% of their goals. However, to accomplish this, entrance requirements have been lowered and more non-high school graduates from the lower mental classifications have been inducted.[5] As current population trends will result in an even smaller pool of youth in the 1980s, the services must improve their image among young people.

Alienated Military

Lieutenant Colonel Donald B. Vought recently declared that society has a "vague feeling that given a choice decent people would not be in the military."[6] Do significant numbers of Americans share this vague feeling? Do many feel that "other than decent people" tend to join the armed forces? Although Vought failed to substantiate his claim or to adequately define "decent people," these two questions are still of great importance and must be addressed.

In fact, the military services are composed of men and women from all levels of society, from all economic and social classes, and from all regions of the nation. It is also true that since the advent of the all volunteer force, the services are attracting a poorer, less educated recruit. To label the poor and less educated as "other than

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[5]Bob Gatty, "The Army in Crisis: Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?," Army, November 1979, p. 28.

[6]Donald B. Vought, "Farewell to Arms: A Perspective on Retirement," Military Review, February 1980, p. 8.

decent," however, is inaccurate and unjust.

Nevertheless, a negative military stereotype may very well exist in the minds of many citizens. That is, the view may exist that the military is composed of only the lower economic and social classes and that these classes are less decent than other citizens. This stereotype also suggests a dilemma. The dilemma is that if the public views the military as a haven for the lower economic and social strata of society, it is less likely that a representative proportion of America's youth will serve and the armed forces will eventually be composed almost exclusively of the very poor. The stereotype will thus become a self-fulfilling reality.

As with any inaccurate stereotype or misunderstanding, the most obvious solution to the problem is effective communications. If, for example, the military and civilian communities were more effectively integrated, false images and notions would soon be rectified. Unfortunately, the military communities have not integrated effectively and have isolated themselves from the society they serve.

A variety of causes exist for the military's isolation from society. The most obvious is that most military posts or bases are self-contained. In other words, everything that is necessary can be found on base. Housing, food, department stores, movies, libraries, social clubs, churches, and even gas stations are available to the military person without his having to leave the post and enter the civilian community.

Even those who live off post often do not participate as part of the civilian community. Long working hours, frequent periods when the head of the household is away on training, and frequent rotation make it difficult, if not impossible, for the service family to participate fully in civilian society. As a result, civilians living near a military post become most familiar with the younger, and often more unstable, enlisted person, for he spends much of his off-duty time in search of a "good time" off post.

Another cause of isolation is that members of the military are often culturally and racially different from the local populace. There can be no argument that a significant number of Americans are prejudiced against others because of their culture or color. This prejudice further hinders military-civilian relations.

Lastly, the most recent cause for isolation may be a growing tendency for the services to attract alienated persons, that is, persons who are already isolated from society. A 1979 study indicated that an alarming number of volunteers were sociopolitically alienated from society before they entered military service.[7] Real or perceived social and economic conditions while the person was growing up may have caused the alienation, but the effect is the same as though the military services caused it. Thus the alienation tends to exasperate civil-military harmony.

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[7]Stephen D. Wesbrook, "The Alienated Soldier: Legacy of Our Society," Army, December 1979, p. 18.

Some contend that the all volunteer force is especially susceptible to attracting alienated individuals. The military services are recruiting heavily from the most alienated portion of society, the poor. Additionally, even the volunteers from the middle and upper-middle classes appear to be the most alienated persons from those classes.[8]

Regardless of the reasons, the effects of isolation tend to diminish the interface between the civilian and military communities and to add fuel to the negative military stereotype. The military services must strive to attract a more representative share of volunteers, to more fully integrate themselves into the civilian community, and, most importantly, to convince the people that the military offers a decent and honorable life style.

Although Hsiao Hua, political director of the Chinese Army, may have been a bit dramatic in expressing the dangers of an isolated and alienated military, his following words help to illustrate the problem:

> Since our army is the army of the people, it must regularly maintain close relations with the masses. . . . Unless this is done, the army will be like a tree that has no root, a stream whose source has dried up, and so will its vitality and combat strength.[9]

Summary

Civilian attitudes toward the military continue to be largely

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[8]Wesbrook, p. 23.

[9]John Gittings, The Role of the Chinese Army, Issued under auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 176.

negative. There may exist a feeling that good people do not enter military service and that the armed forces are composed of those who could not be successful in civilian life. The isolation of military personnel from the civilian community does little to alter these perceptions and adds fuel to the military stereotype.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The American people have traditionally held largely negative perceptions about the Armed Forces of the United States. From the earliest days of the nation to the present time, the history of the country is ripe with evidence that its citizens have not regarded the professional soldier with much respect. In fact, except for a few brief periods when the public regarded military service highly, a constant of the American experience seems to have been to view the military in an unfavorable light.

A variety of factors or underlying causes have fostered this poor image of the military. From the first days of the nation until World War II, there was considerable opinion that since a serious threat did not exist a standing military, of any significant size, was simply not required. Logically, those who adhered to such a theory had little regard for an "unnecessary" standing force.

Another cause for the military's image problem has been concern over the quality of enlisted personnel. It has been amply demonstrated that those who have traditionally volunteered for military service have disproportionally represented the poor. From the Revolutionary War to the current day, America's volunteers have been attracted largely from

the most disfranchised and often the most alienated portions of society. It is unfortunate, even unfair, that young members of the lower socio-economic classes are judged less worthy by the majority. Yet, that is a fact, and it has tended to further denigrate the military establishment's image.

The participation of the armed forces in unpopular wars is another theme that has surfaced on several occasions and has served to undermine public support for the military. The Mexican-American War was the first instance; Viet Nam was the latest.

A number of lesser, but significant, causes have eroded public support. The influence of peace movements, antipathy for West Point, an alleged disdain for democracy as exhibited by professional officers, and the lack of preparedness of the armed forces were all factors which damaged the image of the military.

The purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate that the military forces of the United States have traditionally not enjoyed a positive image among the citizens of the nation. The evidence that has been presented clearly illustrates the validity of this assertion. Unfortunately, this negative image exists at the present time and adversely impacts on the ability of the armed forces to recruit and train a sufficient number of soldiers to man the force in a period when America's security requirements have never been higher. In April 1980, in a 14-page "white paper" concerning the Army of the 1980s, Army Chief of Staff General E. C. Meyer wrote: "Manning the total force is the

major challenge the Army faces today."[1]

It is beyond the intention and scope of this study to provide recommendations that will uplift the military's image. However, it is obvious that before any problem can be solved, it must first be recognized. Military and civilian leadership must recognize that the image of the military is in need of improvement, and they must set out to develop programs to uplift that image. To consider the attractiveness of military service only in terms of working conditions and compensation is incomplete. Reforms in those areas alone, although important, will not succeed in alleviating personnel shortages. Leaders must realize that the problem of image is real and that it tends to discourage young men and women from joining the force. Perhaps the services are becoming more aware of this problem. General Meyer continued in his "white paper": "The recruiting message must include . . . the positive image of service to the nation and pride in that service" (italics mine).[2]

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[1]E. C. Meyer [Chief of Staff, U.S. Army], A "white paper" addressed to "The Soldiers and Civilians of the U.S. Army" [Washington, April 1980], p. 6.

[2]Ibid.

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