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THE PREPAREDNESS DEBATE:

1914-1916, AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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PREFACE

This study, entitled "The Preparedness Debate: 1914-1916, An Historical Analysis," was prepared in response to a request by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs for a report on the factors involved in America's military readiness on the eve of the First World War. The issues in that debate were fundamental to the very nature of the American military system: whether the nation could or could not depend on its citizens militia to meet the requirements or war, or whether something else was needed. The issues were not new; they had been debated before, and inconclusively, as early as 1784; most of them are equally applicable to the late 1970s. Thus the evidence suggests that, while history is not necessarily cyclic, it does tend to repeat itself.

Because of time constraints, this study presents a generalized account of the debate from its inception until the beginning of United States involvement in World War I. Particular attention is given to the military policy aspects of the story, but political considerations were paramount in this, and comparable debates before and since, and thus cannot be ignored.

The Preparedness Debate: 1914-1916, An Historical Analysis

The end of the war with Spain and the turn of the 20th Century witnessed the emergence of the United States as a world power with overseas possessions to protect. During this same period there was in intensification of rivalries among the great powers in Europe which would eventually lead to another war. Because of the great inefficiency in the US War Department in the Spanish-American War, and because of the trouble already brewing in Europe, many Americans saw a definite need for revamping the military establishment as a necessary and vital part of a program of preparedness to assure that the nation would sustain its new position as a world power.

Without question the Army was in need of reform. That it had been eminently successful in winning the Spanish-American War was due primarily to the high professional standards of the officers and men of the Regular Army, despite the inefficient operations of the War Department and, second, to the fact that the Spanish organization was, if anything, in worse shape than that of the United States. The close of the war found the US Army no better off than it had been at the outset.

By far the most inefficient component of the American land forces was the militia, or National Guard. This state of affairs was the heritage of the Militia Act of 1792, which was poor legislation when it was enacted and, in 1900, was still the law of the land.

But between 1900 and 1914, when the Great War broke out in Europe, much had been done to improve the organization of the War Department, of the Army, and of the militia components of the states. Much of the credit for what was accomplished must be given to Elihu Root, who, during his tenure as Secretary of War, 1899-1904, put forward most of the effective military reorganization legislation approved by Congress during those years. One of his principal accomplishments was overcoming the longstanding division of authority between the Secretary of War and the Commanding General of the Army that had been a major obstacle to effective administration. This was accomplished in 1903 by doing away with the office of the Commanding General and in its place creating the office of the Chief of Staff, responsible to the President as his senior military advisor, through the Secretary of War. Under the new Chief of Staff was an embryo General Staff that grew out of the Army War College formed in 1900.

The Navy had emerged from the Spanish-American War with its reputation enhanced by a series of overwhelming victories. The Navy, furthermore, successfully resisted efforts to apply to it any reorganization such as was affecting the Army. And, in fact, just as in the Spanish War, the Navy was better prepared to meet the exigencies of war than was the Army.[1]

As for the Army, the greatest preparedness issue -- as it had been since 1775 -- was how the manpower of the nation could be most effectively mobilized and made ready for combat in the event of war. Because of the notorious inefficiency and unreadiness of the militia in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, a substitute system of "Volunteers" had been used in the Mexican War and the two subsequent conflicts as the method for augmenting the tiny, but efficient (at least for Indian-fighting) Regular Army. The Volunteers were members of the militia who volunteered to serve in the active army in wartime, unaffected by the constraints and inadequacies of the Militia Act of 1792.

Obviously a military policy law more than a century old, which had to be virtually inactivated in time of war, was not serving the security interests of the nation.

In January 1903 the Congress approved legislation, commonly called the Dick Act, which divided the militia of the various states into a revitalized Organized Militia, also called the National Guard, and a Reserve Militia, sometimes called the State Guard. (For practical purposes nothing was done about the Reserve Militia.)

The law provided for some standardization of organization, equipment, and discipline to match Army standards and authorized the detailing of officers of the Regular Army as instructors to National Guard units. Still, the lack of federal control over the National Guard constituted a bar to effectiveness which had plagued the nation for decades.[2] For instance, its provisions could hamstring the federal authority in time of national emergency. The National Guard could be called up for federal service only through state governors, who could, with impunity, refuse such a call. It could be called up for no more than nine months, and it could not be employed outside the continental limits of the United States. Indeed, the troops of the Guard, themselves, could refuse to answer a federal callup.[3]

Two of the major weaknesses of the Dick Act were corrected by the Militia Law of 1908. The nine-month service provision was changed to allow service for the length of enlistment authorized by Congress; and the prohibition on utilization of the National Guard outside the continental limits was revoked. However, this latter point was overturned by an opinion of the Attorney General in February 1912 that it was unconstitutional.[4] The 1908 law also required the states to carry out those organizational changes necessary to align the Guard with the Regular Army by 21 January 1910. Another provision established a Division of Militia Affairs as a part of the Army General Staff.

Thus the role of the militia in national defense had been clarified to a considerable degree. But the call-up of the National Guard by President Wilson in 1916 for duty on the Mexican Border demonstrated that much more was needed. It had been the fervent hope and conviction of those dedicated to the militia system and the maintenance of the status quo that the Regular Army, when augmented by the militia, would provide adequate military force to meet any contingency until more complete mobilization was achieved by raising and training a Volunteer Army. The Mexican Border experience demonstrated that this was not enough should the United States be involved in a war such as that then raging in Europe.

In the meantime, there had been other events directly related to the preparedness issue. The first was an attempt by the War Department, based on plans drafted by the General Staff, to consolidate the widely scattered units of the Regular Army into brigade- and division-sized formations at eight selected posts. To do this would have required the abandonment of some 31 small posts around the country. These plans ran into stiff Congressional opposition and were thereafter abandoned. Other legislation dealing with a reserve for the Regular Army and providing for new and improved volunteer laws also ran counter to the will of Congress and got nowhere.

At about this same juncture, however, a series of magazine articles on the military unpreparedness of the United States encouraged Congress to

request the War Department to report on the status of the military establishment. This the Army did, using the talent of the War College to prepare a candid report that pointed out both the weakness of the Regular Army and the totally unsatisfactory condition of the militia. The report concluded, "It is apparent that we are almost wholly unprepared for war . . . that the things we need most will take the longest to supply.[5] The preparedness debate had begun.

While the debate was in the process of defining the issues involved, the Army continued to eliminate those deficiencies that fell within its own sphere of authority to correct. One of the chief movers in this effort was General Leonard Wood, who was appointed Chief of Staff in July 1910. One of his first actions was the reorganization of the General Staff. In doing this, Wood ran headlong into opposition, not directly from Congress, but from members of the Army establishment itself, the Bureau Chiefs. What would eventually develop into the famous "Ainsworth Case" was, in fact, one of the opening salvos in the preparedness debate, as Congress, aided and abetted by several of the Bureau Chiefs, viewed most of the Army's reform plans as indications of a growing "militaristic entity" evolving around the General Staff. The Congressional antipathy that developed in the wake of the Army's in-house fight for authority led to a reduction in the size of the General Staff that severely handicapped the Army on the eve of World War I. Other Congressional moves, such as the attempted ouster of Leonard Wood, were squelched by President William H. Taft.

One of Wood's ideas was to become the main ingredient in the debate over preparedness. In 1911, the Chief of Staff directed the Army staff, specifically LTC John McAuley Palmer, to develop plans for the organization of all the land forces of the United States. Palmer, one of the more astute military thinkers and planners of his day, visualized a system whereby a pre-existing citizen army would be mobilized in time of emergency, to replace the anachronistic system for expanding the standing army. He sensed, however, that the level of emergency was a key element in any mobilization plan. Any volunteer system, he would later write, was bound to fail in the event of a great war.[6]

Palmer's study was a jumping-off point for a subsequent effort along the same lines, that was prepared for the Secretary of War in 1912. In 1911, however, no clearcut policy was forthcoming, even though the Infantry Journal stated that "our whole military establishment on its present lines is useless for any military purpose."[7] The Act of 24 August 1912, the so-called Manchu Law, which had a number of drastic effects on the General Staff, did make an attempt to create a reserve for the Regular Army. Because of shortcomings in its language, however, only 16 men joined the reserve in the next two years.[8]

The year 1912 also saw Wood successful over the Bureau Chiefs and marked the beginning of a period of progressive leadership in the development of military policy. It was also the election year that put Woodrow Wilson in the White House. That year also witnessed the first of the two Balkan Wars that were direct precursors of World War I, and another series of magazine articles on preparedness, written by six Army officers, appeared in the Independent. They so impressed Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson that he had them collected and reprinted, along with an article of his own, in an official document called, "What is the Matter with our Army." In essence, these articles put forward the premise that the chief problem with the Army was the lack of a coherent policy for its direction.[9]

As a start toward correcting this situation, Stimson directed the General Staff to prepare a report on "the Organization of the Land Forces of the United States." This report, made a part of the Secretary's Annual Report to Congress, became known as the Stimson Plan. It covered almost all aspects of the nation's mobilization for war. Of principal concern was the question of manpower and organization: "The military establishment in time of peace is to be a small Regular Army," the report stated,

> and the ultimate war force of the Nation is to be a great army of citizen soldiers . . . . But reliance upon citizen soldiers is subject to the limitation that they cannot be expected to meet a trained enemy until they too, have been trained . . . . The problem is one of expansion from a small peace force to a great war force. Its solution therefore involves the provision of a sufficient peace nucleus, the partial organization and training of citizen soldiers in peace, and the provisions for prompt and orderly expansion on the outbreak of war.[10]

The Stimson Plan also recommended a six year enlistment for regulars, with three years in the active army and three years in the reserves. A reserve officers training program would also be instituted, and West Point was to be expanded. One feature of the plan called for the establishment of a national citizens' army organized into divisional units that would be prepared to reinforce the Regular Army in time of war. As this was to take some time in doing, the plan further recommended increased federal control over the National Guard as an interim measure. In view of the constitutional difficulties involved, these forces were to be utilized as volunteer organizations. This great pool of volunteer manpower was to constitute the third line of defense behind the Regular Army and the National Guard. The Secretary of War had the full support of the Chief of Staff in this plan. Hermann Hagedorn, Leonard Wood's biographer, would later write that Wood believed in "making the Army not an establishment of elderly veterans, but a school for youth, . . . ready to come to the colors when the emergency arose, not as raw recruits, but as men already trained."[11]

The return of the Democratic Party under Woodrow Wilson to power after 20 years of Republican leadership in the White House created a new, major stumbling block to preparedness, and the Stimson Plan was shelved by the new administration. Wilson, a devout pacifist, had compaigned on a platform that all but ignored preparedness as an issue. Stimson was replaced as Secretary of War by Lindley M. Garrison, but, surprisingly, Leonard Wood was retained for a time as Chief of Staff. With the Stimson Plan abandoned, the General Staff would have to content itself with piecemeal planning as before, but not without purpose. Wood directed the War College to prepare a plan for creation of a reserve for the Regular Army. In general terms this plan when finished reiterated provisions found in the Stimson Plan, whereby a soldier would serve three years with the Regular Army and then be transferred to the reserves. Backed by Garrison, who was considered by many of the Army's senior officers to be an outstanding Secretary of War, this plan was presented to Congress but without result. Over the next twelve months the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of War were to reiterate the need for adequate preparedness continually, only to be rebuked by Congress.

One important success in 1912 was Leonard Wood's experimental summer camp program in which young men, for the most part college undergraduates, received, at their own expense, six weeks of military training that, according to Walter Millis, the Congress had failed to provide its citizens.[12] Two such camps were set up in 1913, at Monterey and Gettysburg. Only about 244 attended the training that first year, but the so-called "Plattsburg Idea," named after one of the most successful 1914 camps in upstate New York, and that would later be attached to this type of voluntary Citizen's Military Training Camps, was considered successful enough to warrant their continuance.[13] Four camps were set up in 1914, with three times as many trainees.[14] By 1915, J.C. Furnas comments, "The prestige of Plattburgh's /sic/ rookies made the existing National Guard of state-recruited, federal sponsored part-time soldiers meant to back up the regulars look inane."[15]

Before this comment could be justifiably made, however, numerous other events had taken place that more clearly defined the political nature of the preparedness debate.

In April 1914 a crisis on the Mexican border spurred Congress to approve the Volunteer Act. This act provided for the land forces of the United States "to consist of the Regular Army, the organized land militia while in the service of the United States, and such volunteer forces as Congress may authorize." The bill also authorized the President, with Congress's approval, to call for volunteers and to accept National Guard units if three-quarters of the assigned personnel assented, before calling for volunteers.[16] This type of legislation had been requested by the War Department since the turn of the century, but even now, with a crisis at hand, the measure barely made it through Congress. It did pass, one would be forced to believe, only because it did not interfere with the existing National Guard structure or the prerogatives of the states. Even though a conflict with Mexico appeared imminent, the War Department, in its effort to get the bill approved, ignored the larger issue of possible US involvement in the war expected momentarily in Europe. Thus, while satisfying the needs of the moment, the Volunteer Act totally overlooked the issue of total war. This system of calling volunteers would remain in effect until it was discarded, as predicted by Palmer, when the United States entered the war in Europe.

As the acrimony over preparedness escalated, and the possibility of war increased, the President still showed no interest in strengthening the nation's defenses, becoming less responsive, in fact, to those who did. The year 1914 was, after all, a Congressional election year and Wilson's first test of strength. Needless to say, the Republicans gathered their forces to do what damage they could to the Democratic Party of Mr. Wilson. One of the staunchest foes of the President was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. Caught in London by the start of the World War, Lodge, already prepared to do battle with Wilson over the President's handling of the Mexican situation, simply translated his opposition to a higher level and attacked Wilson's stand on neutrality as being unduly favorable to the German side in the war. The English press, of course, hung on every word, but, to Lodge's dismay, upon his return home he found the American people, as Millis put it, "almost as ignorant of foreign affairs as the Democrats."[17] To an extent, Wilson had won a round in the debate. Whereas the Republicans had planned to attack Wilson as overly timorous in his handling of the Mexican situation while a major war was in the works in Europe, the American people, Lodge discovered, were satisfied with the handling of the matter, for it had kept them out of a war with Mexico. When Lodge conveyed this intelligence to Roosevelt, the former President replied that he had already witnessed the same effects on his own Progressives, who had been misguided, he thought, in discerning in Wilson a man with a "noble and humanitarian peace policy."[18]

Roosevelt's personal hatred of Woodrow Wilson and his policies had, by this time, become legend. Therefore, one of the main thrusts in the preparedness debate, besides the obvious military weakness at the time, was purely political polemic. The issue of General Wood's devotion to the idea of strengthening the nation's defenses as a manifestation of militarism was a part of this political debate, and his departure from the office of Chief of Staff and subsequent assignment as Commanding General of the Eastern Department in April 1914 did little to diminish his alleged militarism.

To say the least, much of what Wood did while Chief of Staff, and much that he had to say afterward, must have irked President Wilson. Wilson had remained almost totally unresponsive to the subject of military preparedness

up to November 1914. And even thereafter, he really could not visualize a need for a strengthened military, for it was his conviction that the breadth of the Atlantic protected America from the threat of attack by anyone in Europe or elsewhere. Even the clear victor in the struggle in Europe would be so weakened, he conjectured, as to be incapable of invading the United States. Even if Germany won the war, and this was certainly a distinct possibility, Wilson felt there would be sufficient time to prepare the nation's defenses after the fact.[19]

Wilson's attitude was changing, however, as much because of political pressures on all sides as because of the disquieting nature of the news from Europe. One of the political pressures that faced the President in December 1914, immediately after the election, was the resolution introduced into the House by Representative Augustus P. Gardner, which would have created a National Security Commission to investigate America's readiness. Gardner, a Republican, was the son-in-law of Representative James Hay, the chairman and power in the House Military Affairs Committee. Hay, a Virginia Republican unalterably opposed to a large standing army and to the concept of a General Staff, was also the personal friend and confidant of Major General Fred C. Ainsworth, the former Adjutant General, who had openly defied Wood and Stimson over readiness policies and was forced out of the Army because of it. Ainsworth and Hay appeared utterly opposed to anything that smacked of Wood or Stimson, and Ainsworth continued to be one of Hay's chief advisors.

However, the Administration was adroitly able to equate the Gardner Resolution as an expression of a desire to continue the bloodshed in Europe. Consequently the bill died.

By this time the sides were rather clearly drawn. Among those who favored a stronger effort in national preparedness were Theodore Roosevelt and Leonard Wood. The official representative of preparedness was Lindley Garrison, the Secretary of War, who since taking office, had consistently indicated that he was in accord with the goals of Leonard Wood. It was Garrison who had backed Wood in his move to create a viable reserve for the Regular Army, believing the army needed to be large enough to field a force of about 600,000 in the initial phase of any conflict. In this effort, Wood, Garrison, and the War Department encountered the powerful opposition of James Hay, who argued that the

Regular Army was exactly the right size to fulfill its primary mission of being a rallying point around which the country could muster in time of war. No reserve was needed, he contended, as the 120,000-man National Guard was already in being as the second line of defense.

The nominal leadership of the anti-preparedness forces rested with William Jennings Bryan, the Secretary of State, and, to an extent, the President himself, although Wilson's vacillation and his ambiguity on the issue left much to be desired by those who espoused pacifism. This was probably best illustrated in 1916 when Wilson came out for universal military training "on a voluntary basis."[20] When Wilson did address the problem in somewhat clearer terms, as he did in his annual message to Congress in 1914, he declared that if the United States wanted to live up to its traditions and ideals it could never prepare for war in time of peace. The country needed to depend, he went on, not on a standing army or a reserve army but on its citizenry, armed and trained. Wilson did not spell out how this was to be done, instead defending his administration's stand on preparedness and claiming his conviction that the American people had been misinformed.[21] Wilson's policy has often been called one of "non-preparedness."

Criticism of the speech hit Wilson from all sides. Roosevelt, for one, bitterly condemned both Wilson and William Jennings Bryan as dangerous pacifists.[22] Lindley Garrison, the Secretary of War and David E. Houston, Secretary of the Treasury, were equally dismayed. Houston was reported as saying that the times warranted a change in traditional US policy on non-alignment and non-preparedness, although he was by this time painfully aware of growing public dissatisfaction and uneasiness over the issue. The nation, opined Roosevelt, was adrift "stern foremost."[24]

On 20 February 1915, the Army Navy Journal, usually a moderate publication, demanded a call-up of one million volunteers as a peace measure. Then in March, an organization calling itself the American Legion (not to be confused with the later veterans' organization), with the backing of Leonard Wood, and endorsed by Roosevelt and three former War Secretaries, began organizing a reserve force of former service personnel.[25] Neither Secretary Garrison nor the new Chief of Staff, Hugh Scott, subscribed to this idea, however, rightly

noting that "enlisting a man on a piece of paper is not going to make a soldier of him or make him available for national defense." Scott also noted the danger that the existence of such an organization would tend to make the citizenry at large even more complacent, and when the force was needed it would not be there.[26] Other such organizations were to sprout up during this period, most of them entreating for increased preparedness. Some of them had powerful support. The National Security League, for instance, was formed by 150 influential public figures, including Hudson Maxim, James M. Curley, Bainbridge Colby, and Henry Stimson, with the mission of informing the people of the clear danger of being unprepared. General Scott applauded this group, since its establishment shifted the preparedness debate outside the government.[27] The forces for preparedness were gathering strength and organization.

With the President's continued refusal to accept the need for preparedness, the War Department could do little except go on with its efforts to devise ways of improving the condition of the Army. During the spring and early summer of 1915, the staff, especially the group at the War College, undertook a complete reexamination of military policy. This project, ordered by Secretary Garrison, was the direct result of his appreciation of the accumulating evidence of the true nature and extent of the nation's unpreparedness. Numerous studies conducted by the War College, and particularly one completed in late 1914, had pointed out that, until a permanent tactical structure was established for the Army, there could be no real efficiency in terms of modern warfare. It was the unanimous opinion of the War College in that study that the Stimson Plan of 1912 should be implemented by appropriate legislation.[28] Both the Chief of Staff and the Secretary endorsed these recommendations, but Garrison sidestepped most of the substantive issues involved in this study when he made his annual report for 1914 to Congress. Apparently he was trying to reconcile his own commitment to preparedness with the administration's desire to downplay the issue. Politically, even Garrison's lukewarm proposals were hailed by defense advocates as a great victory. Without question, those opposed to Wilson were willing to use any device to undermine or change the President's position. Congress, however, was still not interested in augmentations of the armed forces, and without any real prodding from the White House nothing would be done before Congress adjourned on 4 March 1915,

except to criticise the War Department for its piecemeal submission of bills.

Garrison bridled at this rebuke, since this piecemeal action was a direct result of Congress's refusal to accept the Stimson Plan in 1912.[29] He publicly defended his plan as exactly what the nation needed. "With so vast a subject as this," he contended, "it is practically impossible to settle it all at one time in one measure." He then added somewhat bitterly that so many extraneous questions were injected into legislative discussions that nothing was ever accomplished anyway.[30]

The upshot of the matter was Garrison's direction to the staff to conduct the 1915 reassessment of the Army's needs. It was his intention to have this plan ready when Congress reconvened in December 1915.[31] But events elsewhere overtook that timetable. On 1 May 1915, the American-flag tanker Gulflight was torpedoed, with the loss of three American lives. Within a week the Lusitania went to the bottom with over a thousand people killed, including nearly 130 Americans. Four days later, on 11 May 1915, the Navy League demanded that Congress be called back into special session to vote money for defense, principally for naval expansion. Within thirty days, the National Security League convened in New York with public leaders from 25 states in attendance. By September, the Governors of 22 states joined the League. However, President Wilson had already acted.

Although still not convinced of the need for an all out effort to prepare for war, on 21 July 1915 Wilson asked the War Department for a comprehensive plan, complete with estimates "of what you and the best informed soldiers in your councils think the country ought to undertake to do."[32]

Wilson's opposition, principally Roosevelt and Lodge, berated the President for coming through with "too little, too late" in what they perceived as a purely political gesture. Those who supported the President, and there were many, claimed it was the Republicans who were acting politically, especially Roosevelt, who was irked by the results of the 1914 elections. William Jennings Bryan, now convinced that the United States was on the verge of war, resigned as Secretary of State. Representative Hay, who seemed to be caught in the middle, still decried the whole idea as not being the will of the people.[33]

The General Staff presented its study to Garrison in September 1915. In general terms, its main recommendation was that the nation must have available at the beginning of hostilities a 500,000 man mobile force trained and organized with another half million men to be ready 90 days thereafter, and an additional half million available for training as replacements. To accomplish this would require increasing the strength of the Regular Army, establishing a reserve, and organizing a Continental Army which would in time of war be formed from a federalized militia. Particularly significant was the fact that the National Guard was not considered by the General Staff to be an element of the first-line force to be mobilized in time of war. "No force can be considered a portion of our first line," the report contended, "whose control and training is so little subject to Federal authority in peace." Thus, the report recommended no specific legislation to improve the Guard, "beyond the repeal of all provisions of laws now in effect whereby militia or militia organizations may or must be received into the Federal Service in advance of any other forces." This was consistent with a War College study which asserted: " What is required is to secure quickly at the outbreak of war a force of trained men. The Organized Militia will not produce such a force."[34]

Clearly the Regular Army in 1915 did not trust the National Guard any more than Washington had trusted the militia in 1776.

This mistrust was mutual. The National Guard was convinced that the regular establishment was inadequate. As one pro-militia source wrote:

> The federal government cannot expect enthusiasms from citizens when it checks, circumscribes, and disparages the formation of living units, --- and then in a matter of months suddenly shifts and expects by a wave of the hand to create out of thin air the very units it should encourage, and indeed goes on and criticizes the formerly repressed action that it now says has not been speedy enough.[35]

This antipathy toward the Regular military establishment was deep-seated in the American culture. The American citizen distrusted what he called "militarism", or what would later be called the "jackboot mentality" of the Regular. This is well illustrated in a passage in Walter Millis's The Martial Spirit. Describing the National Guard, he writes:

> It was a social as well as military organization; there was a pleasant camaraderie within its armories, and it could depose as well as elect its own officers. In Brooklyn a "well-known Guardsman who belongs to an excellent family"

expressed to a reporter his righteous indignation at the prospect of being asked to surrender these mitigations of the natural horrors of war:

> "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. West Pointers have seen fit to introduce a class feeling -- no, I will go farther and say a caste feeling -- between themselves and non-commissioned officers and privates that is unpleasant in the extreme. . . .
>
> 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 and do chores for some West Pointer, well, I would rather be excused."[36]

From the September 1915 report of the General Staff, Garrison framed legislation that was sent to Congress. What he sent up to the Hill, however, was something less than the Staff had recommended. Garrison was a politician working on the premise that he should seek to get what was possible, rather than attempting a more desirable solution that was impossible. The heart of Garrison's plan was the Continental Army. This was to be a citizen force of 400,000 men, raised in three equal contingents over a three year period, who were to serve three years of "active duty," -- such active duty being two months of training in each of the three years and, then, an additional three years in the reserve. In essence this was the type of nationalized militia force that George Washington had espoused in his "Sentiments on a Military Establishment" in 1783. Short of universal military training, the Secretary of War saw this plan as the best possible way out of the preparedness dilemma, indicating that he felt anything else would be unconstitutional or illegal.

When the bill was made public, lines were quickly drawn. Wilson supported the bill, as did the National Security League, Elihu Root, and Henry Stimson. There was no great enthusiasm for the bill among the senior officers of the Army. Scott, Tasker Bliss, and Leonard Wood, in particular, were skeptical that enough men would volunteer to fill its ranks, but all three conceded it was better than what was then in being.[37]

On the other hand, the Army Navy Journal and the National Guard Association opposed the bill. Hays promised to push the bill through committee with all speed, but then reversed himself, stating that he was preparing his own bill, claiming there was little or no support for a major military reorganization in the Congress. The Garrison Bill had become another political football.

In December 1915, Wilson gave his strongest endorsement yet to preparedness in his annual message to Congress. But within sixty days, because of Congressional opposition within his own party to the measure, he withdrew his support of the Garrison Bill. Thereupon Garrison resigned, and on 10 February 1916 General Scott suddenly found himself the Secretary of War ad interim, while Wilson sought a more compliant replacement for Garrison.[38]

When the President finally announced his choice for Secretary of War, the preparedness forces, already up in arms over the Garrison matter, were less than delighted. Newton D. Baker was a well known pacifist, a progressive Democrat, and the man Wilson felt could heal the breach that had developed between the War Department and the Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee. Meanwhile Hay had prepared his alternative to the Garrison Plan. The two concepts were then melded into legislation that became the National Defense Act of 1916.

This was the first piece of comprehensive military defense legislation in the nation's history. Whether it was good legislation, however, was debatable. The law, signed on 3 June 1916, called for a Regular Army slightly increased in strength, an enlarged National Guard, a reserve force, and the Volunteer Army. In effect, the new law placed the main dependence for defense in time of war on the National Guard. Scott had predicted this six months earlier, fearing that just such an action would be taken by the Congress "and we would be worse off than we are now."[39]

The state of preparedness of the United States was clearly demonstrated within 15 days of the enactment of the law. On 19 June 1916, Wilson called up the National Guard in the face of the imminent threat of war with Mexico. The militias of the three border states had already been federalized in May to reinforce what was almost the entire Regular Army on the border, following Pershing's march into Mexico in pursuit of Villa. Now in June, the Carranza government, although apparently impotent in dealing with Villa, was disinclined to allow the continued presence of American troops on Mexican soil. War was possibly only days or hours away.

What was witnessed in the call-up of the Guard could probably best be described as a combination of the worst elements of the old and new. Insufficient time had elapsed to allow for the nationalization of the militia under the new law. Hence what occurred was almost total confusion. The militia was still in its state-oriented form, trying to respond to a federally-oriented mobilization order. The Independent Newark Star Eagle summed up the situation as follows:

> If there had been any worse way to handle the mobilization of the National Guard, or any better way to expose the national unfitness for war, the people in authority would have hastened, one suspects, to adopt it.

"Neither the possibilities nor space of our newspaper" to record all the deficiencies, reported the Republican-oriented Buffalo News, could properly cover what unfolded. The paper continued:

> Regiments with uniforms for only a third of their membership, armories without reserve supplies of any kind, batteries without guns, troops without horses, rifles but no cartridges, food but no cooking outfits, tents but no blankets.

The Republican Boston Transcript went even further:

> On every side appear evidences of our unpreparedness that prove every charge of incompetency brought against the executive and legislative branches of Government, which have ignored the lessons of the European war.[40]

While this rhetoric was largely politically motivated, more sober analyses of what transpired could only confirm the most virulent press reports. For instance there was an official report to the effect that 15.5% of the total call-up in the Central Division of the National Guards of 14 states were physically disqualified because of the laxity of the states in their requirements.[41] Morale among the Guardsmen was extremely low because of what were considered avoidable hardships imposed upon them, and the blame for the problem was rather evenly spread among all the participants.[42] Ineptitude seemed too gracious a term for what happened.

Three things became clear from this mobilization effort: the National Guard could be considered available and ready for effective mobilization without considerable work and effort; the volunteer program as set up in the Act of 1914 had failed to produce more than a meager number of men even though the country's patriotic feelings were at high pitch; and, last, more than military effort was required to prepare the nation for war.

From this brief analysis, several points may be adduced:

1. The debate over preparedness in the pre-World War I period was the result of a two-tiered political discourse that extended throughout the period, and continued into the postwar period as well. On the one tier were those who followed the Wilsonian philosophy of missionary diplomacy, opposing those generally supporting Theodore Roosevelt's big stick policy. Both sides of the debate at this level were convinced that they best understood the needs and desires of the people and of the nation. The second tier was a debate between opponents whose primary objective was either the maintenance of, or the replacement of, the political party in power. In many cases the participants in the debate could be found in both tiers concurrently or at different times.

2. There was also a more tightly focussed debate on military policy. On one side was the regular establishment, as represented by the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff, and the General Staff. Ranged against them were the proponents of the militia system whose case was basically one of condemnation of anything or anyone who argued against continuation of the status quo of the American militia tradition.

3. There were no "bad guys" or "good guys", only an adversary situation in which both sides were quite often in error. However, when the United States entered World War I, it was rapidly appreciated that even the most bellicose of the preparedness advocates had fallen far short in their estimates of what could be required of the armed forces. Thus the proponents of preparedness were proven to be closer to right than their opponents.

4. The National Defense Act of 1916 had no bearing, of course, on the "mobilization" that took place that year along the Mexican Border even though its provisions were used in the call-up. The failure of the National Guard -- despite the outstanding conduct and performance of the vast majority of its members -- was a reflection of the inadequacy of earlier legislation.

5. The mobilization that began in April 1917 after the United States entered World War I came too soon to be a fair test of the National Defense Act of 1916. Nevertheless, the shortcomings of the mobilization undoubtedly would have been considerably worse had that legislation not been available on the books, with at least a blueprint for mobilization.

6. The notion so fondly espoused by William Jennings Bryan that men would flock to the colors as volunteers in times of national crisis proved false. The world had turned, and the military requirements of the period did not lend themselves to the same sort of national pride and patriotic fervor that had gone before. The United States was entering a new era, an era where national security could no longer be something dragged out every four years as a campaign issue; it was from that moment onward to be a matter of almost daily concern.

FOOTNOTES

The Preparedness Debate: 1914-1916, An Historical Analysis

1. The Navy was not without problems. A Congressional investigation in 1920 -- largely politically motivated -- was able to cite numerous prewar deficiencies that allegedly delayed naval participation after the United States entered the war. In spite of this, it was stipulated in the report of investigation that, without the excellent work of the United States Navy, the Allies would have been defeated before American land forces could arrive in France. See Samuel E. Morison & Henry S. Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), II, p. 483.

2. See for instance, Samuel T. Ansell, "The Legal and Historical Aspects of the Militia," Yale Law Review XXVI, 471-480; and James B. Scott, The Militia (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1917), for the best accounts of this problem.

3. This was discussed in a 1915 War College study entitled "The Militia as Organized under the Constitution and its Value to the Nation as a Military Asset." U.S. Army War College, WCD 7835-9 (Washington, November 1915) pp. 7-8.

4. Ibid., 10.

5. For the magazine articles, see for instance Hugh Johnson, "The Lamb Rampant," Everybody's Magazine, XVIII (1908), 301; the report of the War College may be found in Memorandum, Pres. AWC to CofS, 24 August 1910. WCD 6193, War Department Records.

6. John McAuley Palmer, America in Arms (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), pp. 135-137.

7. Infantry Journal, VIII (1911)., p. 918.

8. William A. Ganoe, The History of the United States Army (New York: D. Appleton - Century, 1942), p. 445.

9. Senate Doc. No. 261, 62d Congr., 2d Sess. For his part, Stimson wrote, "The trouble with the Army comes down, therefore, to our lack of an intelligent military policy in dealing with it."

10. Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1912, I, p. 124.

11. Hermann Hagedorn, Leonard Wood: A Biography (2 vols., New York: Harper & Bros., 1931), II, 109.

12. Walter Millis, The Road to War: America 1914-1917 (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1935), pp. 94-95; Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1913, I, pp. 19-20.

13. Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1913, I, p. 20; See also Ganoe, The History of the United States Army, p. 447.

14. Millis, Road to War, p. 95.

15. J.C. Furnas, Great Times: An Informal Social History of the United States, 1914-1929 (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1974), p. 195.

16. XXXVIII Stat 347-351, 25 April 1914.

17. Millis, Road to War, p. 90.

18. Ibid.

19. Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1926-1928), I, pp. 298-300. The President's remarks may well have been directed at allaying any fears engendered by an article in the December 12, 1914, issue of Harper's Weekly entitled, "The Attack on New York," which had been endorsed by Henry L. Stimson as wholly within the bounds of military probability. See also Harper's Weekly, January 2, 1915.

20. "Growing Momentum of the Movement for Universal Military Training," Current Opinion, LXI (1916), p. 77.

21. Roy S. Baker & William E. Dodd, eds., The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson (6 vols., New York: Harper & Bros., 1925-1927), III, pp. 223-227.

22. Elting E. Morison, The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, Vol. II, Roosevelt-Lodge Correspondence (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951, p. 450.

23. New York Times, December 9, 1914, p. 2; see also David E. Houston, Eight Years with Wilson's Cabinet (2 vols., New York: Macmillan Co., 1926).

24. Outlook, December 16, 1914. This magazine was Roosevelt's Progressive Party organ.

25. New York Times, 3 March 1915, p. 5.

26. Hugh L. Scott Manuscript Collection, National Archives, Ltr. Scott to J.M. Dickinson, 2 April 1915. Hereafter, Scott Mss.

27. Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917 (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 177; Ltr. Scott to C. B. Dougherty 26 May 1915, Scott Mss.

28. Memorandum, Brig. Gen. W.W. Macomb to the CofS, 26 December 1914. Records of the General Staff, WCD 8085-3.

29 Army Navy Journal, 12 & 19 December 1914, 16 January 1915; New York Times, 3 February 1915. Sen. George F. Chamberlain, Chmn., Sen. Mil. Aff. Comm. to Sec. of War, 26 January 1915. Scott Mss.

30. Garrison to Chamberlain, 30 January 1915. Scott Mss.

31. Adjutant General to CofS, 22 March 1915. Scott Mss. The Second Session 63d Congress closed on 3 March 1915. The First Session 64th Congress convened on 6 December 1915.

32. President to Sec. of War, 21 July 1915. Scott Mss. See also Army Navy Journal, 4 September 1915.

33. New York Times, 31 August 1915. See also Millis, Road to War, p. 189.

34. "The Militia as Organized," WCD 7835-9, 12.

35. Elbridge Colby, The National Guard of the United States: A Half Century of Progress, Unpublished Manuscript (Manhattan, Kansas: Military Affairs/ Aerospace Historian Publishing, 1977), pp. IV 15-16.

36. Cf. Williston B. Palmer, "The Evolution of Military Policy in the United States." Lecture given at the Army Information School, 1946, quoting Millis, Martial Spirit, p. 155.

37. Scott to Capt. Charles M. de Bremond, December 27, 1914. Scott Mss. See also Frank J. Mather, Jr., "The Continental Army," Unpopular Review, V (1916), 227.

38. John Dickinson, The Building of an Army (New York: Century Press, 1922), pp. 43-44.

39. Scott to John F. McGee, January 1916. Scott Mss.

40. These three quotes and others are taken from a staff article in the Literary Digest(August 5, 1916), 287-289.

41. "Report of the Mustering in of the National Guard," Reports, National Guard File 370.01, 1916. National Archives.

42. "Report of the Mustering in of the National Guard." George Marvin, "Marking Time with Mexico," World's Week XXXIII, 531-533.