1 The Post-Vietnam Recovery, Operation Desert Storm and the Veneration of the Volunteer Soldier

In September 1989, *Parameters*, the journal of the US Army War College, published an article by Major Daniel P. Bolger so pungent in its criticism of the Army's culture that it provoked a note from the journal's editor to the War College's director of academic affairs to warn him about a possible backlash.[1] Bolger's article, 'Two Armies', opened with a famous quote from *The Centurions*, French author Jean Lartéguy's novel about the experience of a French parachute battalion in Indochina and Algeria, in which the protagonist, a veteran of Dien Bien Phu, lamented, 'I'd like France to have two armies'. One would be 'for display, with lovely guns, tanks, little soldiers, fanfares, staffs, distinguished and doddering generals, and dear little regimental officers who would be deeply concerned over their general's bowel movements or their colonel's piles'. This was 'an army that would be shown for a modest fee on every fairground in the country', while the 'real' army would be 'composed entirely of young enthusiasts in camouflage battledress, who would not be put on display but from whom impossible efforts would be demanded, and to whom all sorts of tricks would be taught'.[2] Bolger's complaint was that the United States was now also fielding 'two armies, one for show and one for real fighting'. He critiqued the Army of the Cold War as being 'heavy with tanks, mechanized infantry, self-propelled guns, nimble helicopters, sophisticated electronics of all designs, and fleets of fuel and ammunition trucks'. This was 'America's demonstration army', ready for action 'if the Wehrmacht should resurrect'. Under the cloud of mutually assured destruction, though, they were 'strictly for show'.[3] The ethos of this 'display army' was dominated by bureaucratic routine and a 'preoccupation with quotidian detail'.[4]

[1] Lloyd Matthews, 'Memorandum for Colonel Lunday: Potentially Controversial Parameters Article', 19 July 1989, Lloyd Matthews Papers; Box 1A, Folder 10, notes for 'The Early Struggle, The Later Success' by Colonel Lloyd J. Matthews, 2nd binder [part 4 of 9], US Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA (AHEC).

[2] Daniel Bolger, 'Two Armies', *Parameters: The US Army War College Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (4 July 1989): 24, https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol19/iss1/5.

[3] Bolger, 26–7.

[4] Bolger, 32.

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Less than two years later, this same army was indeed on display on the streets of American cities, but as the object of national adulation during the long months of victory parades that followed its evisceration of the Iraqi Army during Operation Desert Storm. The calls for such celebrations began even before the guns had finished firing in Iraq and Kuwait. On the very day that President Bush declared a ceasefire in the Middle East, popular author Tom Clancy took to the pages of the *Los Angeles Times* to ask: 'how about a few parades? How about the collective thank you that was cruelly denied to the last class of American warriors? .... The military has learned its lessons from Vietnam. What about the rest of us?'[5] This spirit of gratitude was widespread and, as Americans prepared to celebrate their military via mass spectacle, President Bush's speechwriters suggested that he invoke that spirit of gratitude for a national regeneration by asking Americans to 'honor those who have served us – those who have shown us all that America means to the world – by making certain that we here are worthy of them'.[6] Far from being a paper tiger, it seemed as though the 'demonstration army' that Bolger had criticised was for far more than show.

How, then, do we explain this discrepancy between the anxiety that Bolger and officers like him expressed in the late 1980s and the triumphalism that followed in 1991? Part of the reason is that Bolger was not claiming that the Army of the 1980s was a decrepit institution; he found much to admire in the 'real army' that he himself hailed from, but worried about the effects of focusing too much on the unlikely scenario of conventional war in Europe. Mostly, though, this disjuncture stems from the fact that, as historian Adrian Lewis argues, 'while the military may have recovered materially, technologically, and qualitatively from the Vietnam War … it had not completely recovered emotionally and psychologically'.[7] Both the Army's own confidence in its abilities and public support for it were somewhat brittle until the full extent of the institution's recovery from its post-Vietnam nadir was made clear in the Persian Gulf. While most observers hailed vast improvements in the standard of the Army's recruits and training, many officers such as Bolger continued to worry that the force was not adapting quickly enough

[5] Tom Clancy, 'How About a Few Parades?' *Los Angeles Times*, 28 February 1991, B13, in folder 03195-008, Persian Gulf Working Group, Paul McNeill Files, White House Office of Communications, George Bush Presidential Library (GBPL).

[6] Dan McGroarty and Peggy Dooley, 'Draft Presidential Remarks: Joint Session of Congress, the Capitol, March 6, 1991', 5 March 1991, folder 29166-004 'Persian Gulf War [2]', Issues File, John Sununu Files, White House Office of the Chief Staff, GBPL.

[7] Adrian R. Lewis, *The American Culture of War: The History of U.S. Military Force from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 312.

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for what would soon be a post–Cold War world. For these critics, the quality of the American soldier was not in doubt, but it was an open question whether the Army was producing the right sort of soldier for the missions they would likely face.

As we will see in later chapters, these debates would resurface in the 1990s and beyond, but the events of 1991 meant that they would take place on different terrain. After the success of Operation Desert Storm, the narrative of a redeemed Army was irrefutable. This chapter traces the Army's rehabilitation of its reputation in the wake of the Vietnam War and then focuses on how that rehabilitation created and then reified the image of the soldier as inherently heroic and representative of all that was best about Americans. Through movies, advertising campaigns, institutional reforms and public discourse about veterans and soldiers, the soldier went from pariah to paragon.

Two features were central to this transformation. The first was the advent of the All-Volunteer Force and the post-Vietnam reforms to Army training, equipment and doctrine. After a shaky start, the All-Volunteer Force's success normalised the notion of soldiering as an occupation rather than an obligation, and the reforms seemed to create a much more professional and competent force than the one that had been wracked by unrest and uncertainty in the 1970s. Second, the Army's performance in Operation Desert Storm affirmed this narrative of professionalism and competence. Even as the Army stabilised, some, such as Bolger, questioned whether it had gone far enough in its post-Vietnam reforms or whether it had lost something essential in its single-minded focus on one type of war. Any such doubts about the abilities of the American soldier were swept aside in both the public outpouring of support for the military during the build-up to war and the Army's performance during the campaign itself. This was even more apparent in the aftermath of the war. The celebrations that took place to welcome home Gulf War veterans stood out as the largest seen in the United States since the end of World War II, as hundreds of thousands of troops marched in triumphant parades in almost every major American city and in hundreds of small towns. But the pageantry did not simply celebrate American military and technological prowess. Spectators at these parades also engaged in a novel form of patriotism that emphasised unquestioning support for the troops without necessarily affirming the legitimacy of the war itself.

The depth of this veneration meant that the 'stars' of Operation Desert Storm would be in hot demand in the war's aftermath. General Norman Schwarzkopf was fêted at both the Kentucky Derby and the Indianapolis 500, and his memoirs were a bestseller. Another general whose memoirs topped the *New York Times* bestseller lists, Chairman of the Joint

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Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, was the subject of feverish political speculation, as pundits ventured that he would be a viable candidate for the vice presidential ticket for either of the two parties in 1992.[8] Not since Eisenhower had generals commanded such political respect across party lines, a reflection of the fact that the military was regaining the reputation it had enjoyed in the aftermath of World War II. While norms about civilian control of the military broadly held firm in this period, the 'celebrity general' phenomenon made it clear that the Army's post-Vietnam trajectory now meant that soldiers had political currency and, as exemplars of American values, would be objects of contestation during the culture wars of the 1990s.[9] The victory in the Persian Gulf, and the subsequent swell of emotion, thus represented a crucial moment in the American public's deepening veneration for US soldiers and veterans. The Gulf War celebrations made it clear that the Vietnam-era image of the soldier as a broken or rebellious draftee was now finally and purposefully eclipsed by the notion of the volunteer service member as hero, a powerful image that would shape much of what was to come as the Army, along with the other military services, began to reckon with the post–Cold War world.

1.1 The Fall and Rise of the Army after Vietnam

The notion of generals being star personalities was very far from reality in 1970. Long before the final collapse of the South Vietnamese regime in Saigon, it was obvious that the war in South-east Asia had

[8] Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1995); Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero: The Autobiography of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf* (New York: Bantam, 1993); Victor Gold, 'Will Colin Powell Be on the Ticket in '92?', *Tampa Bay Times*, 28 May 1991, www.tampabay.com/archive/1991/04/28/will-colin-powell-be-on-the-ticket-in-92/C1kX3QTaP0G28MhKT3Ue/Exmv0yhh22d; Cathleen Decker, 'The Ticket for Clinton? Everyone Has an Idea: Campaign – Suggestions for the Vice Presidential Spot Are Pouring in, but Few Fill That Combination of Glitz and Stability', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 May 1992, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-05-12-mn-1721-story.htmlC1kX3QTaP0G28MhKT3Ue/Exmv0yhh22d; Paul Galloway and Cheryl Lavin, 'A New No. 2 May Be Just the Ticket', *Chicago Tribune*, 28 July 1992.

[9] Even if these norms ultimately held, historians and political scientists nonetheless spent much of the decade debating the extent to which they had frayed. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss some of the areas where generals and politicians clashed. Richard H. Kohn, 'Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil–Military Relations', *The National Interest* 35 (Spring 1994): 3; Russell Weigley, 'The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell', *Journal of Military History* 57 no. 5 (1993), 27–58; Peter D. Feaver, 'The Civil–Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control', *Armed Forces & Society* 23, no. 2 (1996): 149–78; Ole R. Holsti, 'A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976–96', *International Security* 23, no. 3 (1998): 5–42; Deborah Avant, 'Conflicting Indicators of "Crisis" in American Civil–Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 3 (1 April 1998): 375–87.

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done serious damage to the Army as an institution.[10] Morale was low, the non-commissioned officer (NCO) cadre had been decimated by enlisted personnel opting not to re-enlist, the quality of draftees was poor, discipline problems abounded and Army combat units all over the world reported poor readiness.[11] By 1972, only four of thirteen divisions were rated as ready for combat.[12] Even those officers who were seen to have a bright future in the Army found that the 'heart and soul of the officer corps' was imperilled. A 1970 study by the Army War College on military professionalism in the officer corps found that the 450 participants surveyed, including the entire War College class of 1970, were scathing about the institution's ethos.[13] All reported a significant difference between the ideal values and the actual values of the officer corps, and reported a zero defects culture that was intolerant of any admission of problems, rampant careerism, a lack of integrity and a lack of care for subordinates. Officers talked about being forced to fake readiness reports, to lie to progress the careers of their commanding officers and even to carry spare rifles with them in Vietnam so that they could plant these weapons on the bodies of unarmed Vietnamese people killed by American patrols.[14] Crucially, the study's authors did not blame external 'fiscal, political, sociological or managerial influences' or the lack of public support for the war in Vietnam for this crisis.[15] The problems the Army was facing stemmed primarily from choices made by its own leaders.

While the officer corps' integrity had been badly damaged by the Vietnam War, the aftermath of that same war caused even greater problems in the enlisted ranks. In the words of the Army's official history of

[10] There was an extensive literature dedicated to exploring the Army's breakdown while it was ongoing. Cecil Currey, *Self-destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era* (New York: Norton, 1981); Stuart H. Loory, *Defeated: Inside America's Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1973); Richard Boyle, *The Flower of the Dragon: The Breakdown of the U.S. Army in Vietnam* (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1972); Richard A. Gabriel and Paul Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); William L. Hauser, *America's Army in Crisis: A Study in Civil–Military Relations* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); William R. Corson, *Consequences of Failure* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974).

[11] Robert H. Scales, *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 1998), 6–7, 15–16.

[12] Richard Lock-Pullan, *U.S. Intervention Policy and Army Innovation: From Vietnam to Iraq* (London: Routledge, 2005), 49.

[13] US Army War College, 'Study on Military Professionalism' (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 30 June 1970), Defense Technical Information Center, http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA063748.

[14] US Army War College, 28, B-1-3, B-1-14.

[15] US Army War College, v.

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Figure 1.1 Military policemen being taught to recognise drug paraphernalia, 1973

Operation Desert Storm, 'the American Army emerged from Vietnam cloaked in anguish … it was an institution fighting merely to maintain its existence in the midst of growing, apathy, decay, and intolerance'.[16] By 1971, the *New York Times* was reporting on bases where commanders needed to chain up vehicles lest they be stolen and where muggings took place in unlit areas. Army leaders in both South Vietnam and Europe reported increasing problems with drug use, and the desertion rate climbed steadily higher, with 17.7 per cent of all soldiers in the Army listed as having been absent without leave and fully 7.4 per cent classified as deserters (Figure 1.1).[17] Overseas, stagnating wages along with the drop in the value of the dollar relative to the Deutschmark meant that Germans began to comment on the poor quality of American military housing and the beat-up cars that soldiers were driving, while the state of race relations in the US 7th Army drew the attention of the West German government, as African American GIs protested against racist

[16] Robert H. Scales, *Certain Victory: The US Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 1998), 6.

[17] B. Drummond Ayres Jr., 'Army Is Shaken by Crisis in Morale and Discipline', *New York Times*, 5 September 1971, www.nytimes.com/1971/09/05/archives/army-is-shaken-by-crisis-in-morale-and-discipline-army-is-shaken-by.html.

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treatment at the hands of both the Army and local authorities.[18] Some GIs looked to their counterparts in the Dutch military, who had successfully won the right to collective bargaining, and wondered whether such a move would help them improve their working and living conditions.[19] The need for some sort of radical intervention was made clear by the fact that a 1973 Harris Poll 'revealed that the American public ranked the military only above sanitation workers in relative order of respect'.[20] Given this state of affairs, attracting and retaining high-quality recruits would be increasingly difficult.

The recruiting problem was more acute than it had been in decades, as the Nixon administration moved to abolish the draft by 1973. Selective Service had been a vital source of manpower for over thirty years, not just in the raw number of draftees it provided but in motivating others to volunteer for the Army before being drafted, so as to have more control over their military specialisation.[21] Immediately, Army leaders worried about finding enough volunteers for combat units and began to invest both in initiatives to improve the quality of life for enlisted personnel and in a vastly expanded advertising budget. These measures, which included relaxing haircut regulations, allowing individual rooms in barracks, advertisements that highlighted job training opportunities and, most controversially of all, the slogan 'Today's Army wants to join you', created consternation in the officer and NCO ranks over a softening of the Army's image and seemingly did little to improve morale or the quality of recruits in what was now an All-Volunteer Force.[22]

As historian Beth Bailey notes in *America's Army*, her history of the All-Volunteer Force, these early years were difficult. While the Nixon administration raised salaries by 61 per cent in 1973 to aid with recruitment, wages stagnated after that, with a 10 per cent decline in military

[18] Maria Höhn, 'The Racial Crisis of 1971 in the US Military: Finding Solutions in West Germany and South Korea', in *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, ed. Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 267–9; Howard J. De Nike, 'The US Military and Dissenters in the Ranks', in *GIs in Germany: The Social, Economic, Cultural, and Political History of the American Military Presence*, ed. Thomas W. Maulucci and Detlef Junker (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute; Cambridge University Press, 2013), 277.

[19] Jennifer Mittelstadt, '"The Army Is a Service, Not a Job": Unionization, Employment, and the Meaning of Military Service in the Late-Twentieth Century United States', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 80, no. 1 (2011): 29–52.

[20] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 7.

[21] Amy J. Rutenberg, *Rough Draft: Cold War Military Manpower Policy and the Origins of Vietnam-Era Draft Resistance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

[22] Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Bernard D. Rostker and K. C. Yeh, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2006).

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pay relative to civilian pay between 1975 and 1979 compounded by the expiry of the Vietnam-era GI Bill.[23] Meanwhile, over 250 recruiters were disciplined in 1973 for falsifying high school diplomas and concealing the police records of potential recruits, and a further 5 officers and 187 NCOs were relieved of duty in 1979 for the same thing.[24] Retention among career soldiers also dropped precipitously, with re-enlistment rates falling from 83 per cent at the end of the draft to 69 per cent in 1979.[25] Concerns over 'quality' were deeply entangled with race, as complaints regarding the quality of recruits tracked the increase in the number of African Americans in the ranks.[26] The drop in intelligence test scores, though, was driven not by black recruits, who tended to come from the African American lower middle class, but by an influx of poor white soldiers. By 1978, an increasing number of soldiers were failing their qualification tests in their area of speciality and, writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1981, the journalist James Fallows spoke about an Army in which 'such soldiers as do enlist stand befuddled before the space age machinery they must operate'.[27] By 1981, over 50 per cent of all Army recruits were classed as Category IV in intelligence tests, leading observers to complain that the All-Volunteer Force was 'too dumb, too black and too costly'.[28] It seemed to many observers as though the return of the draft was only a matter of time.

The combination of recruiting and morale problems, along with limited training and maintenance budgets, led Army Chief of Staff General Edward 'Shy' Meyer to tell President Carter that the United States had a 'hollow army' in November 1979, a warning he repeated before Congress in May 1980.[29] The immediate impetus for Meyer's declaration, which has since acquired immense weight as a trope within the military as a whole, was reporting that suggested that four of the Army's ten stateside divisions were incapable of deploying to Europe, with every

[23] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 15.
[24] Bailey, *America's Army*, 105–6; James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 1997), 208.
[25] Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 208.
[26] By 1974, over 30 per cent of Army recruits were African American. In 1967, during a period where civil rights campaigners were protesting against disproportionate African American casualties in Vietnam, 16.3 per cent of draftees were Black. Bailey, *America's Army*, 115; Gerald F. Goodwin, 'Black and White in Vietnam', *New York Times*, 18 July 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/07/18/opinion/racism-vietnam-war.html.
[27] Bailey, *America's Army*, 121.
[28] Bailey, 121, 125.
[29] Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 197–208; Frank L. Jones, *A 'Hollow Army' Reappraised: President Carter, Defense Budgets, and the Politics of Military Readiness* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2012).

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unit bar the 82nd Airborne Division understrength, tank companies with only twelve tanks rather than the required seventeen, and battalions missing whole platoons and companies.[30] Meyer made his public 'hollow army' remarks before Congress in the immediate aftermath of the Desert One debacle: the failed attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran that resulted in a helicopter and aircraft being destroyed, five helicopters being abandoned in the Iranian desert and eight service members being killed. An interservice disaster, Desert One only underlined the fact that the military had yet to recover from its post-Vietnam nadir.[31]

Even as it struggled with morale and discipline, though, the Army was making several changes that would offset problems caused by the end of the draft and the post-Vietnam drawdown and chart a route to longer-term recovery. First, Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams successfully resisted attempts at making big cuts to the Army's overall strength after Vietnam, which held at 785,000, and even managed to expand the Army's number of active combat divisions in 1973 from thirteen to sixteen.[32] He achieved this by advocating for a Total Force policy, where the Army would use Reserve Component units to help round out Active Component divisions. Reservists would increasingly take on combat service support functions, which both made it imperative to mobilise them during any future crisis and freed up more strength in the Active Force to concentrate on combat tasks.[33] While Abrams' policy was celebrated in later years as providing the bedrock for success during the Gulf War, it gave Army planners at the time a huge headache, as they had to struggle to make the numbers that had previously sustained thirteen Army divisions work for a sixteen-division force, with less funding available for training and maintenance.[34] In some ways, the ambition of Abrams' initiative led to the problems that caused Meyer to complain about readiness and the 'hollow army', but the strengthening

[30] Jones, *A 'Hollow Army' Reappraised*, 7.
[31] Charles Cogan, 'Desert One and Its Disorders', *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 1 (2003): 201–16.
[32] Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 363–5.
[33] Sorley claimed that Abrams' policy was intended to ensure that a future president would have to call up the reserves before going to war, but this claim has been disputed by scholars working with recently released archival sources. See Sorley, 365; Conrad C. Crane and Gian P. Gentile, 'Understanding the Abrams Doctrine: Myth versus Reality', *War on the Rocks*, 9 December 2015, https://warontherocks.com/2015/12/understanding-the-abrams-doctrine-myth-versus-reality/C1kX3QTaP0G28MhKT3Ue/Exmv0yhh22d; Brian D. Jones, 'The Abrams Doctrine: Total Force Foundation or Enduring Fallacy?', in *A Nation at War in an Era of Strategic Change*, ed. Williamson Muray (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2004), 201–26.
[34] Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 150–1.

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of the relationship between the Active and Reserve Components, which had become more distant when the latter effectively sat out the Vietnam War, paid long-term dividends.

The second significant move the Army made to alleviate recruiting difficulties was one that it had been under pressure to make for some time in any case. The cap on the number of women in the armed forces had been lifted in 1968 and, as the Equal Rights Amendment worked its way towards ratification, the Army along with the other military services moved to integrate women more fully into its ranks, abolishing the separate Women's Army Corps.[35] Given the recruiting pressure caused by the All-Volunteer Force, it only made sense to devote more attention to recruiting women to help make up for the shortfall in numbers.[36] While still heavily restricted in the roles they could take on, women moved from making up 1.3 per cent of the ranks by 1971 to 7.6 per cent in 1979, a figure that meant that the military could no longer function without them.[37] The scale of the contribution that women made to the All-Volunteer Force meant that they were able to survive the conservative backlash that leveraged the general crisis of standards in the Army to make the case that the increasing number of women in the ranks was a sign of the problems that the force was facing regarding quality and readiness. As retired Air Force Major General Jeanne Holm put it, many in the military thought that the expansion of women's roles and numbers in the All-Volunteer Force was 'a temporary condition that would pass with the demise of a misguided Carter administration', and the Army seized the opportunity provided by the election of Ronald Reagan to institute a 'womanpause' in 1981, halting the recruitment of women altogether.[38] They also proposed a return to the draft, which still excluded women from its reach. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger immediately rejected any notion that the military would return to the draft and, as Beth Bailey put it, 'even Ronald Reagan's Pentagon believed [that women] were key to the survival of the All-Volunteer Force'.[39]

As the failed attempt at a 'womanpause' and aborted attempts to return to the draft made clear, neither the All-Volunteer Force nor the expansion of women's roles in the Army were universally welcomed at the time, even if they both ultimately proved crucial to the health of

[35] Bailey, *America's Army*, 157; Tanya L. Roth, *Her Cold War: Women in the U.S. Military, 1945–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021).
[36] Bailey, *America's Army*, 154.
[37] Bailey, 133.
[38] Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992), 387; Bailey, *America's Army*, 171.
[39] Bailey, *America's Army*, 216.

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the Army. Other post-Vietnam changes were more immediately popular. Chief among them was the establishment of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) under the leadership of General William E. DePuy. Designed to oversee all Army training and the development of operational doctrine, TRADOC became a vehicle for extensive reform. DePuy, a sometimes abrasive character who had been deeply affected by his experiences of combat with the 90th Division in Normandy during World War II, wanted to return the Army to what he saw as the basics.[40] Junior officer training would no longer focus on abstract topics such as the art of war, but on the construction of trenches and on tank gunnery, while in general terms training would take priority over education throughout the force, and a new approach to training, measured by passing standardised tests rather than hours put into training, took hold.[41]

An essential part of what an Army historian termed the Army's 'training revolution' was the establishment of much more realistic and less scripted combat exercises. Working with DePuy, Major General Paul Gorman overhauled the Army's training standards and established the Army's National Training Center (NTC) in Fort Irwin, California. Heavily influenced by the Air Force's 'Red Flag' exercises and the Navy's 'Top Gun' programme, the architects of the NTC made use of over 1,000 square miles of uninhabited desert to develop a huge area for whole brigades to conduct realistic tactical manoeuvres, while sophisticated sensors would record 'kills' on the simulated battlefield.[42] A well-trained and highly motivated 'opposition force' training cadre modelled themselves on Soviet doctrine, dressed in Soviet uniforms and modified their vehicles to look like Warsaw Pact vehicles. This combination of relatively free play exercises and rigorous post-exercise debriefings made Army units much more tactically proficient. At the staff officer level, the Army established the School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth in 1982 to offer a rigorous and intensive course designed to prepare officers to serve as divisional and corps-level planners and to offer as challenging an operational environment as the NTC was a tactical one.[43]

As the presence of Soviet uniforms in Fort Irwin indicated, all of this activity was singularly geared towards confronting the Red Army. The

[40] Henry G. Gole, *General William E. DePuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

[41] William E. DePuy, *Selected Papers of General William E. Depuy*, ed. Richard M. Swain (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1994), 197, 221.

[42] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 39; Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 191–3.

[43] Kevin C. M. Benson, *Educating the Army's Jedi: The School of Advanced Military Studies and the Introduction of Operational Art into U.S. Army Doctrine 1983–1994* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2010).

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Astarita Study Group, convened by General Creighton Abrams in 1973, had recommended that the Army should focus its mission on providing conventional deterrence in Europe.[44] Warfare in Europe was something that the Army knew well, and many argued that the last time the Army had truly performed well in combat was during the campaigns of 1944 and 1945, where they pushed the *Wehrmacht* back to Germany. Writing about the report's findings a few years later, General Fred Weyand reflected on this return to the familiar by quoting T. S. Eliot's lines: 'At the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time'.[45] Certainly, the Army dedicated some effort to knowing Europe again: the 1976 edition of FM 100-5 Operations contained detailed meteorological data for Germany and maps of urban density from the Ruhr to the Oder rivers, an unusually tight focus for a manual that was supposed to provide doctrinal guidance for the full range of Army operations.[46] In a letter to Weyand, DePuy clearly stated his intent, declaring that 'this manual takes the Army out of the rice paddies of Vietnam and places it on the Western European battlefield against the Warsaw Pact'.[47]

Like many of his initiatives, DePuy's edition of FM 100-5 proved controversial, but the debate it sparked led to the new doctrine of 'Air-Land battle', a term that appeared in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5.[48] This doctrine heavily emphasised a manoeuvre-based defence and tight integration between land forces confronting the first wave of Soviet attacks and air forces simultaneously attacking the enemy's rear echelons and follow-on echelons. Proponents of Air-Land battle explicitly drew on the experiences of the German *Wehrmacht* during World War II and emphasised the need for operational and tactical excellence, along with sophisticated new weapons systems.[49] These weapons systems, which had soaked up large portions of the Army's budget while they were in

[44] Harry G. Summers, Jr, *The Astarita Report: A Military Strategy for the Multipolar World* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 1981).
[45] Fred C. Weyand and Harry G. Summers, 'Serving the People: The Need for Military Power', *Military Review* 56 (1976): 10.
[46] US Army, *FM 100-5 Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1976); Richard Lock-Pullan, '"An Inward Looking Time": The United States Army, 1973–1976', *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 2 (2003): 483–511; David Fitzgerald, *Learning to Forget: US Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 39–59.
[47] DePuy, *Selected Papers of General William E. Depuy*, 194.
[48] Paul H. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1988); US Army, *FM 100-5 Operations*, 100–5.
[49] John L. Romjue, 'From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine from 1973 to 1982', TRADOC Historical Monograph Series (Fort Monroe, VA: Historical Office, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1984).

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development in the 1970s, began to be fielded by units in the early 1980s and represented a major improvement in capabilities.[50] Later termed the 'big five' after the role they played in the Gulf War, the emergence of the M1 Abrams tank, M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopter and MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile assuaged fears that the Army had fallen beyond their Soviet counterparts in technological terms and gave Army leaders confidence that they could win an armoured battle in Europe.

As Army doctrine, training and equipment improved, so did its recruiting and retention situation. General Maxwell Thurman took over Recruiting Command in 1979 and immediately reinvigorated it, using social science research to undergird recruiting efforts and working with advertising agencies to come up with the hugely successful 'Be All That You Can Be' advertising campaign and slogan.[51] Thurman was aided by the growing defence budgets of the Reagan era, as military pay increased significantly and the GI Bill was revitalised, even as the Reagan administration drastically cut college financial aid for civilians.[52] By the mid-1980s, the word 'college' seemed to be omnipresent in Army ads, in the hope that a focus on education rather than cash bonuses would attract more intelligent and ambitious recruits.[53] The military social welfare system grew more elaborate and generous, and focused more on family welfare, as the All-Volunteer military attracted older, longer-serving members who had a much higher marriage rate than their predecessors in the Selective Service Era.[54] The combined effects of more effective advertising and more generous compensation were remarkable: whereas only 54 per cent of recruits in 1980 were high school graduates and over half were Category IV, by 1987, 91 per cent of recruits were high school graduates and only 4 per cent were Category IV.[55] The contrast with the early 1970s image of the rebellious draftee or reluctant and ill-disciplined recruit was striking. The soldier of the 1980s was educated, highly disciplined and seemingly highly proficient.

Some observers such as the sociologist Charles Moskos began to argue that the military could provide an example for broader society. By 1986, Moskos was reporting that the racial tensions that had roiled the Army

[50] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 19–20.
[51] Bailey, *America's Army*, 180–92.
[52] Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 98, 104.
[53] Bailey, *America's Army*, 195.
[54] John Worsencroft, 'A Family Affair: Military Service in the Postwar Era' (PhD dissertation, Philadelphia, Temple University, 2017), 125.
[55] Bailey, *America's Army*, 197.

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of the 1970s had now vanished and that the service provided a model for what racial integration could look like, with no signs of de facto segregation on Army bases, and African American soldiers rising through the ranks to take on high command with little fuss.[56] Certainly, the Army's broader image had improved. While West German politicians of the 1970s had worried about race riots, German observers in the 1980s noted that American armoured forces were much more competent than they previously had been, no longer littering German roadways during exercises and damaging crops and buildings with their tanks, while American units began to outperform their West German counterparts in tank gunnery exercises.[57] This operational improvement took place alongside a cultural rehabilitation of the armed forces, with Hollywood churning out movies that celebrated a highly competent and heroic military.[58] Opinion polling reflected this shift too. While the Harris Poll of the early 1970s had indicated that soldiers were about as well regarded as sanitation workers, Gallup polling in August 1990 indicated that 68 per cent of Americans had a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the military, up from a 1979 low point of 50 per cent.[59]

1.2 Dissent: Bureaucracy and the Missing 'Warrior Spirit'

This story of the Army's recovery from its Vietnam trauma is well known. Scholars often understandably draw a straight line between the reforms of the 1970s and 1980s and the overwhelming success of Operation Desert Storm.[60] Not for nothing is the Army's official history of that conflict called *Certain Victory*. General Barry McCaffrey captured the essence of this sentiment when he testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee in the aftermath of the Gulf War that 'this war didn't take 100 hours to win, it took 15 years'.[61] However, this post-1991 triumphalism misses

[56] Charles C. Moskos, 'Success Story: Blacks in the Military', *The Atlantic*, May 1986, www.theatlantic.com/ideastour/military/moskos-full.html.

[57] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 32.

[58] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Lawrence Howard Suid, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, 2nd edition (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002); Walter L. Hixson, '"Red Storm Rising": Tom Clancy Novels and the Cult of National Security', *Diplomatic History* 17, no. 4 (1993): 599–614.

[59] Gallup Inc., 'Confidence in Institutions', www.gallup.com/poll/1597/Confidence-Institutions.aspx.

[60] James F. Dunnigan and Raymond M. Macedonia, *Getting It Right: American Military Reforms after Vietnam to the Gulf War and beyond* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1993); Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*.

[61] Barry R. McCaffrey, 'Desert Shield and Desert Storm Operations Overview', testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 102nd Congress, 1st session, 9 May 1991.

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something about the uncertainty and the ongoing lack of confidence felt by many in the Army, even throughout the military build-up of the Reagan administration. We can see something of this nervousness in the fact that the Army awarded over 9,000 medals for bravery and valour for Operation Urgent Fury, the 1983 invasion of tiny Grenada, even though no more than 7,000 soldiers were ever on the island in the first place.[62] The invasion of Grenada also highlighted a slew of problems with intelligence and interservice communication and coordination.[63] More broadly, even as the US Army in Europe began to rehabilitate its reputation, officers took to the pages of professional journals to complain that many of the issues that had plagued the Army in the Vietnam era still remained unresolved.

Perhaps the most scathing critic of the Army of the late 1980s was Christopher Bassford, an artillery officer who had left the Army after a five-year stint and who would later go on to become a widely respected scholar of Clausewitz. In 1988, he published *The Spit-Shine Syndrome: Organizational Irrationality in the American Field Army*, a book that recounted his frustrations as a junior artillery officer while offering a wider critique of the Army as a whole.[64] Bassford claimed that 'the organizational pathologies that led to disaster in Vietnam are still alive in the army of the 1980s' and his study echoed many of the same complaints of the 1970 Army War College study on professionalism.[65] For Bassford, the Army's reporting systems were still broken, as they 'mandate a fatal level of dishonesty, distort the chain of command, create a tremendous waste of time and resources, forbid tactical or organizational flexibility or creativity, compartmentalize units into jealously competing fragments, and drive wedges between commanders and their troops'.[66] He claimed that units in Germany were falsifying readiness reports by failing to report equipment breakdowns, which then caused supply NCOs to lose faith in the supply system and hoard spare parts by double-ordering, scrounging and theft so that they could repair their vehicles without formally requisitioning the parts that would tip off higher headquarters that something wasn't right.[67] As a result, trust between different elements of the Army's component parts was breaking down, and the logistics system was becoming more inefficient.

[62] Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 268.
[63] Philip Kukielski, *The U.S. Invasion of Grenada: Legacy of a Flawed Victory* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019).
[64] Christopher Bassford, *The Spit-Shine Syndrome: Organizational Irrationality in the American Field Army* (New York: Praeger, 1988).
[65] Bassford, 1.
[66] Bassford, 14.
[67] Bassford, 60.

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The Officer Efficiency Report system was similarly irrational. Bassford's description of the system came strikingly close to repeating almost verbatim the complaints of the Vietnam-era professionalism study; he argued that it 'could not be better designed to produce a class of timid, dishonest paper shuffler, far more concerned about their individual promotion chances than about producing effective military units'.[68] He noted that a 1984 army survey showed that 49 per cent of Army officers took the position that a 'bold, creative officer could not survive in the army', and argued that the Army's vast command superstructure 'exerts a crushing weight on subordinate units through gross over-supervision'.[69] All of this produced what Bassford called a 'spit shine syndrome': an obsession with appearances at the expense of reality, where 'the mirror polish of a spit shine combat boot is taken as an analogue for dedication to the unit and military professionalism, because those doing the evaluating either cannot judge, do not have time to worry about, or have no interest in the actual capability of the soldier'.[70] Bassford thought that the 'hollow army' described by General Edward C. Meyer still existed, albeit it was 'hidden under a layer of shoe polish'.

Bassford pinned much of the blame for this state of affairs on a personnel system that created far too much churn, which then encouraged both extensive bureaucratic oversight and an emphasis on the individual rather than the collective. In his foreword to the book, retired Lieutenant General Robert M. Elton celebrated contemporary American soldiers, claiming that 'as individuals, they are the most outstanding today that I have ever seen' and that 'the potential is there to mold a truly great army'. However, like Bassford, Elton worried that 'in a sophisticated army with great lethality, we will drive away those very individuals who would make us great'.[71] Elton believed that future wars would not rely on general mobilisation but would be 'come as you are', which meant that the Army needed to focus on building and testing cohesive units where soldiers were not equated to spare parts in an inventory, and where 'replacements come as cohesive packages rather than parceled out in poker chips one at a time to meet monthly readiness paper requirements'.[72] An Army that kept units together for an extended period and whose primary form of evaluation was a collective one based on realistic field exercises would be one that could truly meet its potential.

68 Bassford, 79.
69 Bassford, 8, 14.
70 Bassford, 32.
71 Robert M. Elton, 'Foreword', in *The Spit-Shine Syndrome: Organizational Irrationality in the American Field Army*, ed. Christopher Bassford (New York: Praeger, 1988), xi.
72 Elton, xi.

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Many in the upper ranks of the Army agreed. Indeed, Meyer had thought reforms along these lines were on a par with the establishment of TRADOC, the fielding of new weapons systems and doctrine, and the creation of the NTC in terms of their importance for the Army's future. Under his leadership, in 1981, the Army created a pilot programme known as Cohesion, Operational Readiness and Training (COHORT), which was intended to reorient the Army's personnel policy towards a unit-based system rather than one based on the individual. Meyer wanted to slow down personnel turbulence by creating units that would stay together for a minimum of three years.[73] Recruits would start basic training together and then join up with a cadre of officers and NCOs who would lead those same soldiers for the duration of their first enlistment, with the makeup of every squad and platoon remaining unchanged from start to finish. The objective was to create cohesive small units where personnel were accustomed to training and working closely together.[74] Speaking of the then-proposed changes in 1979, the military sociologist Morris Janowitz claimed that the move was an obvious one to make and that the 'the question is not how to create cohesion. Armies have known how for centuries. The question is why the American Army doesn't want cohesive units.'[75]

The subsequent failure of COHORT seemed to pose that same question yet again. From an initial pilot of twenty companies, the Army expanded the programme to 110 COHORT companies by 1983 and 281 companies by 1988.[76] Along with a parallel development of a new regimental system, which would group all soldiers in the Army into regionally based and culturally distinctive regiments where they could expect to serve the bulk of their careers both at home and overseas, COHORT was supposed to be rolled out to the entire Army.[77] However, critics such as Bassford claimed that the pace of change was far too timid and slow, and while studies demonstrated that COHORT units had much greater horizontal cohesion than their non-COHORT counterparts, officers and NCOs did not buy into the system in the same way, and turbulence at

[73] Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 206.

[74] Brad Knickerbocker, 'Army's COHORT Plan Keeps Units Together, Builds Morale', *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 December 1982, www.csmonitor.com/1982/1222/122243.html.

[75] Michael R. Kearnes, 'Lessons in Unit Cohesion from the United States Armys COHORT (Cohesion, Operational Readiness, and Training) Experiment of 1981 to 1995' (Fort Leavenworth KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 12 June 2020), 72, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD1124784.

[76] Kearnes, 87, 96.

[77] Richard Halloran, 'Army Is Reviving Use of Regiments', *New York Times*, 22 December 1982, www.nytimes.com/1982/12/22/us/army-is-reviving-use-of-regiments.html.

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the level of unit leadership never really improved.[78] The rhythm of regular deployments to Europe and Korea meant that commanders preferred to think in terms of individual personnel slots that they needed to fill rather than rotating an entire unchanging unit.[79]

Looking back on his career, Maxwell Thurman, the general credited with saving the All-Volunteer Force with his overhaul of Recruiting Command, commented that 'if I look and say what did I fail to get accomplished, the answer is that I failed to get accomplished the institutionalization of COHORT. I had too many people against me on that. The commanders in Europe didn't like it. Armor didn't like it … I wouldn't say they sabotaged it, but they fought it tooth and nail every step of the way and it succumbed on those grounds.'[80] More broadly, the Army's reporting and evaluation systems never adapted to account for the new policy, and, as one study of COHORT put it, 'an underlying assumption of the Army's culture is the individual system is so entrenched is because leaders succeed in an environment, and subconsciously become skeptical of change'.[81] Given the significance that so many studies of military effectiveness assign to small-unit cohesion, the failure of the COHORT project, which had the strong support of three different chiefs of staff, in the face of bureaucratic inertia indicates that all was not well in the Army in the late 1980s, despite all the reforms that took place in the aftermath of defeat in Vietnam.

The fundamental immovability of Army bureaucracy was one of the issues that most vexed critical mid-ranking officers, especially those that were associated with the Military Reform movement.[82] This group, which was largely made up of civilian analysts and disgruntled Air Force officers, critiqued careerism in the officer corps, the military's tendency to develop complex and expensive weapons systems, and a focus on attrition as a strategy, an approach they characterised as mindlessly focusing on grinding the enemy down over time.[83] Many within this group took

[78] Kearnes, 'Lessons in Unit Cohesion from the United States Armys COHORT (Cohesion, Operational Readiness, and Training) Experiment of 1981 to 1995', 109–23.
[79] Kearnes, 96, 130.
[80] Kearnes, 133–4.
[81] Kearnes, 139.
[82] For an account of the movement and its origins in the US Air Force, see Michael W. Hankins, *Flying Camelot: The F-15, the F-16, and the Weaponization of Fighter Pilot Nostalgia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).
[83] James G. Burton, *The Pentagon Wars: Reformers Challenge the Old Guard* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993); James Fallows, 'Muscle-Bound Superpower: The State of America's Defense', *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1979. The British historian Paul Kennedy made a similar argument about the tendency of the United States to overspend on unnecessarily complex weapons systems in his highly influential book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987).

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inspiration from Air Force Colonel John Boyd's 'patterns of conflict' briefing, which drew on an impressionistic understanding of German tactics in World War II to make the case for a 'manoeuvrist' approach to warfare that would seek to throw the enemy off balance by avoiding their strong points and attacking their weaknesses and critical vulnerability, destroying their cohesion and ability to cope by a series of rapid and unexpected actions.[84]

While Boyd and his acolytes shared an admiration for the *Wehrmacht* with the generals who devised Air-Land battle, they were critical of Air-Land battle's focus on synchronisation, which necessitated tight control to integrate Air Force and Army actions more effectively.[85] Instead, they focused on command as an art form, where individual commanders would be empowered to act in accordance with their own assessment of the situation. This doctrine of 'mission command' was derived from an American understanding of the German concept of *Auftragstaktik*.[86] With its emphasis on individual creativity and skill, mission command was, as the historian Adam Tooze put it, both the hallmark of western individualism and freedom put consciously into opposition to the unthinking automatons of the Red Army, and 'the gothic scissors that cut through the threads that suspended the American fighting-man like a puppet from the dead hand of McNamara's Pentagon'.[87] The US military had seen the results of bureaucracy in Vietnam and they needed to do everything in their power to move away from it.

Mission command made it into American doctrine and was an artefact of the almost universal celebration of the *Wehrmacht* in the Army of the

[84] John Boyd, *A Discourse on Winning and Losing* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2018), www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B_0151_Boyd_Discourse_Winning_Losing.pdf; Frans P. B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (Cheltenham: Routledge, 2007); Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2004). Stephen Robinson's revisionist account demonstrates that Boyd and manoeuvre warfare theorists misunderstood the nature of the German approach to war and misrepresented that history in order to promote their own theories about the potency of manoeuvre. Stephen Robinson, *The Blind Strategist: John Boyd and the American Art of War* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Exisle, 2021).

[85] Saul Bronfeld, 'Did TRADOC Outmanoeuvre the Manoeuvrists? A Comment', *War & Society* 27, no. 2 (1 October 2008): 111–25.

[86] Ricardo Herrera has argued that the American infatuation with *Aufstragstakik* began with the publication of Trevor Dupuy's *A Genius for War* in 1977, but that this infatuation represents a fundamental misunderstanding of both German and American military history. Trevor N. Dupuy, *A Genius for War: The German Army and General Staff, 1807–1945* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1984); Ricardo A. Herrera, 'History, Mission Command, and the Auftragstaktik Infatuation', *Military Review*, August 2022, 53–66.

[87] Adam Tooze, 'Chartbook #128: Mission Command – NATO's Strangelove Vision of Freedom Enacted on the Ukraine Battlefield', Substack newsletter, *Chartbook* (blog), 12 June 2022, https://adamtooze.substack.com/p/chartbook-128-mission-command-natos.

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1980s, but for the military reformers, Army leadership was only paying lip service to the concept.[88] They argued that the Army's focus on high-tech weaponry, its careerist promotion system and its failure to improve unit cohesion via the COHORT system meant that the organisation was far more rigid and hidebound than those who celebrated post-Vietnam reforms cared to admit.

Many blamed this inertia on the post-Vietnam Army's overwhelming focus on its mission in Europe and its sense that the outbreak of war there was not in fact likely. Colonel Walther E. Mather complained that too many senior commanders saw deterrence and the preservation of peace as being their primary mission, which contributed 'to a peacetime-oriented professional, more concerned with peacetime management manifest in DoD's [Department of Defense] planning-programming-budgeting system and "How the Army Runs" courses than with the serious study of war'.[89] Similarly, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel G. Murphy Donovan argued in *Parameters* that the military's recent rhetorical emphasis on 'warfighting' was hollow and that military education focused too 'much on producing managers', while the promotion system produced careerists who tended 'to confuse rank with achievement, promotion with competence' and who believed that 'their personal success is a validation of their way of doing things, even if their way includes ignoring the obvious'.[90] Moreover, while the post-Vietnam military had spent heavily on new equipment, 'the difficult problems of military competence concern strategy and operational art, not just procurement and logistics where necessities are often confused with sufficiencies'.[91] Donovan believed that none of this would change without 'radical changes in the ways that officers think about warrior preparation'.[92]

Daniel Bolger's 'Two Armies' article, which opened this chapter, appeared in the same issue of *Parameters* as Donovan's piece. Bolger took the critique even further and claimed that the heavy forces which predominated in Europe were nothing but 'show troopers', reliant on 'extensive synchronization' and 'inch-thick operations orders', who might be dedicated and competent but who tended to be preoccupied

88 For an account of the US Army's incorporation of mission command into their doctrine, see Eitan Shamir, 'The Long and Winding Road: The US Army Managerial Approach to Command and the Adoption of Mission Command (Auftragstaktik)', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 5 (1 October 2010): 645–72.

89 Walter Mather, 'Peace Is Not My Profession; Deterrence Is Not My Mission', *Armed Forces Journal International* 125, no. 11 (June 1988).

90 G. Murphy Donovan, 'Sustaining the Military Arts', *Parameters: The US Army War College Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (4 July 1989): 21.

91 Donovan, 15.

92 Donovan, 21.

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with 'quotidian detail' rather than 'readiness for a war that the commanders have begun to suspect will never happen'.[93] He believed that the 'real fighting' since 1945 had been done by the Army's light units along with the Marine Corps, who together made up 'the expeditionary army'.[94] These were a different breed: 'paratroopers might be quaffing beer at a pizza parlour near Fort Bragg one night and be in a desperate firefight in a distant hostile land the next afternoon. These regulars go into action as they are, with no mobilization'. The speed of their deployments meant that they would expect to 'fight outnumbered far from friendly bases and must rely on the collective skills imparted by sound leadership, demanding training, and shared pre-battle hardship' rather than the traditional American advantages in technology and numbers.[95] These expeditionary soldiers could not afford to 'conform to prevailing social norms of self-serving comfort; they conform instead to the pitiless calculus of armed struggle'. Unlike the display Army in Europe, they 'must eschew bureaucratic miasma and exude the ethos of the pure warrior. That which does not contribute directly to success in battle must be ruthlessly excised. Warriorship is a way of life.'[96]

Bolger's concern was that the 'show army' and the 'expeditionary army' had not been fully divorced and that the Army's priorities tended towards satisfying the needs of the wrong part of the force. In this, he was not alone. Participants in ExcelOpers, an early internet-based Army discussion forum, similarly mused that the contemporary Army wasn't doing enough to promote the 'warrior spirit', with some claiming that if 'the warrior exists in the Army today, it exists only in a few units at best' and that 'we simply struggle with the making of warrior. Our raw materials come from a soft society.' Others noted that this 'warrior spirit' was hard to sustain in peacetime and that 'the only way to catch the warrior fever is through spirited, aggressive live firing … which unfortunately often runs counter to a safety-conscious Army'.[97]

These complaints were echoed by no less a figure than the novelist Tom Clancy. In a surprising move for someone who played his own role in the rehabilitation of the military's post-Vietnam public image through depictions of extreme military competence in his best-selling technothriller novels, Clancy published an opinion piece in the *Washington Post*

[93] Bolger, 'Two Armies', 31, 32.
[94] Bolger, 27.
[95] Bolger, 30.
[96] Bolger, 33.
[97] 'Transcript: Regarding the Nebulous and Esoteric Warrior "Spirit"', 21 May 1985, Gordon R. Sullivan Papers, Box 64, Folder 7, Discussions with Colleagues on Training of Officer Corps, May 1985, AHEC.

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in December 1988 that excoriated both the Navy and the Army for not adequately training its commanders and for producing a climate where command had 'become a mere adjunct to career advancement – and therefore a place of passage, a place to play safe and make no mistakes'.[98] Clancy argued that the 'current system militates towards homogenized mediocrity' and that military leaders had forgotten that 'the military was meant to be neither a jobs programme nor another federal bureaucracy'.[99] Ironically for someone whose work focused with exquisite detail on the working of military machinery, Clancy argued that public debates over military budgets were missing the point because they focused too much on weapons rather than people, and that the military needed to 'return to fundamentals' and to 'restore the warrior ethic'. For Clancy, 'not all officers are or can be warriors, but only those who are deserve to command at any level'.[100] Therefore, the military had to change its training programmes to identify and nurture these people before giving them the support and experience they would need to succeed in combat. The crucial issue undergirding all this anxiety about incomplete reforms and about persistent bureaucratic pathologies was the sense that, however much the Army had overhauled itself after Vietnam, it remained essentially untested in the crucible of war.

1.3 A Revolution Validated: Operation Desert Storm

That test was not long in coming. While the interventions in tiny Grenada and Panama had been facile, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 set the United States on course for confrontation with what analysts were quick to note was the fourth largest army in the world, battle hardened by a decade of war with Iran. The Bush administration quickly launched Operation Desert Shield to ensure that Iraqi advances would not continue further south into Saudi oilfields, and deployed the XVIII Airborne Corps, beginning with the 82nd Airborne Division, to Saudi Arabia. As the administration began to build an international coalition to eject Iraq from Kuwait, and more and more soldiers poured into the Persian Gulf through the autumn and winter of 1990, it was becoming clear that war, and with it a serious test of the Army's capabilities, was likely.

Both the military and broader American society took the situation seriously. The Veterans Administration made arrangements to clear

[98] Tom Clancy, 'Look Who's Sinking Our Navy', *Washington Post*, 25 December 1988, www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1988/12/25/look-whos-sinking-our-navy/be6f11f3-a21d-4bbf-b738-72868af8f412/.C1kX3QTaP0G28MhKT3Ue/Exmv0yhh22d

[99] Clancy.

[100] Clancy.

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hospital beds for the anticipated flow of wounded soldiers.[101] Some analysts estimated that the war would result in between 10,000 and 20,000 American casualties.[102] While not on the scale of Vietnam-era protests, a substantial anti-war movement emerged, largely driven by grassroots peace organisations but also featuring large-scale protests in cities such as San Francisco and Washington, DC. The political debate over intervention was fraught, and the Senate only narrowly voted to authorise the use of military force, with the resolution passing fifty-two votes to forty-seven.[103] In some quarters, there were even fears of a more a general war: sales of gas masks boomed in January 1991, and some wrote to local newspapers to suggest that the crisis called for the planting of World War II–type 'victory gardens'.[104] While the Department of Defense strongly denied that the military build-up in the Gulf was prompting them to think about reinstating the draft, some members of local Selective Service boards openly speculated about its return.[105] With question marks still hanging over the success of the military's post-Vietnam reforms, some allowed their imaginations to run wild.

While few in the Army shared these sentiments, Army leaders were certainly attuned to what was at stake. Speaking to students in Fort Leavenworth in November 1990, Army Chief of Staff General Carl Vuono claimed that 'this is not a minor league operation. If we don't fire a shot, it's been a demanding scenario.'[106] As a service chief, Vuono was not part of the chain of command for operations in the Persian Gulf, and he kept his focus on the potential impact of the crisis on the broader institution. For Vuono, the challenge would be to maintain global readiness,

[101] 'Is the VA Ready?' *DAV Magazine*, October 1990, folder 03194-004 'Persian Gulf Working Group', Paul McNeill Files, White House Office of Communications, GBPL.

[102] 'Potential War Casualties Put at 100,000', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 1990, 2.

[103] W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz, eds, *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994); Frederick Fico, Linlin Ku and Stan Soffin, 'Fairness, Balance of Newspaper Coverage of U.S. in Gulf War', *Newspaper Research Journal* 15, no. 1 (January 1994): 30–43; Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, 'Challenging a Master Narrative: Peace Protest and Opinion/Editorial Discourse in the US Press During the Gulf War', *Discourse & Society* 5, no. 4 (October 1994): 509–41; John E. Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

[104] David Treadwell, 'Americans Willing to Pay for Bit of Security', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 January 1991, A11; Ivetta Burch, 'Readers Write – It's Time Again for Victory Garden', *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, 6 February 1991, 7A.

[105] Rosemary Weathers, 'Gulf Crisis – Next in Line? – Young Men Wait on Return of U.S. Draft – Threat of War Rekindles Draft Fears', *Kentucky Post*, 12 January 1991; Rosemary Weathers, 'Gulf Crisis – Draft-Board Members Search Their Souls', *Kentucky Post*, 12 January 1991.

[106] Carl E. Vuono, 'Address to CASSS 91-1/2', 1 November 1990, Carl E. Vuono Papers: Box 33A, Folder 9, Speeches and Remarks, 1991, AHEC.

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observing that 'while we are keeping our eye on Desert Shield, we have to keep our eye on the rest of the Army and strike the right balance in terms of how we mix the forces'. He recalled that when he was a more junior officer, 'we didn't do that … and it took us 10–12 years to recover from it'. What was at stake was the success of the All-Volunteer Force. Vuono emphasised to the student officers that 'we have an Army today of volunteers; everybody in the ranks today volunteered. We didn't have to go out looking and forcing people into the Army, they volunteered. They raised their hands.'[107] If the Army allowed Operation Desert Shield to run down readiness within the force, then fewer hands might be raised in the future. Moreover, he reminded his audience that 'the American people have entrusted to you the most precious commodity that this country has – its son and daughters'.[108] Vuono had lived through a time when that trust had been broken and had no intention of repeating the experience.

The initial public reaction to Operation Desert Shield suggested that this time the military could count on public support. In August 1990, a convoy of soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell on their way to Atlanta to be airlifted to the Persian Gulf was met by cheering crowds along Interstate 75, with every overpass for 110 miles, from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Atlanta, Georgia, packed with flag-waving well-wishers.[109] Media commentators covering these deployments highlighted the more racially diverse, mature and well-trained volunteer force as a symbol of the strength and diversity of the United States – a move that the historian Melani McAlister has termed 'military multiculturalism'.[110] While debates over the wisdom of going to war with Iraq may have been fraught, all sides emphasised support for the troops. Senate Majority Whip, Senator Wendell Ford (D-KY), who had voted against the war, declared that 'we have a profound responsibility to ensure that the tragedy of the Vietnam veterans is not repeated' and called for every American to 'reach out personally to let our service men and women and veterans know that their essential contribution to democracy is appreciated'.[111]

[107] Vuono.
[108] Vuono.
[109] Larry Lewis, 'Pro or Con, Flag Means Patriotism to All', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 January 1991.
[110] Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 235–59.
[111] Wendell F. Ford, 'Press Release: Ford Urges Kentucky Towns and Cities to "Adopt" Servicemen and Women in the Persian Gulf', 17 December 1990, White House Office of Media Affairs, Subject Files: Congress, GBPL.

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Indeed, Americans sent thousands of care packages to soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, and many displayed yellow ribbons in front yards and on jacket lapels.[112] Celebrities embraced those serving in the Gulf, releasing charity singles to raise the morale of those deployed and embarking on USO trips to the Middle East to entertain the troops.[113] The pinnacle of the entertainment industry's embrace of the troops was Whitney Houston's bravura Super Bowl rendition of 'The Star-Spangled Banner', aired ten days into the conflict.[114] Such messages sent fundamentally emotional, apolitical messages of support to the troops and their families. Indeed, even those who opposed the war made a point of publicly displaying their support for the troops. Todd Gitlin, for example, a prominent anti-war figure during the Vietnam War and an opponent of US military intervention in the Gulf, donated blood with *NBC News* cameras rolling.[115] That Gitlin made such a gesture demonstrates how the notion of American soldiers as apolitical and worthy professionals had become an article of faith in American politics.[116] This shift in public attitudes had little to do with Air-Land battle or close scrutiny of the performance of manoeuvre units at the NTC; rather it emerged from a widespread sense that the soldiers of the All-Volunteer Force were of a higher calibre than their Vietnam-era counterparts, as well as a feeling that the nation had treated these Vietnam veterans poorly. From Reagan's declaration that the war in Vietnam had been a 'noble cause' to the building of the Vietnam Veterans' memorial to the staging of a large parade for Vietnam veterans in

[112] For the history of the yellow ribbon and its use during the Gulf War, see Jack Santino, 'Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags: The Folk Assemblage of War', *The Journal of American Folklore* 105, no. 415 (Winter 1992): 19–33; George Mariscal, 'In the Wake of the Gulf War: Untying the Yellow Ribbon', *Cultural Critique*, no. 19 (Autumn 1991): 97–117; Gerald E. Parsons, 'How the Yellow Ribbon Became a National Folk Symbol', *Library of Congress American Folklife Center: Folklife Center News* 13, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 9–11.

[113] Chuck Philips, 'Stars Voice Their Support of Gulf Forces', *Los Angeles Times*, 6 February 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-02-06/entertainment/ca-794_1_gulf-forces.

[114] Danyel Smith, 'When Whitney Hit the High Note', ESPN.com, 1 February 2016, www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/14673003/the-story-whitney-houston-epic-national-anthem-performance-1991-super-bowl; Chuck Philips, 'Stars Voice Their Support of Gulf Forces', *Los Angeles Times*, 6 February 1991, F1.

[115] Gitlin argued that the selective use of images from his blood donation effectively cancelled out his stance against the war. Todd Gitlin, 'On Being Sound-Bitten: Reflections on Truth, Impression, and Belief in a Time of Media Saturation', *Boston Review* 16, no. 6 (December 1991): 15–17.

[116] On the debate over the extent to which the Vietnam-era media was 'anti-troop' and the extent to which memories of that war hamstrung the Gulf War protestors, see Thomas D. Beamish, Harvey Molotch and Richard Flacks, 'Who Supports the Troops? Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the Making of Collective Memory', *Social Problems* 42, no. 3 (August 1995): 344–60.

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Houston in 1988, the image of the veteran was rehabilitated alongside the reputation of the US military.[117]

This success of this rehabilitation was now at stake in the Persian Gulf. While most senior officers deployed to Saudi Arabia were confident that the coalition assembled to fight the war would easily defeat Saddam Hussein's army and that some of the figures circulating in the press about potential American casualties were overblown, all of this would be hypothetical until the first shots were fired. For Major General Barry McCaffrey, commander of the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division, the moment he realised that this time would be different was when he attended CENTCOM (United States Central Command) commander General Norman Schwarzkopf's briefing on what would be called Operation Desert Storm: the plan of attack to liberate Kuwait. As Schwarzkopf described a campaign that would feature massive aerial bombardment before the launch of a huge multi-corps wheel into the desert to outflank Iraqi forces, McCaffrey was overcome with emotion. As the journalist James Kitfield described it, 'the briefing had left McCaffrey slightly stunned … he had one overriding thought. We're not going to fight a war of attrition, or a limited war. It was a revelation. He saw now that the Army was going to play to its strengths and the enemy's weakness. By God, we learned. We learned.' When he turned to his counterpart General Binford Peay, commander of the 101st Airborne Division, 'there were tears in McCaffrey's eyes. Peay just nodded his head in confirmation: "That's it, Barry. That's what we'll do."'[118]

And indeed, Army units deployed to the Persian Gulf did just what the plan called for them to do. The flanking movement was a stunning success, and Army divisions carved their way through Iraqi defensive positions without difficulty. After only 100 hours of ground combat, President Bush declared a ceasefire and declared that Kuwait had been liberated. As the Army's official history of the conflict puts it, 'only 100 ground combat hours were necessary for the Army to re-establish itself convincingly

[117] Ronald Reagan, 'Peace: Restoring the Margain of Safety' (Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention, Chicago, 18 August 1980), www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/8.18.80.htmlC1kX3QTaP0G28MhKT3Ue/Exmv0yhh22d; Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009); David Ryan, 'Vietnam in the American Mind: Narratives of the Nation and the Sources of Collective Memory', in *Cultural Memory and Multiple Identities* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008); David Kieran, *Forever Vietnam: How a Divisive War Changed American Public Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014); Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: NYU Press, 2000); Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[118] Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 24.

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as a successful land combat force'. The Army's mechanised forces had advanced at a speed of more than ninety-five kilometres per day, double what the *Wehrmacht* had achieved during the heyday of blitzkrieg warfare in 1941.[119] If there had been any doubts as to the extent of the Army's renaissance, then Operation Desert Storm seemingly put them to rest.

Like most of the people attending Schwarzkopf's pre-war briefing, McCaffrey had served multiple tours in Vietnam, and his sentiments about what Desert Storm meant were far from unique. An entire generation of Army leaders had lived through the Vietnam experience and its aftermath and so saw the Gulf War as the conclusion of a narrative arc of redemption. In their memoirs, generals such as Colin Powell, Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr and Tommy Franks told stories of their frustrations in Vietnam followed by years of hard work to rebuild the military before finding vindication in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula.[120] As the scholar Andrew Bacevich observes, 'virtually every one of these narratives conforms to a prescribed formula … From his experience in a lost war, the protagonist derives certain essential truths that he vows to apply if ever called upon in some future crisis to serve in a position of authority.' In these memoirs, the protagonist returns home from war to find his fellow citizens shunning those who serve, but commits himself to the military, 'rising through the ranks during a lengthy apprenticeship. When his moment finally arrives, he orchestrates a great victory, by implication showing how Vietnam ought to have been fought. In vanquishing the enemy, he also helps heal old wounds at home, promoting both reconciliation and national renewal.'[121] The most vivid example of this genre is *Into the Storm*, an account of the ground war in the Persian Gulf co-authored by Tom Clancy and General Fred Franks, who commanded VII Corps throughout the conflict. After losing a leg in Vietnam in 1971, Franks underwent his personal 'Valley Forge' of recovery. As his own body healed, the Army itself was healed and rebuilt by veterans of Vietnam. Franks then took command of a well-trained and well-equipped Armored Corps and defeated Saddam Hussein's vast army in just 100 hours of combat.[122]

The Army's official history of the conflict, *Certain Victory*, followed the same narrative arc by focusing on the figure of Steven Slocum, who had

[119] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 5.
[120] Tommy R. Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005); Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey: An Autobiography* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995); Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero: The Autobiography of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993); Hugh Shelton, Ronald Levinson and Malcolm McConnell, *Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior* (New York: St Martins Press, 2010).
[121] Andrew Bacevich, 'A Modern Major General', *New Left Review* 29 (October 2004).
[122] Tom Clancy and Fred Franks, *Into the Storm: A Study in Command* (New York, 1998).

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served in Vietnam as a specialist fourth class and in the Gulf as a command sergeant major. As a young soldier, his unit had been decimated by fighting during the 1968 Tet Offensive, but this time, 'Slocum took 2,000 young paratroopers to the Gulf and brought them all back'. While his brigade took part in an assault on an Iraqi airfield, 'he watched the young infantrymen he had trained go about their business with a professionalism and self-confidence far different from what he had seen [in Vietnam]'.[123] American tactical proficiency was not the only thing that separated the two experiences. Whereas Specialist Slocum had returned from Vietnam in 1968 on his own and to no fanfare, Command Sergeant Major Slocum returned from the Gulf decades later with his unit and to 'thank you's' from everyone from the flight attendant on his chartered Pan Am 747 to the thousands waiting 'with fluttering flags and banners' at Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina.[124] For the authors of *Certain Victory*, it was the presence of that crowd of thousands at the homecoming as much as the performance of the troops in the desert that affirmed that the post-Vietnam redemption was now complete.

1.4 Operation Welcome Home

On the very day that President Bush declared a ceasefire in the Gulf, *The Los Angeles Times* published a piece by Tom Clancy calling for victory parades for the veterans of Operation Desert Storm. Whereas in 1988 Clancy had worried that an overly bureaucratic military had lost the 'warrior spirit', he now returned to familiar themes and rhetorically asked 'does America still have it?' before answering his own question with the retort: 'ask the Iraqis'. He acknowledged 'how effective our weapons were' but also argued that 'there is no truer measure of any society than its armed forces. In uniform you will find the best and worst, the tools, the people, the ideas, all distilled in one place.'[125] He told his readers that 'when they come home, it's your job to remember who they are, and whom they worked for …. And they're coming home winners. We owe them.' Clancy's appeal fell on fertile ground: in a *USA Today* poll taken in early March, 86 per cent of respondents said that they would go to a parade for hometown soldiers.[126] Moreover, even as Clancy published

[123] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 356.
[124] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 355–7.
[125] Tom Clancy, 'How About a Few Parades?', *Los Angeles Times*, 28 February 1991, B13, in folder 03195-008, Persian Gulf Working Group, Paul McNeill Files, White House Office of Communications, George fBPL.
[126] 'Communities Make Homecoming Plans', n.d., folder 03195-014 'Persian Gulf Working Group: Surrogates [2]', Paul McNeill files, White House Office of Communications Files, GBPL.

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his piece, White House Chief of Staff John H. Sununu kept on his desk a draft schedule of homecoming events. He had solicited ideas for managing the celebrations from a Washington public relations consultant on 22 February, two days before the ground campaign in Kuwait started.[127]

The festivities that ensued are a useful barometer of the public's regard for the military. Much as Army leaders became increasingly confident about the success of their reform efforts as the years wore on, and much as opinion polling had indicated a strong recovery in the military's public image since the low point of the 1970s, the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm was the clearest indication yet that the military's post-Vietnam overhaul had been noticed by the broader American public. Moreover, the fact that many of these celebrations specifically emphasised the volunteer status of the military and that they gave a prominent place to high-tech weaponry gives some sense as to which reforms had most resonated with Americans.

Indeed, politicians made a point of celebrating volunteerism as one of the cardinal virtues of the force that had won the war. Writing to President Bush, House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich offered ideas for the president's upcoming address to a Joint Session of Congress, using the volunteer ethos of the military to advance conservative policies. Gingrich urged Bush to tell Congress that 'one thing we must not forget is that the brave men and women who participated in Operation Desert storm did so as volunteers – they chose to risk their lives for principle, for honor, for country and for a better, safer world. They volunteered to do the hard work of freedom.' He wanted Bush to call on Americans to 'join with that volunteer army of freedom' to make the twenty-first century the next 'American Century'.[128] While White House staffers did not use Gingrich's suggested language in the actual address to Congress, Bush agreed with Gingrich's claim that 'our military today is fundamentally better than it was ten years ago'. He celebrated the 'first-class talent' that 'went halfway around the world to do what is moral and just and right', and claimed that the victory belonged to 'the privates and the pilots, to the sergeants and the supply officers, to the men and women in the machines and the men and women who made them work'.[129] For both

[127] Roy Pfautch, 'Memorandum to John Sununu: The National Welcome Home', 22 February 1991, folder 04733-005 'Desert Storm: Events', Sig Rogich Files, White House Office of Public Events and Initiatives, GBPL.

[128] Newt Gingrich, 'Memorandum to John Sununu: Suggested Rhetoric for 3/6 Joint Speech', 4 March 1991, folder 29166-004 'Persian Gulf War [2]', Issues File, John Sununu Files, White House Office of the Chief Staff, GBPL.

[129] George H. W. Bush, 'Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Cessation of the Persian Gulf Conflict' (Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, 6 March 1991), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19364.

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Bush and Gingrich, the volunteer military stood at the heart of what had gone right in Desert Storm.

Others emphasised volunteerism as a quintessentially American trait. A concept paper sent to the White House Office of National Service made the connection between the skills displayed by the military in the Gulf and the needs of modern American capitalism. According to the paper's author, 'American enterprises increasingly require employees with the experience and qualities shown by the troops. To compete in the global marketplace, most US manufacturers and service industries find they must delegate responsibility for precision operations to employees well down the line'. Desert Storm veterans fit the bill perfectly because, 'as volunteer recruits they performed on time, in time and in teams .... They exercised savvy, courage and leadership in performing their missions.'[130]

This analysis drew heavily on a *Washington Post* column by Steven Rosenfeld that celebrated the victory over Iraq as springing from the democratic ideology of the US military. Rosenfeld cited Marine Corps Colonel W. C. Gregson, who claimed that US military doctrine 'counts heavily on and encourages the initiative, skills and courage of the individual and the small-unit leaders'. According to Gregson, this worked only because 'our armed forces personnel are not "simple soldiers" who slavishly serve the hierarchy, as in totalitarian forces. In the democratic tradition, they are the purpose around which all our efforts revolve.' Rosenfeld concluded by arguing that 'to walk in American footsteps, other governments must change their basic political ways – loosen up central control, devolve authority to lower levels, reward individual initiative .... Let us ship our field manuals – and the Bill of Rights. This is the wonderfully subversive lesson of the war.'[131] For Rosenfeld and other observers, the volunteer soldiers of Desert Storm not only displayed tactical and operational mastery, but also the best American capitalist values of personal responsibility and individual enterprise.

Such was the admiration for the victors of Desert Storm that several public relations firms believed the administration should use them to advance its domestic policy goals of shrinking the size of the federal government and promoting private volunteerism. Hill + Knowlton Strategies, a firm with close ties to both the administration and the Kuwaiti government, suggested that Bush appoint a hero of Desert Storm, such as General Schwarzkopf or Powell, to run 'Operation Domestic

[130] Frances Brigham Johnson to Clark Irvin, 'Welcoming the Troops Home to New Opportunities: Hometown Volunteers Can Make a Difference', 2 April 1991, folder 03630, General Files: Veteran and Operation Desert Storm Information, Clark Kent Irvin Files, White House Office of National Service, GBPL.

[131] Stephen S. Rosenfeld, 'Democracy's War', *Washington Post*, 29 March 1991, A21.

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Prosperity', a 100-day initiative to make the United States a 'home fit for heroes' by pressuring Congress to pass the Bush administration's domestic agenda.[132] Recalling the 'freedom trains' of the early Cold War, they also suggested a 'victory train' stocked with veterans to tour the nation and celebrate 'the men, women and technology of Desert Storm'.[133] This would be accompanied by a 'freedom flotilla' of US Navy and merchant marine vessels sailing around the United States, and a giant yellow ribbon stretching completely across it.[134] Burson-Marsteller, a rival to Hill + Knowlton, proposed that the Department of Defense should carefully hand-pick and give media training to returning service members and then send them out to 'maintain and expand in a meaningful way the national sense of pride, accomplishment and good feeling generated by Operation Desert Storm'.[135] Most ambitious of all was a suggestion from Kenneth Smith, CEO of a private consulting firm with ties to the Republican Party.[136] He suggested that the administration train the more than 500,000 Gulf War veterans as 'Desert Storm Community Service Volunteers' for an unspecified purpose. According to Smith:

> The people who participated in Desert Storm are truly an enormous national asset .... America's young people desperately need heroes – real heroes. Real people in real walks of life who do the real things that make America what it is. People who serve their country. People who earn their money, people who have a commitment to excellence and competence, people who believe in the value of service.[137]

[132] On behalf of Kuwait, Hill and Knowlton coordinated false testimony given to the House Human Rights Caucus in October 1990, where a fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti girl claimed to have witnessed Iraqi soldiers taking babies out of incubators in a Kuwaiti hospital and leaving them to die. John R. MacArthur, 'Remember Nayirah, Witness for Kuwait?', *New York Times*, 6 January 1992, A17.

[133] The 1947–9 'freedom train' was a travelling exhibit designed to 'sell America to Americans' by displaying artifacts such as original copies of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. Fried, *The Russians Are Coming!*, 29–50.

[134] Craig L. Fuller, 'Memorandum for John Sununu', 27 March 1991, folder 04733-005 'Desert Storm: Events', Sig Rogich Files, White House Office of Public Events and Initiatives, GBPL.

[135] Thomas D. Bell, 'Memorandum for Ed Rogers: Expanding the Spirit of Desert Storm', 2 April 1991, folder 04733-005 'Desert Storm: Events', Sig Rogich Files, White House Office of Public Events and Initiatives, GBPL.

[136] Smith was the founder and CEO of the International Development and Management Group, a consulting firm based in Alexandria, VA. Formerly a Nixon White House staffer, he had been appointed to various national advisory councils by President Reagan. His firm specialised in building 'strategic partnerships' between industry and government.

[137] Kenneth Smith, 'Memorandum for David Demarest: Desert Storm Heroes as Community Service Leaders', 15 March 1991, folder 07637-09, White House Office of National Service, GBPL.

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Unlike previous homecomings, in which the public and government officials worried about how to reintegrate veterans back into society and what sort of supports they would need, the Gulf War veterans would instead be the ones to provide support and inspiration to broader American society.

The initial celebrations, such as an event in Texas Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys, that attracted 30,000 revellers, were often pro-troop rallies that had been scheduled before the end of hostilities and then turned into improvised victory parties, and thus emphasised flag-waving and patriotism rather than military hardware. For later homecomings, martial pageantry formed a prominent part of the festivities, even in locations as small as Hueytown, Alabama (population: 15,000). The mayor of Hueytown sent the White House an invitation to the 18 May celebration, describing a military display including 'helicopters, tanks, artillery' and a day of festivities that would open with an 'Army Special Forces flyover, followed by two squads of troops rappelling from hovering helicopters onto field in full battle dress to engage in mock battle, complete with blank ammo'.[138] While not everyone opted for a full-scale mock combat demonstration, almost every city across the United States put on some sort of homecoming celebration. The major cities and communities adjacent to large military bases attracted the most direct military involvement, and virtually all of them hosted some sort of large-scale parade featuring several thousand troops.

Writing in 1987, the sociologist Michael Mann pointedly described the modern military, which relies on advanced technology and a smaller, professional armed force, as lending itself to 'spectator sport militarism', in which the general population mobilised for war 'not as players but as spectators'.[139] The events organised by large American cities after the Gulf War affirmed this profound shift. In New York City, Mayor David Dinkins planned a 'Mother of All Parades' – a traditional tickertape parade up Broadway on 10 June. Such events – where Wall Street workers threw tickertape (or, in later years, computer paper sheets) out of office windows onto returning heroes – had been in recent years reserved for sports teams, such as the New York Mets when they won the World Series in 1969 and 1986. This one would attract between 1 million and 4.7 million spectators.[140] Five thousand

[138] Richard Shelby, 'A Patriot's Day Celebration in Hueytown, Alabama', 7 May 1991, document 208848, ME002 Messages (Sent to Groups/Organizations), Subject File – General, WHORM files, GBPL.

[139] Michael Mann, 'The Roots and Contradictions of Modern Militarism', *New Left Review* 162 (March–April 1987): 35–50, 48.

[140] Robert D. McFadden, 'New York Salutes in a Ticker-Tape Blizzard, New York Honors the Troops', *New York Times*, 11 June 1991, A1.

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Figure 1.2 A soldier waves an American flag during a ticker tape parade in New York City to welcome troops home from the Persian Gulf, June 1991

soldiers, led by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Generals Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf, kicked off the start of a 24,000-strong procession featuring various veterans' organisations, diverse community groups and bands (Figure 1.2).[141]

While New York City may have attracted the most spectators, Washington, DC's National Victory Celebration displayed by far the most military hardware. The parade organisers, the 'Desert Storm Homecoming Foundation', consisted of the three major veterans' organisations: the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion and Disabled American Veterans. They initially scheduled the parade for 4 July but moved it to 8 June, ostensibly because Congress would still be in session then, but, in reality, to upstage New York's parade.[142] General Schwarzkopf led 8,800 troops on their march through DC, and then joined President Bush on the reviewing stand. A twelve-minute-long flyby of over eighty

[141] Michael Specter and Laurie Goodstein, 'Millions Honor Gulf Vets at Parade in New York', *Washington Post*, 11 June 1991, A1.

[142] Leigh Ann Metzger, 'Memorandum for the President: Meeting with Desert Storm Homecoming Foundation', 18 April 1991, folder 12918 Iraq [1991] [4], Alphabetical Subject Files, Marlin Fitzwater Files, White House Press Office, GBPL.

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aircraft, led by a lone F-117 stealth fighter, an icon of the war, capped off the event, which also included thirty-one heavy military vehicles, among them the M1A1 Abrams main battle tank and the Patriot missile system.[143] Major General William Streeter, Commanding General of the Military District of Washington, provided commentary on both the troop formations and various weapons and vehicles for C-SPAN, while *CBS News* correspondent Eric Engsberg reported that there was 'so much military hardware moving, at times it seemed as if Washington was under attack'.[144] Seven blocks of the National Mall were also dedicated to what bemused reporters called a 'military petting zoo' of weaponry and equipment. One exhibit tent contained every type of bomb and missile used in the war, while others allowed visitors to try on a gas mask or practice laying a howitzer on the Washington Monument.

Indeed, such was the scale and bulk of the hardware on display that National Park Service personnel worried about tanks tearing up the Mall and damaging the sprinkler system underneath. Some asked questions about whether the bridges over the Potomac, designed for civilian traffic, could bear the weight of the seventy-tonne Abrams tanks. The military put in place traffic regulations allowing only one tank to cross the bridge at a time, keeping to under thirty miles per hour and at least two feet away from the curb on either side. Electric and phone companies worried about damage to their cables and several streetlights had to be removed so that the Patriot Missile Launcher vehicle could get through. Designing a parade route that did not cross any of Washington, DC's metro tunnels and stations, as engineers feared they might collapse under the weight of the vehicles, proved most difficult of all.[145]

The eventual parade route stretched just over two and a half miles long, but the event attracted only around 200,000 spectators, far below the one million that organisers had hoped for. The crowd featured a heavy contingent of federal employees and defence contractors, a group that one reporter observed was 'tightly connected to the military and the bureaucracy, closer than most of the country to weapons and the workaday of war'.[146] Along with the 'military petting zoo' on the Mall and the

[143] 'Bush Unfurls Desert Storm Day of Pride Gulf War Veterans Get Extravaganza', *Baltimore Sun*, 9 June 1991, 1A.

[144] 'National Victory Celebration Parade', C-SPAN, 8 June 1991, www.c-span.org/video/?18328-1/national-victory-celebration-parade (accessed 25 November 2018); Caroline Linton, 'How CBS News Reported the Last National Military Parade in 1991', *CBS News*, 7 February 2018, www.cbsnews.com/news/how-cbs-news-reported-the-last-national-military-parade-in-1991/ (accessed 25 November 2018).

[145] Mary Jordan, 'D.C. Parade Plans Roar into Focus', *Washington Post*, 16 May 1991, A1.

[146] Associated Press, '200,000 View War Victory Parade', *Pittsburgh Press*, 9 June 1991, A1.

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hardware-heavy parade and flyby, the Pentagon chose to use the week following the parade to promote its budget priorities. It promoted an 'Air Force Stealth Week' at nearby Andrews Air Force Base where reporters could visit the base and see a selection of stealth aircraft, including a prototype of the F-22 Raptor, the F-117 Nighthawk and the B-2 Spirit. Not coincidentally, Congress had recently threatened to cancel the B-2's building programme.[147] For the Pentagon, then, the National Victory Celebration was a chance not just to welcome home the 'half million heroes' their Public Affairs Office invoked in discussions with the White House, but also to aggressively promote budget priorities in the post–Cold War spending drawdown.

While the White House wanted to emphasise the importance of volunteers and the military used the parades as an occasion to make the case for maintaining spending on equipment, the celebrations also served as an opportunity to emphasise their story of post-Vietnam redemption and to implore the American people to extend gratitude not just to the contemporary armed forces but to veterans of all American wars. The commemorative pamphlet produced for Washington, DC's National Victory Celebration made this clear when it included an account from a Gulf War veteran of the welcome he received from a wheelchair-bound Vietnam veteran. The Desert Storm veteran hoped and prayed that 'our welcome home will in some small way make up for the one he and his brother never got'.[148]

Vietnam veterans played prominent roles in the planning and execution of many of the parades. During the Philadelphia celebrations, for example, two Vietnam veterans symbolically passed a US flag and a POW-MIA flag to two Gulf veterans.[149] Other parades also featured marching Vietnam veterans: in Chicago, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Edwin Derwinksi, both veterans, served as grand marshals, and a group of 350 Vietnam veterans received loud cheers as they marched.[150] In Hollywood,

[147] Fred Kaplan, 'Air Force Opens up to Save Its Stealth Capitol Hill Pitch Plays on Gulf War Parades', *Boston Globe*, 11 June 1991, 3.

[148] 'Desert Storm: A Commemorative Salute' (Grabhorn Studio Inc, 8 June 1991), folder 08809-02 Miscellaneous Files: Desert Storm [2], White House Office of National Service, GBPL.

[149] The POW-MIA flag is the symbol of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. Weightman Public Relations, 'Press Release: Vietnam Veterans Salute Persian Gulf Veterans in an Emotional Independence Day in Philadelphia', 19 June 1991, folder 04733-005 'Desert Storm: Events', Sig Rogich Files, White House Office of Public Events and Initiatives, GBPL.

[150] 'Chicagoans Line Up 15 Rows Deep for Parade Honoring Gulf Veterans', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 May 1991, 18; Edward Walsh and Lauren Ina, 'Chicago Cheers Gulf Vets; Parade Also Salutes Vietnam Soldiers', *Washington Post*, 11 May 1991, A3.

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none other than General William Westmoreland, the former commander of US forces in Vietnam, led a large contingent of Vietnam veterans. Westmoreland told reporters that 'any time I can be with the troops it's an exhilarating experience … there's lots of camaraderie'. He also noted that 'I don't think we've ever seen a time in history when the country is so elated and so happy about the great success of a war'.[151] Westmoreland received loud cheers from Vietnam veterans when he appeared on parade, even as some veteran groups refused to participate because of his presence.[152]

Some veterans of earlier wars found the adulation for Gulf War veterans harder to stomach. In Orange County, California, Vietnam veteran Dan Baldwin spoke about the Desert Storm veterans to reporters as he attended a homecoming parade: 'These guys did a hell of a fine job over there … I'm proud of them, but there's a bit of jealousy.' Baldwin saw a stark difference between the two wars: 'here they are getting a parade, well-deserved as it is, for eight months of work and 100 hours of war. I was in Vietnam for 13 months, wounded twice. There was nothing for us. But it's a different society today.'[153] Writing to the *Louisville Courier-Journal* on Veterans Day and looking back at the summer of celebratory homecomings, World War II veteran Frank O'Rourke complained about both the adulation for the Gulf War veterans and the grievances of Vietnam veterans. O'Rourke pointed out that the vast majority of veterans did not actually see combat and that the 'war for them will be remembered as an experience from their youth that they can reminisce about the way college students do about a big football game'.[154] Further, there was something off-putting about these parades, where 'soldiers looked the way civilians thought victorious soldiers should look – clean shaven, pressed uniforms, shiny boots, bands playing, and flags flying', more like a championship-winning football or baseball team.

In contrast, O'Rourke recalled his own experience, when he, like most experienced combat veterans, opted to leave the 82nd Airborne Division early rather than delay his discharge to take part in the homecoming parade. When he attended the division's 1946 parade down Fifth Avenue in New York City as a civilian onlooker, he saw a division full of fresh recruits that the Army had rushed in to replace the departed veterans.

[151] Associated Press, 'Tinseltown Gives Gulf Vets Huge Parade', *Northwest Florida Daily News*, 20 May 1991.

[152] Harris and Meyer, 'Gulf Troops Welcomed with Hollywood Flair Parade'; Rosenberg, 'A Parade of TV Praise for Gulf Warriors, War'.

[153] Gary A. Warner, 'Hero's Welcome Far Cry from Vietnam', *Orange County Register*, 19 May 1991, A14.

[154] Frank J. O'Rourke, 'Parade of Veterans', *The Courier-Journal*, 11 November 1991, 6.

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O'Rourke wished instead for a less sanitised parade, one that featured his unit when they came out of the Battle of the Bulge: 'just columns of guys straggling down Fifth Avenue, shuffling along on frostbitten feet, with hand grenades tucked in the webbing of their harnesses, M-1s slung over their shoulders, bearded faces, gaunt eyes, hollow eyes, fatigued, exhausted physically and emotionally'.[155] Instead, he saw the Gulf War homecomings as a continuation of a deception about the nature of war.

Generally, though, the wave of celebrations across the country drowned out perspectives such as O'Rourke's. Given the ubiquity and intensity of these celebrations, it is clear that they represented widespread popular sentiment. Perhaps the most striking demonstration of the ways in which Americans embraced veterans in 1991 took place at Bangor International Airport, Maine. Bangor became a major transit point for troops returning from the Middle East. Throughout the spring and summer of 1991, approximately 220 flights landed there, containing some 60,000 veterans of Operation Desert Storm. Local civic groups organised a roster of greeters so that every flight, whether it landed in the middle of the night or during the working day, would be met with an enthusiastic crowd of locals offering coffee, small gifts, free phone calls, embraces and handshakes.[156] The mood at the airport was generally euphoric: greeters pinned yellow ribbons on the veterans, and soldiers autographed children's commemorative Desert Storm T-shirts. On one of the initial flights, on 8 March, Sergeant Kevin Tillman grabbed a saxophone and played a rendition of the 'Star-Spangled Banner' from the steps of the plane to a cheering crowd.[157]

The organisers made the point that their greeting party had 'nary a politician or bureaucrat in its ranks'.[158] One greeter claimed that 'we as a nation can't afford to repeat the mistakes we made with the troops in Vietnam. It's time to welcome home a new generation of veterans'.[159] Similarly, local journalist Brian Swartz argued that the Bangor homecomings 'had flipped the page historically by welcoming home our veterans, not by castigating them for obeying their civilian superiors' orders and policies' and that the greeters honoured 'them for what they

[155] O'Rourke.

[156] Brian Swartz, *An American Homecoming* (Bangor, ME: Bangor Pub Co, 1996); Lynne Junkins Cole, *Goodbye Desert Storm, Hello Bangor, Maine: Experience Welcoming the Troops through the Eyes of the Greeters* (Hampden, ME: Lynne Cole Pub, 1991).

[157] '20 Years Later, Sax-Playing Soldier Helps John Bapst Band Send off Troops', *Bangor Daily News*, 19 October 2011, https://bangordailynews.com/2011/10/19/news/bangor/20-years-later-sax-playing-soldier-helps-john-bapst-band-send-off-troops/ (accessed 19 December 2018)

[158] Swartz, *An American Homecoming*, 2.

[159] Swartz, 15.

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were: the best of the best, American men and women who had gone into harm's way for the rest of us'.[160] Some members of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars even made a point of chasing any service members embarrassed by the welcome out from the ramp and into the waiting arms of the crowd 'where they belonged'.[161] Whether they wanted it or not, Gulf War veterans would receive a loud and public welcome home in Bangor. So extensive were the homecoming celebrations, which continued until September 1991, that the city held a special ceremony to thank the greeters in August 1991. At that ceremony, Lieutenant General John Yeosock, who had commanded the US 3rd Army in the Gulf, told the crowd that, much as he had been heartened by the groundswell of public support marked by the volume of care packages and mail sent to the troops, the scale of the phenomenon had not occurred to him until he landed in Bangor. But now he had no doubt that the greeters 'manifested the totality of what it was that this great nation of ours came to believe, feel, understand and do'.[162]

1.5 The Lessons of Desert Storm

In June 1991, officers within the Army Staff's think tank, the Chief's Analysis and Initiatives Group (CAIG), began circulating memos that offered broad reflections on what had transpired over the past few months. These remarkably candid musings offer valuable insights as to how some of the Army's most promising mid-ranking officers were processing the events of the war and its aftermath. One staff officer talked about his shock at being handed an anti-war pamphlet in the foyer of his church before Sunday Mass and hearing his deacon preach against the military build-up in the Gulf. He pointed out that in the run-up to war, there 'was reason to be concerned that the American public would remain seriously divided about going to war' and that 'the administration and the military both found themselves not only watching the polls to find out what the prevailing sentiment was, but carefully considering how and when to make various statements and policy moves to elicit the most favourable public impression'.[163] The outpouring of support for the troops seen during both Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm was therefore not a foregone conclusion. As the build-up to

[160] Swartz, v.
[161] Swartz, 26.
[162] Swartz, 227.
[163] Jim Narel, 'Protests, Parades and Polarization', June 1991, Carl E. Vuono Papers: Box 41, Folder 2, Issues Book [part 2 of 2], June 1991, AHEC.

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war continued and media coverage paid attention to the stories of troops deployed to Saudi Arabia, the anti-war pamphlets disappeared from the church and the homilies became more balanced, but the incident reminded the officer that public support could not be taken for granted.

Another staffer, Colonel Robert Killebrew, also focused on the question of public support, noting just how much of that support focused on the figure of the soldier. Marvelling at the 'public reaction to Desert Shield', he claimed that 'Americans didn't react as if the soldiers over there were mercenaries; the troops were "our boys and girls," exactly as if they had been draftees'. He asked: 'with the draft dead as a dodo for nearly twenty years, why did the public react that way?'[164] The answer was that the All-Volunteer Force was a unique institution in American history; it was qualitatively different from the old 'Regular Army' of the 1930s that had been largely cut off from the American public, or the draftee armies of the world wars and Cold War and was instead 'a different kind of volunteer Army'. Killebrew argued that:

> The citizen-soldier is alive and well in the ranks, but the basis for entering service has changed. What has passed is that coercion is no longer used to bring the citizen to the ranks. … today's high-quality soldier is closer (not the same, but closer) to the tradition of the Greeks (or the volunteers on both sides of the American civil war) who saw voluntary service as a condition of citizenship than did his uncle who was drafted, or his grandfather who was an old-time Regular.[165]

This provided 'a new basis for military service in this democracy … one that affects how the nation perceives *and uses* its Army over the long haul'. He noted that 'although soldiering is still basically a blue-collar profession, the world has changed, and the Army has thankfully changed along with it'. A professional army required discipline and toughness, but armies in democracies, 'islands of authoritarianism in a liberal sea', could only do this via a focus on service to the nation and on the tough, realistic training that had marked the organisation's ascent out of the nadir of the 'Hollow Army' days. Killebrew believed that volunteer recruits offered 'themselves freely to their country' because they wanted that tough training, and that the Army had to avoid losing that focus and giving into the temptation of creating 'a very nice Army … that spends more time looking after itself and avoiding bureaucratic snarls than doing the messy and hard stuff out in the rain that makes tough,

[164] Robert Killebrew, 'Thought Piece: Continuity and Change', June 1991, Carl E. Vuono Papers: Box 41, Folder 2, Issues Book [part 2 of 2], June 1991, AHEC.
[165] Killebrew.

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cocky soldiers'. To maintain the unusual alchemy that sustained an All-Volunteer Army that was seen by the American public as representative of its ideals, Army leaders would need to build a force 'dedicated to winning, dedicated to the point that we are all first soldiers and only then transporters or radio repairmen, or colonels, for that matter'.[166] Paradoxically, only by embracing this warrior ethos could the true spirit of the citizen-soldier be preserved.

Some policymakers made the same point. While CAIG officers were penning their reflections on Operation Desert Storm, Representative Les Aspin (D-WI), then chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services, gave a speech to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. In it, he offered what he styled as not only his own views but those of his House committee as a whole. Much of Aspin's analysis followed along conventional lines. This included the claim that 'the men and women of the U.S. military today may be the best ever', his praise of the salutary effects of the Goldwater–Nichols Act, the 1986 legislation that reorganised the military chain of command and strengthened the role the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his assertion that military 'high technology was vindicated in Desert Storm'.[167]

In the last part of his analysis, though, he broke with the arguments that had appeared in the military's official accounts of the war and reflected on the role of the Military Reform movement. While much coverage of this movement had focused on debates over weapons systems, Aspin noted that 'their programme was people first, ideas second and weapons only third' and that their agenda focused on promoting warriors over managers, 'agile, unpredictable manoeuvre warfare', and unit cohesion, 'the fighting spirit that comes when men train and fight together, for each other'. For Aspin, Desert Storm had validated these ideas, but only by accident. Certainly, the military 'clearly had warriors in General Powell and General Schwarzkopf', and unit cohesion appeared to be strong, but this cohesion was never really tested, given the brevity of the war. He pointed to the failure of the COHORT system and noted that many military reformers still argued that Army units clearly lacked natural cohesion and 'stumbled into it more by chance than by conscious adaptation'. If cohesion existed, it was because units spent six months together in the desert waiting for the war to start, so 'unit cohesion was developed on the scene rather than developed through Army policy'. In Aspin's mind,

[166] Killebrew.
[167] Les Aspin, 'Desert One to Desert Storm: Making Ready for Victory: Speech to Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.', 20 June 1991, Gordon R. Sullivan Papers: Box 88, Folder 9, Memorandum [part 1 of 2], July 1991, AHEC.

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'the jury was still out' on whether the Pentagon would accept this key part of the Military Reform movement's agenda.[168] In emphasising questions of cohesion and the warrior spirit, Aspin was hinting that, despite all of euphoria brought about by the swift victory in the Gulf, some of the cultural problems highlighted by dissident officers in the late 1980s had not gone away.

1.6 Conclusion

Aspin's brief reflections on cohesion aside, the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm was about celebration. 'Lessons learned' studies would later go into more detail about what had worked well and what hadn't, but the overwhelming public message was that the military had reached new heights of competence and even brilliance. For Army leaders, Desert Storm and its celebratory aftermath confirmed that the All-Volunteer Force had been a success and that its bonds with the American people had been thoroughly rebuilt. Part of the message of the homecoming parades was that never again would these bonds be allowed to break. In reflecting on the meaning of these events, Army leaders felt that their duty was to ensure that any post–Cold War drawdown preserved the essentials of the post-Vietnam reforms and embraced the things that had made the Gulf War go so well for the United States. This meant that any fundamental rethinking of the Army's roles, missions or culture would be out of the question, even in a world without the Cold War.

For the broader public, the military's post-Vietnam reforms and its triumph in the Persian Gulf elevated the figure of the soldier as representative of all that was best about the United States. The jubilation of the summer of 1991 would not last, but this heroic image would, in large part, endure, even as the actual experience of military service was the preserve of fewer and fewer Americans. Since the soldier being idealised was a volunteer professional, not a draftee, political rhetoric emphasised that soldiers embodied American values to conform to the 'citizen-soldier' ideal. Even if the military's makeup did not map precisely onto the demographic contours of the country, soldiers could act as symbols for the nation. If soldiers were supposed to be paragons of American ideals, then it was all the more important for different political groups to claim soldiers as their own, and to ensure that the values of the military were indeed in keeping with those of broader society. This situation also made it imperative for the broad swathes of American society

[168] Aspin.

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that had been excluded from the possibility of full military service to demand the right to don the uniform so that they could access all the symbolic and material benefits that came with it. The tensions between a military leadership that was determined to preserve what it saw as a hard-won restoration and the social forces both within the ranks of the Army and in broader society who sought to make the institution a more equitable one would soon spill over into a dispute that would take some of the gloss off the successes of Desert Storm.

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