

Government 1521  
Bureaucratic Politics:  
Government, Military,  
Social and Economic Organizations

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Lecture 08: World War I and Army Learning

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National Defense Act of 1916

- (1) Guard reassumes position as nation's first line behind regulars
- (2) Guard gives up autonomy, can be deployed overseas
- (3) Creation of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)

[Summary in Coffman, *The Regulars*, 199]

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WWI Basics for American  
Participation

- Beginning of war in 1914; U.S. entry in April 1918; small army in U.S.
  - U.S.: 98,000
  - German: 620,000 [16%]
  - French: 560,000 [18%]
  - GB: 254,500 [38%]
  - Swiss: 140,000 [~70%]
- Conscription in May 1918. American forces organized under American Expeditionary Forces [AEF]; eventually 1.5M in arms.

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### Organizational Problems

(1) Shortage of officers; needed 200,000, started with 5,791.

Solution: accelerate training and promotions.

“The wartime expansion brought about overwhelming pressure on the regular officer corps. Promotion, which was very slow and deliberate in peacetime, advanced by leaps and bounds to keep up with the rapidly expanding force.” [Coffman, 208]

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### Organizational Problems

(2) Breakdown of formalization

“Originally the Army intended to segregate the regulars, the National Guard, and the National Army (the draftees). . . .Wartime volunteers soon came to outnumber peacetime veterans in the regular and guard units, so that by 1918 there was little difference in the experience level in any of these divisions. In August of that year the Army chief of staff ordered the elimination of those distinctions.” [Coffman, 205]

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### Organizational Innovations

(1) Army Air Service/Signal Corps [Maj. Billy Mitchell]

(2) Idea of peacetime army as “an educational institution”; Secretary of War Newton D. Baker [1919]

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## Reform Plans; ND Act of 1920

1. Baker-March standing army of 500,000 and War Dept control of supply. [1<sup>st</sup> part adopted somewhat, 2<sup>nd</sup> part rejected.]
2. Integration of Army w/ War Department
3. Tank Corps and Motor Transport Corps abolished.
4. 3 new permanent branches of War Dept: (a) Air Service, (b) Chemical Warfare Service, (c) Finance Department

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## Postwar “Lessons”

1923: *Field Service Regulations* reissued. [Coffman, 263]. Still central role for infantry.

Rise of Infantry School at Fort Benning

Artillery: Increased emphasis on mobility

Decline of traditional cavalry, rise of tanks and mobile heavy gun units (e.g., howitzers).

In face of budget cuts (1920s isolationism, 1930s depression), schools become organizational continuity of Army. [Coffman, 289]

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## Standard Operating Procedures in the War Effort: Weberian Administration by Files?

The principles enunciated in Bulletin No. 30 May 23, 1918; Memorandum for Corps and Division Commanders, August 5, 1918, and Notes on Recent Operations, No. 1, August 7, 1918, are not yet receiving due application. Attack formations of platoons, companies and battalions are everywhere too dense and follow too rigidly the illustrations contained in the *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. Waves are too close together; individuals therein have too little interval. Lines are frequently seen with the men almost elbow to elbow, and seldom with intervals of greater than two or three paces. Columns, when used, are too long; in first line companies should rarely have a greater depth than ten files. All formations are habitually lacking in elasticity; there is almost never any attempt to maneuver, that is, to throw supports and reserves to the flanks for envelopment. Scouts, if used, are frequently only a few yards in front of the leading waves, where the only purpose they can serve is to blanket or to receive the fire of the men behind them.

- AEF Document No. 1348, Combat Instructions GHQ, AEF, September 5, 1918, 3-5 [National Archives, RG 120]

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### Standard Operating Procedures in AEF Operations

The essential difference between open and trench warfare, so far as effect upon formations is concerned, is characterized by the presence or absence of the rolling barrage ahead of the infantry. ... Trench warfare is marked by uniform formations, the regulation of space and time by higher command down to the smallest details, absence of scouts preceding the first wave, fixed distances and intervals between units and individuals, voluminous orders, careful rehearsal, little initiative upon the part of the individual soldier. Open warfare is marked by scouts who precede the first wave, irregularity of formations, comparatively little regulation of space and time by the higher command, the greatest possible use of the infantry's own fire power to enable it to get forward, variable distances between units and individuals, use of every form of cover and accident of the group during the advance, brief orders, and the greatest possible use of individual initiative by all troops engaged in the action.

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### Standard Operating Procedures in AEF Operations

4. *Scouts.* When closely following a moving barrage, there is seldom room for scouts. When the barrage has been lost or does not exist, as is ordinarily the case in the open field, scouts should precede the first line companies. ... One moment they may be 500 meters ahead of their platoons, a few minutes later they may be absorbed therein. Their purpose is to compel the enemy machine guns to open fire and so disclose their location or be run over by the scouts. When the hostile machine guns have been located, the scouts should at once open fire.

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### Standard Operating Procedures in AEF Operations

5. *Platoons.* ... As soon as the scouts have located the machine gun, the rifle grenadiers assist the advance of everyone by heavy fire from suitable positions behind the first line. The ability of the platoon leader is displayed by prompt reconnaissance of his men on the ground, by a rapid estimate of what it offers toward facilitating the advance of his men, and by immediate decision upon a simple plan for the use of his combined weapons and of the ground to enable him to close with the enemy. His plan should habitually include pinning the enemy to the ground by frontal and flanking fire, under cover of which some portions of the platoon, usually those sent against the hostile flanks, can close by short rushes with the enemy. ... A platoon should be itself be able to capture one, or even a pair, of hostile machine guns.

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## The Issue of a Separate American Force

Traditional Account (Pershing, Coffman): Highly effective and influential.

Revisionist Account (Trask): War would have ended sooner had American mobilized under direction of Allies.

More general problem: When to join military operations with allies and when (and how much) to fight separately? An organizational problem and a political issue.

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## Post-WWI Innovations

S.P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War*, 24: “Yet there are so many examples of military organizations that have been unable, for whatever reasons, to learn from wartime experience that we are forced to be cautious in assuming that innovation during wartime is a straightforward matter of observing what works and does not work in combat.”

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## Post-WWI Innovations

Amphibious warfare, 1905-1940; U.S. Marine Corps

Carrier aviation, 1918-1943; Navy

Guided missiles, 1918-1956; USAF

Electronics warfare, 1921-1945

Ordnance, 1918-1945

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