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The Remarkable John Bigelow, Jr.: An Examination of Professionalism in the United States Army, 1877-91

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THE REMARKABLE JOHN BIGELOW, JR.: AN EXAMINATION OF PROFESSIONALISM
IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY, 1877-91

by
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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University
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Approved by:

Carl Boyd (Director)
ABSTRACT

THE REMARKABLE JOHN BIGELOW, JR.: AN EXAMINATION OF PROFESSIONALISM IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY, 1877-91

Howard K. Hansen, Jr.
Old Dominion University, 1986
Director: Dr. Carl Boyd

This thesis describes the military career of John Bigelow, Jr., with emphasis on the professional development of United States Army officers. It questions the role Bigelow played in the formation of army professionalism, a sense of corporate responsibility to exercise military expertise correctly. A focus on Bigelow to delineate professionalism in the army provides a fresh perspective of a pivotal period in American military history in the aftermath of the Civil War and before the United States started to build a colonial empire. Bigelow articulated a comprehensive concept of total war as he perceived its development in the United States. He developed a doctrine of total war against civilian populations based principally on the Civil War campaigns of William Tecumseh Sherman.

This study challenges many assumptions about the development of a military ethos within the army after the Civil War. Specifically, many military historians suggest that the U.S. Army's isolation on the frontier, away from civilian society, fostered the professionalism that flourished during the period. A study of Bigelow's diaries, papers, correspondence, and publications suggests instead that a close association with civilians, rather than isolation, may have been the catalyst for the development of military professionalism.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons and institutions have aided me in the preparation of this thesis. I would particularly like to thank Professor Carl Boyd who introduced me to Bigelow during a series of studies in military history and who gave generously of his time and talent. His patience and understanding have been much appreciated. The thoughtful and kind personnel in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division at the New York Public Library were very helpful, as were the many people who willingly assisted me at the Library of Congress. Archivists at the United States Military Academy Library were notably encouraging and helpful. I acknowledge also a debt to Russell F. Weigley from whose study of The History of the United States Army I gleaned the title of this thesis. Also, I want to thank my wife, Rosann, without whose support and encouragement this paper could not have been written. Finally, my heartfelt gratitude to my three sons who showed great patience with my frequent absences during the research and writing of this study.
PREFACE

John Bigelow, Jr., was a soldier and historian. He toiled for over thirty years as an army officer in the Tenth and Ninth Regiments, United States Cavalry, rising slowly in rank to Lieutenant Colonel. He served on the western frontier in the waning days of the army's military operations against the Indians, and was cited for gallantry at the Battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War.

He authored important historical works that helped shape the future of the army: reflective monographs of the Franco-Prussian War battles of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte in 1884; a significant study of The Principles of Strategy published in 1891 and revised in 1894; and an autobiographical critique of the state of the army, Reminiscences of the Santiago Campaign, in 1899. During the Geronimo campaign near the close of the Indian wars, his published journals did much to publicize the unheralded exploits and hardships of the frontier army. His most lasting historical contribution was a detailed examination of The Campaign of Chancellorsville published in 1910.

This study of the career of Bigelow investigates his role in the evolution of American military thought, and determines his significance to the professional development of the army. Army professionalism should be viewed as a profound sense of corporate responsibility to exercise military expertise correctly. Such a
military professionalism recognizes a social responsibility to provide an adequate national defense.

Bigelow is generally given scant attention in histories of the United States Army. He has no entry in the authoritative 1984 edition of the Dictionary of American Military Biography. Although his military career from 1873 to 1919 spanned a period of great military intellectual development and thought, he is frequently overshadowed by his contemporaries Emory Upton, Arthur L. Wagner, and Eben Swift. These eminent soldiers staffed the military schools that were instituted during the time Bigelow served in the frontier army. They ably advanced army professionalism as pioneer military educators. Bigelow is unique in that his musing on strategy generally took root in the frontier army away from the direct influence of the renaissance in the military schools. Overlooked as a progenitor of army professionalism, Bigelow should be viewed as one of its leading proponents.

What motivated Bigelow? Many military historians suggest that the U.S. Army's isolation on the frontier, away from civilian society, fostered the professionalism that flourished during the latter portion of the nineteenth century; a concentration on Bigelow permits a re-evaluation of this terse thesis. Bigelow's career suggests instead that a close association with civilians, rather than isolation, may have been the catalyst for the military professionalism that prevailed during the period.

Most importantly, Bigelow articulated a comprehensive concept of total war as he perceived its development in the United States. He
codified total war as a strategic principle. Bigelow's idea of total war made an enemy's population a legitimate target of military action. He sought to redirect American military strategy based on principles rooted in practical American experience in war. In many respects he simply tried to compile a body of strategic principles that the army had already been implementing in practice. He articulated a doctrine of total war based principally on the Civil War campaigns of William Tecumseh Sherman. Clearly, Bigelow represents a very valuable case study that should balance an appreciation of soldierly professionalism in the classroom, as illustrated mainly by Wagner and Swift, with that which developed in the field with the frontier army.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF

JOHN BIGELOW, JR.

Overview

During the Gilded Age of American history, when Mark Twain satirized the growing plutocracy within the United States, John Bigelow, Jr., appeared to be an enigma. The son of the elder John Bigelow, an associate of William Cullen Bryant on the New York Evening Post and later President Abraham Lincoln's consul to France during the Civil War, he eschewed the life of a scion of a wealthy patriarch, opted for a rugged career in the Regular Army, and entered the United States Military Academy at West Point on July 1, 1873.\(^1\)

Bigelow was a remarkable army officer who had an appreciable effect on American military thought. His published journals and reminiscences offer startling commentary on the army, and his contributions to professional military periodicals stimulated his fellow officers. In 1891 he published The Principles of Strategy, a watershed book that changed the way American army officers viewed military history. American military policy, strategy, and tactics had been measured based on European examples; Bigelow examined the art of

war in light of American experience. He dispelled the persistent notion that the professional study of United States military operations was necessarily inferior to the study of European campaigns. Most importantly, Bigelow articulated a comprehensive concept of total war as he perceived its development in the United States. He discarded the notion that the only legitimate target of war was the enemy's military forces; he proposed that the enemy's civilian population was also a particularly remunerative military objective.

In 1910 he published a seminal treatise on The Campaign of Chancellorsville: A Strategic and Tactical Study. Critical bibliographies laud it as a classic; several decades after its publication it was cited as "a masterful study -- one of the very finest ever written on an American campaign."² A contemporary reviewer, Eben Swift, Fifth United States Cavalry, one of the progenitors of army professionalism and an architect of the officer education program, labeled it "a monumental work . . . at times approaching brilliancy."³ It is still extolled as "the model campaign study of the Civil War."⁴


⁴Frank E. Vandiver, Forward to Richmond Redeemed: The Siege
Purpose of the Study

This study examines the diaries, correspondence, and early military writings of John Bigelow, Jr., for the purpose of assessing his role in the evolution of American military thought and determining his significance to the professional development of the army. Bigelow's military career, replete with adventure, boredom, sacrifice, and heroism, also offers a helpful window into the larger history of the army in 1877-91. Bigelow is indeed an important figure and a concentration on his significance to the army near the turn of the century is a fruitful intellectual endeavor. Robert M. Utley, in an insightful, short pamphlet prepared for the National Park Service, *Indian, Soldier, and Settler: Experiences in the Struggle for the American West*, suggests that one way to achieve a useful perspective of the Indian army is to examine it through the eyes of one individual. Utley indicates that historical balance will not be realized through a study of the multitude of generals who charted the Indian Wars on their maps but rather in the experiences of the officers who toiled in the field, often in futile pursuit of hostile Indians.5

A biography of Bigelow is useful but this study hopes also to question preconceptions about the Indian-fighting army. A number of military historians and sociologists have suggested that the army was

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5Robert M. Utley, *Indian, Soldier, and Settler: Experiences in the Struggle for the American West* (St. Louis: Jefferson National

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isolated on the American western frontier during the latter portion of the nineteenth century. They contend that the army was physically and intellectually insulated from civilian society. Many military historians argue that this isolation fostered the professionalism that flourished in the army during the period. These scholars contend that isolation severed the army from the mainstream of civilian intellectualism and that introspection resulted from necessity and produced a unique, independent professionalism apart from developments in the civil sector. In his 1957 study of The Soldier and the State Samuel P. Huntington asserts that isolation was "a prerequisite to professionalism." An examination of the army career of John Bigelow, Jr., provides a fresh perspective of this pivotal period in American military history. That examination suggests that army professionalism was encouraged by a close association with civilian society rather than by isolation.

Précis of Bigelow's Career

U.S. Army officers were not isolated. Bigelow may have experienced loneliness and physical isolation in remote frontier outposts, but at no time did he feel intellectually separated from the mainstream of American thought. Nevertheless, the varied writings of

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Expansion Historical Association, 1979), p. 5.


Ibid., p. 38.

Bigelow's contemporary military officers support the notion of isolation. Captain Charles King, for example, was the author of a popular series of military stories that vividly depict army life during the Indian Wars; he highlights the loneliness and travails of service on the frontier. In an amusing exposition of the *Trials of a Staff Officer* published in 1891, he talks of "perilous days on the Indian frontier . . . ; of out-of-the-way sensations in out-of-the-way garrisons . . . ; [and of a] life more or less monotonous." Even Bigelow's own letters and journals frequently reinforce this misleading perspective. John M. Gates, in an intriguing article on "The Alleged Isolation of U.S. Army Officers in the Late 19th Century," states this perspective is a popular cliche generated by the officers' own "tendency toward the creation of a self-contained social world on their military posts." Gates discards the notion of isolation.

Although the concept of isolation may be a convenient generalization that helps explain the surge of professionalism that appeared throughout the army, a review of Bigelow's military incumbency belies such a thesis. Bigelow was indeed assigned to remote outposts on the frontier and overseas in the course of his extended military service, but he was by no means cut off from society; he was also afforded duties that placed him in close contact with civilians. It can be argued that Bigelow's professional musing

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on strategy, tactics, and the state of the army arose from his intimate interaction with civilian society rather than his isolation in secluded military garrisons. Even arduous assignments proffered surprising intellectual stimulation and interaction with local civilians. For example, at Fort Davis, Texas, during the army's pursuit of Geronimo in 1885, Bigelow not only honed his Spanish skills with local Mexican residents but delivered historical dissertations to nearby literary clubs and submitted articles to newspapers in major western cities.11 Less rugged duty as an assistant professor of French and an assistant instructor of tactics at West Point in 1880-84 afforded more frequent and traditional opportunities for association with civilians.12 Bigelow discussed tactics and history with visiting dignitaries, read papers before military history forums, and published commentary on current military events.13

11John Bigelow, Jr., to Jane Poultney Bigelow, 3 March 1885, The Papers of John Bigelow, box 96, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library (NYPL). Jane Poultney Bigelow was Bigelow's mother. See also The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 16 February 1885, John Bigelow, Jr., Papers, United States Military Academy (USMA) Library. In addition, Mrs. Orsemus B. Boyd, Cavalry Life in Tent and Field (New York: J. S. Tait, 1894; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 303 suggests that it was not unusual for officers stationed on the frontier to deliver lectures and addresses to local civic and church groups, or other social and club meetings.

12See Major General George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, at West Point, N.Y. from its Establishment, in 1802, to 1890: With the Early History of the United States Military Academy, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891), 3:285. During subsequent decades, various editors have added other volumes and supplements to Cullum's register; these will be cited separately, as appropriate, in the course of this study.

13See, for example, The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 27 May 1884 and 3 June 1884, USMA; also John Bigelow, Jr., Mars-la-Tour and
In 1887 Bigelow was posted to Washington, D.C., in the Adjutant General's Office, a position that Gates suggests provided "an astonishing array of opportunities for the integration of army officers into American civilian and political life."\(^{14}\) Indeed, for this very reason Bigelow considered his tour of duty in the nation's capital most profitable, at the time his "best ever in the army."\(^{15}\) It was certainly a tumultuous historical period for the War Department staff, and Bigelow found himself witness to the struggle for dominance between the Commanding General of the Army and the Adjutant General. Bigelow maintained close association with civilians during additional duty in charge of the Washington Recruiting Rendezvous in 1889.\(^{16}\)

Bigelow was assigned in 1894 as a professor of military science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he taught until the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. Gates says that such an assignment "provided some of the best opportunities for officers to involve themselves in civilian activities."\(^{17}\) It was not an atypical


\(^{15}\) John Bigelow, Jr., to Jane Poulteny Bigelow, 13 September 1887, box 96, NYPL.

\(^{16}\) Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, 3:285.

\(^{17}\) Gates, "The Alleged Isolation of U.S. Army Officers in the Late 19th Century," p. 35. The assignment to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the summer of 1894 led directly to Bigelow's publication of The Campaign of Chancellorsville. Bigelow indicates in the Preface to The Campaign of Chancellorsville: A Strategic and Tactical Study (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1910), p. xi, that he "selected the campaign of Chancellorsville as
assignment. Gates found that more than 30 percent of Bigelow's peers experienced similar duties in academe.\(^\text{18}\) After the war Bigelow was assigned for a short time as collector of customs at Sagua la Grande, Cuba.\(^\text{19}\) That too was a task that demanded intimate association with civilians. It was one of several assignments that demanded the employment of essentially civilian rather than military skills. Similarly, from 1899 until 1902, he also investigated Spanish war claims.

The latter portion of Bigelow's military career was also notable for the assignments that brought him into close contact with civilians, often in direct service to civil needs. In 1904, for example, Bigelow was acting superintendent of Yosemite National Park where he was charged with policing the nature reserve, establishing and enforcing the government's conservation policies, and preserving and protecting the park ecology.\(^\text{20}\) Later, from 1906 to 1910, he was

the theme for a course of lectures to my classes." He presented other outstanding campaign studies to his students as well, particularly a series on the campaign of Saratoga; see John Bigelow, Jr., "The Campaign of Saratoga, 1777: A Strategic Study," in The Colonel John Bigelow Papers, box 3, series 1, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.


on duty with the organized militia of Massachusetts; he was again appointed a professor of military science, this time at Rutgers college during 1917 to 1918; and during the First World War he returned to Washington, D.C., to close his career with an assignment to the historical section of the U.S. Army general staff.\textsuperscript{21}

It is important to highlight Bigelow's terminal military assignment with the historical section, for it underscores the historical slight imposed on Bigelow. Although modern historians generally ignore his influence on the army, Bigelow's contemporaries recognized his intellectual mastery of the realities of war. Army chief of staff Major General Leonard Wood took the initial steps to establish a historical section of the army general staff in January 1914. Wood knew that several foreign armies had maintained historical sections for a number of years and he queried American military attachés to report on their organization and functions. Although Wood contemplated forming an American historical section and Bigelow was considered for assignment, nothing was done until January 1918. Then the new army chief of staff, General Tasker H. Bliss, finally directed the establishment of a historical staff. He sought the best qualified officers to pioneer the effort, and Bigelow was one of five selected.\textsuperscript{22} They initially developed independent historical


\textsuperscript{22}Joseph Mills Hanson, "The Historical Section, Army War College," The Journal of the American Military History Foundation 1 (Summer 1937):70-71.
monographs. Later, however, the staff was eventually enlarged to eighty persons and began systematically to exploit the reports of the American Expeditionary Forces.

Proposition

Bigelow is a neglected historical figure. He should be considered in any thorough evaluation of the development of the United States Army. Only Russell F. Weigley, in his insightful survey of American military thought, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall*, assigns Bigelow a prominent position in the evolution of army professionalism.23 Few other serious writers on the subject acknowledge Bigelow. Timothy K. Nenninger, in a concise study of *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881-1918*, notes Bigelow only in a passing reference.24 His absence


from the Dictionary of American Military Biography, therefore, is not surprising; the editors have established narrow criteria for inclusion, and Bigelow is overlooked in favor of well-studied pioneer military educators, particularly his contemporaries, Emory Upton, Arthur L. Wagner, and Eben Swift. John G. Bourke, Charles King, and Charles B. Gatewood, other prominent contemporaries of Bigelow, are also excluded despite notable accomplishments that also fail to attract the attention of many scholars.

The Indian army was adept at small unit tactics, and the officer corps was concerned with the command and supply of widely scattered detachments. The schools of military application that were instituted during the period taught tactics exclusively, and the


principal instructors wrote useful textbooks that were used in the classroom and throughout the army.\textsuperscript{26} Strategy was ignored. Wagner was the most prominent instructor and tactician and his major examinations of \textit{The Service of Security and Information} in 1893 and \textit{Organization and Tactics} in 1895 were influential studies of European tactical developments. Bigelow was practically alone in considering the role of the army in a major war, and the only officer to address strategy instead of tactics.\textsuperscript{27}

Huntington indicates in his examination of \textit{The Soldier and the State} that his theory on the slow evolution of professionalism in the United States Army demands historical generalization and simplification to form a coherent model for study.\textsuperscript{28} Conversely, a narrow focus on Bigelow cannot be a comprehensive refutation of such a scholarly hypothesis. Nevertheless, it certainly questions the commonly accepted view of Huntington that isolation necessarily led to professionalism.

\textsuperscript{26}Williams, \textit{Americans at War}, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{27}Weigley, "American Strategy \textit{From Its Beginnings Through the First World War}," p. 439.

\textsuperscript{28}Huntington, \textit{The Soldier and the State}, p. vii.
CHAPTER II

ON THE FRONTIER: THE EARLY MILITARY CAREER OF JOHN BIGELOW, JR.

A West Point Student

Bigelow's choice of a military life was not as startling as it might at first seem. The army provided Bigelow a prestige commensurate with his upper class grooming. The corps of cadets at West Point, for example, was comprised principally of middle- and upper-class young men.¹ His father prized the trappings of a formal education, and the military academy offered tangible certification of scientific training. Further, Bigelow's upbringing attracted him to American army officers who were accustomed to national and international affairs.² Bigelow was also inspired by his father's zeal for national service and he tried unsuccessfully to secure President Ulysses S. Grant's appointment to West Point in 1870. Grant refused, citing a disposition only to appoint the sons of veterans. This inclination greatly irritated Bigelow's father who had served


Lincoln admirably during the war in the diplomatic service. He eventually secured a congressional appointment and was assigned in 1873 from New York, where his father was active in politics. His father was a renowned man of letters and young Bigelow had been the beneficiary of a liberal education prior to his appointment. He attended schools in Paris, while his father was consul, and in Bonn, Berlin, and Freiberg, Germany. Bigelow was an unlikely candidate for the unintellectual life that appeared to await him on the American western frontier; the army had been engaged in seemingly unending campaigns against the Indians since the end of the Civil War.

Why, then, was Bigelow attracted to the army? It is likely he was stimulated by an admiration of German military might in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71; as a student in Germany he was impressed by the newspaper accounts of Prussian victories, and interviewed many of the French prisoners interned near Berlin. He was appalled by the

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unpreparedness of France and sought reasons for the German victory. The French debacle similarly convinced his father that the United States should make "a knowledge of the arts of war a part of every young man's education." Bigelow decided to pursue this knowledge at West Point.

General William Tecumseh Sherman, Commanding General of the Army, was also affected by the success of the German military system and was attempting to invigorate the officer corps of the army through the professional study of war. Bigelow was attracted by the changes tendered by Sherman's leadership. He was surely apprised of army reforms since the family estate was in Highland Falls, near West Point. He was disappointed not to undertake his military study with Dennis Hart Mahan, who died in 1871.

Mahan had a pervasive impact on the army. He had been teaching at West Point since 1824. His manifesto on war, An Elementary Treatise on Advanced Guard, Out-Post, and Detachment Service of Troops, and the Manner of Posting and Handling Them in Presence of an Enemy, was published in 1847; it was more commonly known as Out-Post and was an official text at the academy for many years. It buttressed the principles of Antoine Henri de Jomini's

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6Clapp, Forgotten First Citizen, p. 268. Also, in a letter from John Bigelow to William Allen Butler, 14 November 1870, the elder Bigelow argues for compulsory military education based on his views and observations during the Franco-Prussian War; cited in Bigelow, Retrospections of an Active Life, 5:429-34.

Summary of the Art of War and served to delimit the way army officers defined warfare.\(^8\) The leadership of the army was nurtured on Mahan's lectures at West Point and persuaded by his book. He perpetuated a Jominian offensive policy aimed at the seizure of territory; Bigelow would come to believe it was a tenet that endured beyond its usefulness.\(^9\) Bigelow would devote much of his early career to an intellectual attempt to overturn this orientation.

When Bigelow entered the academy in the summer of 1873, West Point under Superintendent Thomas H. Ruger offered no curriculum to promote advanced military study.\(^10\) General Sherman's authority as commanding general did not extend to West Point, and the academy was not affected by his zeal to investigate the future of warfare.\(^11\) The program of instruction emphasized mathematics. Bigelow was disappointed. Nevertheless, the commandant of cadets during Bigelow's initial year at the academy was Emory Upton, who had authored the army's manual of infantry tactics and later compiled such studies as The Military Policy of the United States, and The Armies of Asia and

\(^8\)Edward S. Holden and W. L. Ostrander, "A Tentative List of Textbooks Used in the United States Military Academy at West Point from 1802 to 1902," in The Centennial of the United States Military Academy, 1:464.


Europe. Upton engaged the cadets in lively discussions of the art of war. Upton was the principal instructor of tactics until his departure during the summer in 1874, but his young assistants continued to assemble frequently at the Bigelow home in Highland Falls.12 Bigelow compensated for the academy's lack of a formal professional program for the study of war by debating with these instructors and his fellow cadets. Carl von Clausewitz's classic *On War* was first published in English in 1873, and it was likely a frequent topic at such gatherings.13

Much of Bigelow's education at West Point was marked by his own efforts to bolster his studies. For example, in a letter to his father in October 1876, young Bigelow indicated he was enjoying his classes in international law, particularly his study of historical examples. These examples, however, were provided by the elder Bigelow in copies of diplomatic correspondence he had provided to his son.14

U.S. Army Tenth Regiment of Cavalry

Bigelow persisted through four years of the military academy's constricting curriculum, but he did not excel in the rigid, mechanical approach to war. Indeed, the Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.,

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12See, for example, Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, p. 273.

13John Bigelow, Jr., to John Bigelow, 16 October 1876, The Papers of John Bigelow, box 96, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library (NYPL).
June, 1877 indicates that young Bigelow did very poorly in tactics; he managed to accumulate only 42.9 out of a possible 100 merit points for graduation. He preferred a historical study of war rather than West Point's abstract emphasis on weapons and tactics. Bigelow noted that West Point training instilled an excessive appreciation of science. He lamented the fact that Upton was considered ordinary, simply because he was not scientific. He graduated on June 14, 1877, but ranked only 46 in a class of 76 cadets. Nevertheless, he was a Cadet Lieutenant, a position normally garnered by students who excelled, particularly in tactics. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and joined the Tenth Regiment of Cavalry, Company B, on frontier duty at Fort Duncan, Texas. The Tenth Regiment was one of the army's two black cavalry regiments, organized under a congressional act of July 28, 1866.

15 Headquarters, U.S. Military Academy, Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., June, 1877, June 30, 1877, p. 29.

16 The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 25 May 1884, John Bigelow, Jr., Papers, United States Military Academy (USMA) Library.


18 Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy, p. 34.


The regiment was commanded by white officers, and Bigelow's assignment may have been due to his low ranking in class; many officers were particularly disagreeable to duty with the black regiments. Higher ranking graduates traditionally chose the Corps of Engineers and the artillery branch. Only 46 of the graduates were appointed to vacancies in the individual arms of service; the remaining 30 cadets were appointed as Additional Second Lieutenants to be promoted to vacancies as they occurred in the arms. The top three cadets were appointed to the Corps of Engineers, and twelve of the next thirteen graduates were posted to artillery positions. Cadet John J. Haden, who graduated tenth in the class, opted for the Eighth

C. Nalty (Willmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1977), p. 29. Bigelow is frequently cited as the principal historical biographer of the Tenth Cavalry, and John M. Carroll refers to him as such in the Introduction to Major E. L. N. Glass, The History of the Tenth Cavalry, 1866-1921 (Tucson: Acme Printing Co., 1921; reprint ed., Ft. Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1972), p. iii. Bigelow's historical overview of the regiment was originally prepared for the Journal of the Military Service Institution as part of a series of historical sketches of the U.S. Army. It was published in a shortened form in January 1892; the full manuscript was incorporated into the records of the regiment.


Regiment of Infantry, probably to secure an immediate vacancy in the active service. The cadets who graduated eleventh through sixteenth and selected the artillery were designated as Additional Second Lieutenants and awaited vacancies in the active force. Although the remainder of the class appears to have selected between the cavalry or infantry in no discernible pattern, few appear actively to have sought assignment to the black regiments. The black Ninth Cavalry acquired graduates who ranked between 40-54 in the class; the Tenth Cavalry received cadets who generally ranged in merit from 43-61, although Cadet Calvin C. Esterly, who ranked 27 went to the Tenth, as did Henry O. Flipper, who ranked 49 and was the only black graduate. The two black infantry regiments were assigned cadets who graduated between 44-58 in the class. Bigelow's father cautioned him to approach his assignment to a black unit without prejudice. A review of his private correspondence indicates young Bigelow was quite liberal in his attitude towards blacks, a progressive stance that belied his Victorian background. Bigelow's experience as a cadet with Flipper

23U.S., Department of War, General Orders No. 61, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C., June 27, 1877.

24Ibid.

25During Bigelow's tenure as a student at West Point he observed the academy's struggle to cope with the admission of black cadets. Flipper was a classmate and the first black to graduate from the military academy. Flipper endured prejudice and ostracism at West Point only to be court-martialed and dismissed from the army in 1882 for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

26U.S., Department of War, General Orders No. 61.

27John Bigelow to John Bigelow, Jr., 8 January 1878, box 12, NYPL.
may have also better prepared him for this initial duty with black troops.

The Tenth Cavalry in Texas

During the next two years Bigelow withstood the stultifying effects of scouting with the black "buffalo soldiers" in west Texas. Colonel Benjamin Grierson, commander of the black cavalry regiment, was charged with subduing the hostile Comanche Indians in the region. Grierson was a former music teacher who had served admirably in the Union army during the Civil War. He kept the troopers of his regiment patrolling in the field to guard against the hit-and-run tactics of the Comanches. Bigelow also was on the move, scouting out of Fort Duncan and Fort Stockton and commanding Fort Pulaski, an outpost on the Rio Grande River. Bigelow's tenure with the Tenth Cavalry in

28William H. Leckie, The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), p. 169. Indians called the black troopers of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments "buffalo soldiers" because their hair resembled that of the buffalo. Leckie indicates that "the buffalo was a sacred animal to the Indian, and it is unlikely that he would so name an enemy if respect were lacking." The black soldiers understood this and proudly embraced the title.

29John Bigelow to John Bigelow, Jr., 29 January 1878, box 12, NYPL. Although correspondence indicates Bigelow commanded Fort Pulaski during part of his initial tour with the Tenth Cavalry, it does not appear in an official inventory of army outposts. See U.S., Department of War, List of Military Posts, Etc., Established in the United States from its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time (Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902). It presents a list of forts, named camps, redoubts, reservations, general hospitals, national cemeteries, etc., established or erected in the United States. The list was compiled by the Adjutant General's Returns Division as of February 1, 1902. Nonetheless, Bigelow's correspondence is likely correct. Boyd indicates in Cavalry Life in Tent and Field, p. 285, that company officers were frequently dispatched to numerous temporary garrisons scattered along the Rio Grande River. Fort Pulaski might likely have
west Texas spanned a proud chapter in the history of the regiment, and Bigelow quickly grew proud of his black troopers. Grierson's command not only fought the restive Comanches but also disgruntled Mexican Indians who raided across the border. Mexican bandits and revolutionaries also conducted forays into American territory, and the "buffalo soldiers" were expected to maintain the peace along the vast expanse of the border. To do so they were frequently permitted to continue pursuits into Mexico in order to attack their varied enemies in mountain sanctuaries.

Bigelow was in the field most of the time, although he rarely experienced combat. It was not unusual for the army on the frontier to be in the field at least half of the time. Since 1869 Congress had limited the regular army to a strength of 25,000 men. With a large contingent of troops required for Reconstruction service and to man coastal fortifications, troops detailed to the frontier were stretched beyond the limits of their effectiveness. As a result, the Tenth Cavalry was required to patrol a large geographic area with insufficient troops. Grierson's Tenth Cavalry Regiment had an authorized strength of 1,202 soldiers, but when Bigelow joined the regiment, fewer than 900 men were available for duty.

been a small camp of short permanence that served the various cavalry detachments patrolling the region. See also Edward M. Coffman, "Army Life on the Frontier, 1865-1898," Military Affairs: Journal of the American Military Institute 20 (Winter 1956):193. Coffman reports that temporary camps were frequently "hastily erected due to necessity and abandoned" quickly when their usefulness had ended.


31Leckie, The Buffalo Soldiers, p. 152.
exacerbated a difficult situation. Scouting was a critical responsibility of the frontier army in order to keep potentially hostile Indians under surveillance; to police the vast territory to protect settlers, miners, and other citizens; and to locate warring Indian bands. A cavalry scouting party usually consisted of only an officer, ten troops, and some Indian scouts. Records indicate that Bigelow was in command of such a detachment from Troop B near Escondido Station, Texas, on April 15, 1878 when they engaged a hostile Indian band. One citizen was killed.

Despite the continual patrols, Bigelow experienced the long hours of tedium that scholars suggest characterized duty on the western frontier. In an interesting letter to one of his sisters, Annie, from San Antonio in August 1879, Bigelow complained of the isolation. He grumbled that civilians did not like the army. Nevertheless, despite this impression of alienation from the

32 Rickey, Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay, p. 270.


34 See, for example, Weigley, History of the United States Army, p. 272; see also Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973), p. 68. Gale, "Lebo in Pursuit," p. 13, indicates "the daily tedium and monotony drove many an officer and enlisted man to drink or in some cases, insanity." He notes, however, that "a few officers found relief from the boredom by becoming part-time ethnologists while others took up writing to supplement their meager pay and fight the long dull days." He mentions particularly Bigelow and John G. Bourke as examples of the latter.

35 John Bigelow, Jr., to Annie Bigelow, 14 August 1879, box 96, NYPL.
surrounding civilian population, Bigelow offered the explanation that the exclusiveness of army society might account for the apparent lack of civilian cordiality.

Although Bigelow's introduction to army life was indeed spartan, his alleged isolation on the frontier was not without diversion. Besides dealing with the Comanches, the Tenth Regiment had other responsibilities that included protecting mail routes, railroads and telegraph lines, roadbuilding, and mapping.36 On an extended scouting expedition, for example, Bigelow mapped a region near Tucson, Arizona, and a mountain in the Santa Rita range was named for him.37 During periods of inactivity it was not unusual for Bigelow and his fellow bachelor officers to escort ladies from nearby Fort Duncan to see the sights in the Mexican border towns.38 The Mexican town of Piedras Negras was just across the border from Fort Duncan. Mrs. Orsemus B. Boyd, in her intimate account of the army in the west, Cavalry Life in Tent and Field, recounts enjoyable excursions to the

36See, for example, Jack D. Foner, "The Socializing Role of the Military," in The American Military on the Frontier, The Proceedings of the 7th Military History Symposium, United States Air Force Academy, 30 September-1 October 1976, ed. James P. Tate (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 86; see also Gale, "Lebo in Pursuit," p. 15. Captain Thomas C. Lebo was a company commander in the Tenth Cavalry and Bigelow was his second in command during much of the unit's service on the western frontier. Gale indicates that mapping "mountain ranges, passes, desert flats, springs and water holes" became a major undertaking for the company during the period the Tenth Cavalry spent in west Texas.

37Will C. Barnes, Secretary, United States Geographic Board, to John Bigelow, Jr., 25 June 1930, box 17, USMA.

38See, for example, the Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 21 December 1877, USMA cited in Edward M. Coffman, The Young Officer in the Old Army, The Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History, no. 18 (Colorado Springs: United States Air Force Academy, 1976), p. 6.
quaint town. Fiestas and bullfights were particularly enjoyable for the members of the garrison, and the officers were also frequently invited to balls hosted by the nearby Mexican military. At other times Bigelow would hunt outside the fort. Mostly, however, to compensate for the lack of entertainment he occupied his time reading German military works on the Franco-Prussian War.

Despite the seemingly apparent isolation, Bigelow was very much affected by events and developments beyond the confines of his routine military responsibilities. His father, for example, had been intimately involved in the heated and disputed presidential election of 1876. The elder Bigelow helped manage the apparently successful campaign of Samuel J. Tilden, which led to the extended electoral controversy that eventually saw Rutherford B. Hayes inaugurated president. The senior Bigelow remained active in national politics and in 1884 was involved in the election of Grover Cleveland. He kept his young son fully informed in detailed correspondence. In addition, Bigelow was affected by the new ideas and technologies that necessarily expanded expectations in all sectors of society, including the military.

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40 John Bigelow to John Bigelow, Jr., 20 January 1878, box 12, NYPL.
Edison, advancement of electrification, increasing availability of telephones, and the growth of industry, for example, combined to stimulate an overall philosophical evaluation of life in America. The United States Army was similarly influenced by the Industrial Revolution and technological developments, and Bigelow questioned their effect on the role of the military.

Bigelow began to understand the influence of new and improved weaponry and transport on the conduct of war, lessons gleaned from his study of the Franco-Prussian War. The most profound impact on Bigelow was a broadened world-view that recognized the relative military inferiority of the United States.\(^4^4\) The example of the unpreparedness and failure of the French military in the Franco-Prussian War offered Bigelow stark lessons that could be applied to his own army. He studied the conflict in detail. His father forwarded to Texas much original material on the Franco-Prussian War, including official reports, and young Bigelow busied himself preparing a monograph on the conflict.\(^4^5\)


\(^4^5\) See, for example, John Bigelow to John Bigelow, Jr., 22 September 1877, 11 March 1878, 13 August 1878, and 7 November 1878, box 12, NYPL.
CHAPTER III

MARS-LA-TOUR AND GRAVELOTTE: JOHN BIGELOW, JR.,
AND THE EMERGENCE OF ARMY PROFESSIONALISM

Professional Education and the Officer Corps

By 1880 General Sherman's plans to enhance the professional education of army officers were beginning to be realized. He had installed Emory Upton as commandant of the artillery school at Fort Monroe and directed that the course of instruction include military history, strategy, and logistics.\(^1\) Major General Winfield Scott Hancock founded the Military Service Institute of the United States in 1878, and in 1879 its journal began publication.\(^2\) In January 1880, when Bigelow was assigned to West Point as an assistant professor of French and an assistant instructor of tactics, Major General John M. Schofield was superintendent of the academy.\(^3\) Schofield had been


dispatched to be superintendent at West Point, to replace Colonel Ruger, at the personal behest of Sherman. Sherman wished to extend his influence over the academy and he believed Schofield would assist. Schofield obligingly felt the need to attract talented officers to West Point, and Bigelow appeared promising.

Bigelow's flair for languages was known by Schofield, but the superintendent might also have been attracted by Bigelow's interest in military history. Schofield had a keen interest in military history and was drawn to officers of a similar ilk. He had superseded Ruger as superintendent of the academy in 1876, prior to Bigelow's graduation in 1877, and the general was certainly familiar with Bigelow's interest in the historical study of warfare. The general might also have been aware of Bigelow's draft treatise on the Franco-Prussian War.

Bigelow was in the vanguard of the new professionalism and fulfilled whatever hopes Schofield harbored. Bigelow refined his study of the Franco-Prussian War and presented a paper on the battle of Mars-la-Tour to the Military Service Institute on November 26, 1880. Later, on December 21 and 29, 1882, and January 8, 1883, he presented another study on the battle of Gravelotte. These detailed reports were published as a monograph by the Ordnance Department in January 1884. Bigelow also published several articles on current

Ibid., p. 25.


military affairs. Great Britain, for example, was embroiled in colonial wars in Africa, and Bigelow issued commentary on Egypt and the Sudan and General Charles Gordon's expedition to Khartoum. He was an inveterate student of military affairs.

Bigelow was an asset to the academy. He had a facility for languages and was clearly needed as an instructor in French. The French department at the academy was particularly weak; many of the instructors could not even speak the language. Thomas J. Fleming, in a survey of *West Point: The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy*, reports that the generally inefficient French instructors would conveniently disappear whenever a French dignitary visited. Schofield, however, knew Bigelow had been educated in Europe in French and German schools prior to his appointment as a cadet at West Point. Schofield, a friend of Bigelow's father, was dispatched to the American embassy in Paris by Secretary of State William H. Stewart while the elder Bigelow was consul. He was certainly familiar with Lieutenant Bigelow's fluency in French.

While Bigelow was an instructor at the military academy, the Department of the French Language merged with the Spanish department in June 1882 to form a Department of Modern Languages, and Bigelow

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7The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 25 June 1884 and 11 October 1884, John Bigelow, Jr., Papers, United States Military Academy (USMA) Library.


also conducted classes in Spanish studies. Bigelow had particularly enjoyed the study of Spanish when he was a student at the academy, and the merger permitted him to continue his interest. He had sharpened his Spanish language skills while on duty with the Tenth Cavalry along the Mexican border. A Spanish grammar book frequently accompanied him on patrols. He enjoyed the study of languages. Although Bigelow later headed the French department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and published a French grammar in 1906, at this early stage of his career he pursued his interest in languages as a hobby.

Bigelow's rich literary patrimony also qualified him for other responsibilities. Besides his father's credentials as a journalist, writer, and essayist, his brother, Poultney Bigelow, was a journalist, and Schofield needed Bigelow to drill cadets in English.

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11John Bigelow, Jr., to Jane Poultney Bigelow, 12 September 1874, Bigelow Family Papers, box 96, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library (NYPL). Interestingly, Headquarters, U.S. Military Academy, Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., June, 1877, June 30, 1877, p. 29 indicates that Bigelow excelled in French, scoring 95.8 out of a possible 100 merit points for graduation; in Spanish he earned 62.6 out of a possible 75 merit points.


Courses in English had not been offered at the academy for ten years, from 1867-77. His prime concern, however, was the historical study of strategy and tactics.

Bigelow believed there were basic and fundamental deficiencies in the professional development of army officers. As an instructor in tactics at West Point he was confined by the restrictive curriculum and was as disappointed in the program of instruction as he had been as a student. Nevertheless, Bigelow tried to impart a historical appreciation of the art of war to offset the academy's rigid mechanical emphasis on fortifications, weapons, and tactics. Fortunately, Emory Upton's text on Infantry Tactics, Double and Single Rank, Adapted to American Topography and Improved Firearms was a required text. It was "hailed as the greatest single advance in tactical instruction since the work of General Steuben during the Revolution." Bigelow had become familiar with the text as a cadet, and it helped him conceptualize the impact of modern weapons on tactics. Upton's principles of infantry tactics, drawn from his experiences during the Civil War, had been in use in the army since 1871. Previously the army drew upon the French example.

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15Fleming, West Point, p. 236.


18Ibid.; see also Ganoe, The History of the United States Army, p. 317.
manual was the first original exposition of an American system of
tactics. The system allowed greater ease and flexibility in movement
and opened ranks to counter the effects of advanced weaponry,
particularly artillery. Bigelow was impressed by this practical
application of the American experience in war but persisted in the
study of the Franco-Prussian War.

Historical Study of European Warfare

Why did Bigelow pursue his study of the Franco-Prussian War?

Bigelow's examination of that conflict enabled him to expand and
refine his own assessments of the impact of modern weapons on tactics
and of the problems inherent in the movement and supply of large
armies. Bigelow's interest in a military profession was triggered by
the carnage he witnessed during the Franco-Prussian War. It follows
that he would devote the beginning of his career to acquiring a fuller
and better understanding of the conflict. He was motivated by a
conviction that the United States Army should not be unprepared to
wage effective combat, as were the French in 1870.¹⁹ He admired
Germany's superior military performance and was impressed by Helmut
von Moltke's detailed planning for combat. Certainly in the aftermath
of the Franco-Prussian War the study of German military thought was
logical.

The publication of Bigelow's careful analysis of the battles

¹⁹See, for example, John Bigelow to William Allen Butler, 14
November 1870, in John Bigelow, Retrospections of an Active Life, 5
vols. (New York: Baker & Taylor Co., vols. 1-3, 1909), and (Garden
City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., vols. 4-5, ed. John Bigelow, Jr.,
1913), 4:429-34; see also Clapp, Forgotten First Citizen, pp. 321-22.
of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte was a significant milestone in his career. Bigelow had carefully assembled the treatise from the German official report of the war, a sketch by General Julius von Verdy du Vernois, and additional primary materials his father had provided which were not generally available. The elder Bigelow gave his son personal and official correspondence that provided young Bigelow a broader perspective on the conflict. He included detailed orders of battle, battlefield terrain analysis, and thorough descriptions of the dispositions of opposing forces. Historians recognize it as an important contribution to military history. Contemporary reviewers were very complimentary. The Army and Navy Journal reported on June 21, 1884 that "in preparing these elaborate studies of recent modern engagements Bigelow has not only increased his military knowledge and contributed to the instruction of the service, but has set an example which we should be glad to see generally followed by our young officers." Nevertheless, while it was an important contribution to the professional education of army officers, it failed to advance or redirect American military strategy. Bigelow's study of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte was pedestrian in its focus on the European experience in warfare.

20John Bigelow to John Bigelow, Jr., 22 September 1877 and 11 March 1878, box 12, NYPL.


22Army and Navy Journal, 21 June 1884, p. 963; see also The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 17 June 1884 and 21 June 1884, USMA.
Progressive officers routinely studied European military history, culling lessons to apply to their own army.\(^\text{23}\) The army, for example, had commissioned official studies of European military systems during the Crimean War, 1853-56, and General George B. McClellan had published a popular examination of *The Armies of Europe* in 1861.\(^\text{24}\) Major General George W. Cullum, superintendent of the United States Military Academy at the close of the Civil War, ignored the American experience and continued to urge the study of the European model. The United States Army regularly dispatched military attachés to Europe to observe training and to report on military institutions.\(^\text{25}\) General Philip H. Sheridan served as a military observer with the German army during the Franco-Prussian War, and he had witnessed the battles of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte.\(^\text{26}\) In 1874 General Sherman dispatched Emory Upton to observe the British and Russian armies in India and central Asia.\(^\text{27}\) Thus, Bigelow's examination of the battles of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte was consistent with the military inclination to study European armies.

The completeness of the Prussian victory had astonished the world. For years the French Army had been the model for military


\(^{26}\)Bigelow, *Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte*, p. 41.

\(^{27}\)Weigley, *Towards an American Army*, p. 104.
historians and serious soldiers. Bigelow sought to discern the reasons for the French failure and the German success. He found particularly appealing the distinguishing German character in warfare. Also, Bigelow discerned how the concerted professional development of the Prussian officer corps had effectively prepared it for the detailed planning prior to and during the invasion.

The Franco-Prussian War

Bigelow was an ardent student of Jomini and understood how the principles he espoused could be applied to the conduct of war. But Bigelow's study of the Franco-Prussian War alerted him to the influences of technology and industrialization on warfare. He realized from reading Jomini that principles of war might be unchanging but that their application had to be based on a careful assessment of technological change. The telegraph and railroad were innovations that were not anticipated by Jomini, yet Bigelow learned that they did not drastically affect the basic principles of war. For example, concentration of forces was a Napoleonic concept that all soldiers understood. The study of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte indicated to Bigelow that this concentration could no longer be


29Bigelow, Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte, p. 23.

attained simply by skillful maneuver on the field of battle. The German General Staff demonstrated that concentration had to develop from extended plans for mobilization, movement, and supply long before a conflict began.\textsuperscript{31} Since the first battle of a war could be decisive, effective conscription, training, and logistical organization were critical to victory.

Bigelow studied the Franco-Prussian War closely. He noted how technological innovations had altered the manner in which warfare was conducted. It was apparent, moreover, that the role of the junior officers and non-commissioned officers had greatly appreciated. The increased range and lethality of weapons demanded open and fluid formations capable of rapid maneuver on the battlefield, frequently under cover. This required increased dependence on subordinate commanders at the lowest tactical levels. Previously the commanding generals maneuvered large rigid formations in accord with a preconceived scheme of operations. Bigelow learned that this was no longer possible and realized that America's junior officers needed to understand the principles of strategy if U.S. Army generals had to rely on them in a war.

Bigelow understood that warfare was becoming increasingly more complex. Although the individual skill of the commander was still crucial to victory, he discerned that the wisdom and knowledgeable staff work by a multitude of other specialized officers was also essential. The exigencies of war, particularly the wide dispersion of forces necessitated by the lethality of new weaponry,\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{31}Howard, \textit{The Franco-Prussian War}, p. 4.
made the will of the commander more difficult to exert on the battlefield. Junior officers had to assume greater responsibility for leadership. The commander's lack of direct control over the course of a battle also demanded that more detailed preparations precede a battle and necessarily involve a wide array of subordinate commanders and specialized staff officers. These staff officers and subordinate commanders had to be familiar with the commander's plan of battle so they could anticipate the will of the commander even when the ebb and flow of the battle inhibited communication of orders. Bigelow foresaw, then, a need to develop the U.S. Army's young officers to fill this vital role in war. He did not believe that the contemporary military literature and methods of instruction served that end, and he resolved to prepare a study that would meet American needs.

Bigelow's study of the Franco-Prussian War also showed him how the technological advances in weapons had served to transform tactics. Bigelow saw that victory at Mars-la-Tour and Gravelototte had not been achieved by bold frontal offensive action. Infantry and cavalry charges led to heavy casualties. Victory was gained by maneuver, innovative artillery bombardments, and flanking actions. The superiority of the French chassepot rifle, for example, led the Germans to hold their infantry out of range while their artillery hammered the French positions. Bigelow also noted the shortcomings of cavalry reconnaissance in the face of rifled breech-loading weapons. Due to ineffective reconnaissance the Germans had attacked a French force at Mars-la-Tour of twice the strength.32 Only effective,...

32Bigelow, Mars-la-Tour and Gravelototte, p. 6.
dynamic command prevailed. Bigelow may have wondered why the German offensive succeeded over the French defense, bolstered with machine guns, when just the opposite took place during the American Civil War. He realized Europeans generally ignored the lessons of the Civil War. His study exposed the deficiencies of French tactics. The French dedication to the offensive, a false martial spirit, and the élan of the sabre and bayonet, blinded the French commanders to the advantages of the defense.\textsuperscript{33} The French staff system had neglected the historical study and analysis of war.

What did Bigelow learn from his study of the Franco-Prussian War? His carefully constructed monographs displayed no startling military maneuvers or innovative tactics. Further, neither the French nor the Germans had exploited the technological advantages of their weaponry—the French \textit{chassepot} rifle very nearly counterbalanced the Prussian breech-loading guns.\textsuperscript{34} Bigelow was redirected to consider strategy. He showed that German preparation for war and detailed organization had enabled Moltke to concentrate superior numbers, particularly during the battle of Gravelotte. Bigelow curtly summarized Moltke's intentions:

The German plan of operations was singular for its simplicity and disrespect of conventionality. Had it been strictly carried out thousands of German mothers would have been spared the affliction that crushed out of them forever every joyful thought or emotion connected with the victory of Gravelotte. Von Moltke's plan was to make his numerical superiority tell with such force and rapidity that the French would have neither strength nor time to dispute it.\textsuperscript{35}

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\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{34}Howard, \textit{The Franco-Prussian War}, p. 455.
\textsuperscript{35}Bigelow, \textit{Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte}, p. 66.
\end{flushright}
German victory was secured, Bigelow believed, not only by Moltke's superior organization and the rigorous unit training that occurred before war was decided upon but also by the preparatory staff work and professional development of the Prussian officer corps. The theoretical study of war was crucial to victory.36

From his study of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte, Bigelow concluded that American officers were being poorly prepared for the next war.37 The Indian wars did not prepare the American army for a major conventional war against large armies. The frontier soldier in his campaigns against the Indians operated in small, mobile detachments and carried their supplies with them or on pack mules. Even the few major concentrations of army forces for the Indian wars were conducted by units required to sustain themselves. Bigelow's study of the Franco-Prussian War demonstrated that any major deployment or commitment of U.S. Army forces would require detailed planning for mobilization, transportation, and supply. The Franco-Prussian War indicated that each individual facet of a campaign required specialists to plan the operation in minute detail. Medical support, for example, would require that selected supplies be prepositioned; that medical personnel and other necessary provisions be transported with a deploying unit; and that arrangements be made


for the care of sick and wounded at the front and for the evacuation of casualties. As similar requirements mount for rations, ordnance, forage and other essential equipment and supplies, Bigelow understood that the planning task became insurmountable for a commander without a specially trained staff. Further, Bigelow came to believe that the American predilection for Jomini, woven into the fabric of the army by Henry W. Halleck and Dennis Hart Mahan, was stifling the initiative of its young officers. The rote principles espoused by Jomini failed to prepare officers for the spontaneity required by modern warfare. On the other hand, Moltke's strategy was rooted in an appreciation of Clausewitz and a historical understanding of the dynamic role of the battlefield commander.\textsuperscript{38} Bigelow understood that future captains would need not simply to master principles of war but to comprehend the vicissitudes of logistics, topography, communication, and political strategy. Future captains would also have to depend on a skilled staff.

Limited War

Bigelow's study of the French debacle convinced him that moderation in war required strict central control and was difficult to achieve.\textsuperscript{39} He discerned the concept of limited war as applied by Otto von Bismarck in his carefully measured campaign against France. Each of the wars of German unification were guided by a studied moderation of military power in pursuit of limited political goals and

\textsuperscript{38}Holborn, "Moltke's Strategical Concepts," p. 155.

\textsuperscript{39}Bigelow, Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte, pp. 65-66.
objectives. Bismarck's restrained use of the preponderant Prussian Army during the period 1864 to 1871 was in basic contrast to the limited conflicts prior to the French Revolutionary War. Those earlier wars were inherently constrained by limited military means and capabilities. Bismarck, on the other hand, knew that he had to harness a mobilized army of vast abilities and he deliberately subordinated Moltke, the German General Staff, and an expanding militarism to the tempered designs of diplomacy. It was a difficult political policy to force on the German General Staff, but Bigelow appreciated its necessity. Interestingly, when General Schofield helped to reinforce this important perspective, Bigelow realized that it went counter to much of the current military thinking in America. Schofield believed that limited wars were a valid and necessary political strategy. Bigelow echoed Schofield's belief by asserting that military strategy must be defined by the purposes the federal government had established for war. During a meeting of the Military Service Institution on November 8, 1883 Bigelow chided General Sherman and argued that "the great want of our . . . army, is a purpose."
Bigelow feared that the growing economic and technological foundations of modern states increased the army's capacity and propensity for unlimited war. Bismarck understood the stark limits within which military power could be usefully asserted. He selected, planned, and controlled the use of military force for limited ends and made a sharp distinction between a Prussian capacity for war and the inclination to employ it. While Bigelow greatly admired the organizational effectiveness and the military preparedness of the Prussian army, he also appreciated Bismarck's control and mitigation of military aims by the demands of state policy. Moltke had fashioned a progressive military institution and planned in detail for its employment. Moltke, however, did not appreciate Clausewitz's concern that military means must be subjugated to political ends, whereas Bismarck was consistent in its application.\textsuperscript{43} Bigelow acknowledged that

the cause of a war is a political matter, the course of it is a military matter. But neither is independent of the other. The cause determines the object and this is a factor in the operations. The object suggests the plans of the commander and has much to do with the inspiration, with the morale, of his troops.\textsuperscript{44}

Bigelow, therefore, clearly grasped the political limits of military power as preached by Clausewitz and practiced by Bismarck. His belief was rooted in the Clausewitzian observation that military


power must be subordinate to political power. Bigelow knew that a simple military strategy of annihilation was self-destructive. His study of the Franco-Prussian War demonstrated that Bismarck had understood that the object of limited war was "to inflict losses or to pose risks for the enemy out of proportion to the objectives under dispute." This was a strategic goal that Bigelow found appealing. He wondered how best to apply this premise and resolved to intensify his research and study. The lessons he drew from his study of the Franco-Prussian War were bolstered by his examination of other European conflicts and from the American military experience.

The American Experience in War

The publication of General Sherman's Memoirs in 1875 made available much candid testimony on the conduct of the Civil War. Bigelow was a tremendous admirer of Sherman, and the autobiographical study probably redirected Bigelow's attention to the professional study of his own army. Bigelow may have been dismayed by the disregard the Prussian commanders displayed toward the lessons of the American experience. He understood that both the Franco-Prussian War and the American Civil War demonstrated that the chasm between the warring armies and the civilian populations was gone. The rapid development of transportation and communication led Bigelow to conclude that civil populations were as much a part of the conflict as the soldiers at the front. He saw this as approaching Clausewitz's

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46 Weigley, Towards an American Army, p. 96.
concept of "absolute war." He applied this principle to his historical study of conflict.

Bigelow remained at the academy until August 1884 and devoted himself to the study of American campaigns. He proved to be a prolific writer and essayist. An article on "The Sabre and Bayonet Question," read before the Military Service Institute on September 15, 1881 and later published in its journal, was particularly popular and controversial and it was heatedly discussed for many years. These interesting and important efforts, however, were by-products of his fertile, active, and imaginative intellect. A comprehensive study of American strategy had become a driving passion. He studied Sherman's Memoirs in detail and Badeau's Military History of U.S. Grant published in 1882. He pursued an exhaustive examination of the American Revolution as well as the Civil War. Bigelow likely took a particular interest in Henry P. Johnston's campaign study of The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis, 1781, published in 1881 which paralleled his own analysis of military events displayed in

47 Howard, The Franco-Prussian War, p. 3.  
48 U.S., Department of War, Special Orders No. 74, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C., March 31, 1884.  
50 He had married Mary Braxton Dallam on April 28, 1883. Nevertheless, he spent much of his time reading and writing on strategy and tactics. His wife must have been very patient and supportive.  
51 See, for example, John Bigelow, Jr., The Principles of Strategy: Illustrated Mainly from American Campaigns, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1894), p. 11.
his study of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte. Campaign studies were of particular interest to Bigelow for their analysis of strategy.

Bigelow did not abandon a broader view of military history, strategy, and policy. He continued to explore European studies of the art of war and made extensive notes on German General Colmar von der Goltz's *The Nation in Arms.* He studied the current texts on strategy that recounted the experiences of Napoleon and Frederick the Great. Many of the strategists and tacticians that he read had tried to bridge the gap between the old and new styles of warfare by identifying the similarities and enumerating principles that could be projected into the conduct of future war. Jomini, in particular, who still had a great influence on Bigelow, defined the form of future war in geometric terms of recurring principles of maneuver and lines of communication. Bigelow, however, also tried to assimilate the concepts of Clausewitz into his thinking. Clausewitz emphasized the differences between the old and new systems of war. He particularly emphasized the political aspects of war. His concept of "absolute war" took into account the importance of the populations of the belligerents. To Bigelow, therefore, the population became a legitimate target in war and to this end he applied Bismarck's object of limited war. His evolving conception of the totality of war was reinforced by his study of the history of American military campaigns.

52The Colonel John Bigelow Papers, box 44, series 1, LC.

53See, for example, Bigelow, *The Principles of Strategy,* pp. 11-13.

during the Revolutionary War, Mexican War, and Civil War, and particularly the Civil War campaigns of his idol General William Tecumseh Sherman. It was a warfare both brutal and total that Bigelow explored.

The development of the railroad further reinforced Bigelow's concept of total war. He saw, during the Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War, that the railway systems linked the populations to the military front as supplies moved rapidly from the cities and industrial regions to the soldiers in combat. The telegraph further linked the civil populations to the front as correspondents dispatched details of the battles to newspapers in near real-time. No longer could the people of belligerent nations be isolated from the effects of modern war; the Industrial Revolution had made them inseparable. The logistic needs of an army were fulfilled by the nation's manufacturing and commercial interests. Even the will of the commander drew sustenance from the civilian reaction to reports of his exploits on the battlefield.

Bigelow was intent on publishing his own book on strategy. His father, a prolific writer and diarist, had repeatedly urged him to prepare a manuscript. Unfortunately, although the respite at the academy afforded Bigelow time for scholarship and research, he was soon returned to duty on the frontier. His reassignment, however, did not diminish his desire to publicize his views.

55Weigley, Towards an American Army, p. 96.

56Howard, War in European History, p. 98; see also Howard, The Franco-Prussian War, p. 2.
Why was he so intent on publication? The fate that befell France in the course of the short Franco-Prussian War instilled in Bigelow a driving need to learn more about the conduct of warfare. It was not an atypical reaction. Military professionals throughout the world's armies were reawakened by the swift German success, and the Prussian example was examined and copied. Moreover, Bigelow believed that the professional study of military history was the only way to learn about the conduct of war short of actually commanding in combat. That was one reason he explored the German and French actions at Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte in detail. The future, he believed, called for a large body of efficient officers, well-schooled in the conduct of war. He recognized that the army's role on the frontier, policing a vast region, made no demands on officers to acquire this essential knowledge. The army lacked purpose. Bigelow felt he could contribute to the overall professionalism of the army if he publicized his views. He deduced from his study of the Franco-Prussian War that careful preparation for war was crucial and provided a necessary purpose or focus for the professional education of officers.

Bigelow further realized that technology was making war more and more complex. Staff officers would need to plan for the rapid deployment and support of large mobile armies. He envisioned the requirements for the swift transport of supplies and personnel by rail or over redundant and improved roadways. The telegraph, which heralded improved communication, would speed the flow of implementing

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orders and vital battlefield information. Bigelow was aware that the United States Army was unprepared to adapt quickly to these changing conditions of warfare. He turned to history, therefore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of war as a total phenomenon.

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58 Bigelow, Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte, p. 65.
CHAPTER IV

"AFTER GERONIMO": JOHN BIGELOW, JR.,
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRESSIVE MILITARY ETHIC

The Indian Wars

Where would Bigelow turn to gain a greater appreciation of war? He had been promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant on September 24, 1883. General Sherman had retired on November 1, 1883, and was succeeded as commanding general by General Philip H. Sheridan. All the same, Bigelow continued to be influenced by the indelible mark Sherman had impressed upon the army. Goaded by Sherman’s Memoirs, Bigelow re-evaluated his experience on the frontier in west Texas and questioned American military doctrine. Despite the popularity of his study of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte, Bigelow surmised that the limited wars of Europe had no useful corollary in America’s extended Indian wars. He observed a more cogent analogy in Sherman’s Civil War campaign against the citizens of Atlanta. Weigley, in an essay on "American Strategy from Its Beginnings Through the First World War" in Peter Paret's edition of Makers of Modern


2The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 17 June 1884 and 21 June 1884, John Bigelow, Jr., Papers, United States Military Academy (USMA) Library.
Strategy, states that "Bigelow almost alone, except for an occasional Civil War memorist, tried to assess the implications of the Civil War for offensive strategy."\textsuperscript{3}

The conduct of America's wars against the Indians buttressed Bigelow's understanding of the need for total warfare. He noted that encumbered cavalry forces were unable to hunt down the light, mobile Indian bands. Frustrated field commanders, charged with subduing the hostiles, impressed frontiersmen and friendly Indians to ferret out the enemy's hidden villages.\textsuperscript{4} Violent surprise attacks of converging columns of cavalry troops trapped the marauding Indians in their villages and forced them to stand and fight to protect their women, children, stocks, and supplies. Denied the mobility that allowed them to prevail over the army, the Indians succumbed to this superior concentration of forces. When applying this effective strategy, the army invariably slaughtered Indian women and children.\textsuperscript{5}

Many military men tried to limit the indiscriminate killing of noncombatants by devising alternate strategies. General George Crook, the leading Indian-fighter in the frontier army, warned his subordinates to "avoid the killing of women and children."\textsuperscript{6} He


\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 52.

\textsuperscript{6}John G. Bourke, On the Border with Crook (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska
developed innovative methods to enhance the mobility of his forces in order to thwart his foe in the field. For the traditional slow, cumbersome army wagon train he substituted pack mules to move provisions in a more rapid fashion and over rugged terrain. He divided his force into small operating detachments capable of quick reaction and speedy pursuit of renegade Indians. He employed Indian scouts to ruthlessly ferret out and track their brethren.

Crook dispersed his command to interdict the overland movement of the Indians and hounded his prey during year-round campaigns, even throughout winter. Crook spared the women and children from the direct physical assault of the army but inflicted wanton privation, denying food and shelter in an effort to force the Indians onto reservations. Bigelow examined these strategies and realized that the future form of effective warfare must include the civilian population as a legitimate target.

The Tenth Cavalry in Arizona

The Indian wars were drawing to a dramatic conclusion, and Bigelow and the Tenth Cavalry were to play major supporting roles. Bigelow rejoined the regiment at Fort Davis, Texas, on November 16, 1884, just prior to the final Geronimo campaign in southern Arizona. The Tenth Cavalry was moved to Arizona on April 1, 1885, in an effort to help General Crook contain renegade Apaches. The capable


8 John Bigelow, Jr., "The Tenth Regiment of Cavalry," in

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"buffalo soldiers" were still under the able command of Colonel Grierson and were scattered in outposts throughout the Arizona territory. Bigelow was posted to Fort Grant. General Crook had been embroiled in continuing conflict with officials from the Interior Department over the correct course of Indian policy. This unfortunate state of affairs climaxed when Chiricahua Apaches under Geronimo grew wary and bolted from their reservation in May 1885. Crook dispersed his cavalry regiments in a sweeping attempt to round up the runaway Indians. Grierson's Tenth Cavalry was located at various points along the Mexican border, and detachments were stretched out in the wearisome duty of watching waterholes, mountain passes, and crossing points. Bigelow's troop was busy scouting along the border and trying to cover the area between the dispersed outposts.

Commanding General of the Army, Philip H. Sheridan, tired of Crook's failure to contain Geronimo. He put Nelson A. Miles in charge of the expedition on April 2, 1886, and demanded rapid results. Miles set up an elaborate system of heliograph stations to speed the transmission of reconnaissance reports on the location of the Apaches. 


and he kept detachments in constant pursuit of Geronimo. Geronimo finally wearied and surrendered in August 1886.

Bigelow, emulating the example of his father, kept a detailed journal of his experiences during the Geronimo campaign. Bigelow was anxious to have his journal published; therefore it was not a spontaneous diary but was prepared intentionally for print. As a result, it is much more than a straight-forward chronicle of Bigelow's day to day activities. The diary presents a critical commentary of frontier duty, details the hardships endured by the black "buffalo soldiers," and assays the professionalism of the army. It was published by his brother, Poulton Bigelow, in fourteen installments in Outing Magazine during March 1886, to April 1887. The series, entitled "After Geronimo," was collated and republished in 1968 by Westernlore Press. It was retitled On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo.

Arthur Woodward, in the Forward to the book, compared Bigelow's diary favorably with Captain John G. Bourke's classic account of army life, On the Border with Crook. Bigelow's published journal did much to


14See John Bigelow to John Bigelow, Jr., 5 December 1877, The Papers of John Bigelow, box 12, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library.


publicize the exploits and hardships of the frontier army. Moreover, it remains a lasting social commentary of the daily routine and rigors of army life in 1885. Interestingly, Bigelow's journal was illustrated by Frederic Remington, at that time still a struggling young artist.17

Bigelow had decided that he must continue to publish commentary and articles in order to establish himself as a military writer.18 This was essential, he realized, if he wished to publish a book on strategy. He knew the prospects for a military writer were bleak. Publishers offered no encouragement to suggest he could make any money at it. To his dismay he learned that recent military works were not even being purchased by the government for post libraries.19 Regardless, he busily continued to write on American strategy and tactics, anxiously and hopefully looking forward to having a book published.20 A measure of Bigelow's professionalism can be found in his diary entry that "whether I publish any of it or not, I have no fear of my time being wasted."21 Bigelow's popular journal, therefore, did not supplant his interest in developing a more scholarly critique of the army. Even during the campaign in Arizona, Bigelow took a great professional interest in General Crook.

18 The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 1 October 1884, USMA.
19 Ibid., 7 October 1884.
20 Ibid., 10 July 1884.
21 Ibid.
The Geronimo Campaign

Bigelow carefully examined official papers at Fort Grant and Fort Huachuca that helped him assess the performance of Crook and his successor, Nelson A. Miles. Bigelow was intrigued by Crook's disregard of standing army procedure during the Apache wars. He was impressed by Crook's efforts to enhance the army's mobility and speed in pursuit of hostile Indians, particularly his innovative employment of pack mules and skilled packers. Although the load for a pack mule might be limited to 150-180 pounds depending on the skill of the packer, Crook's trains under exceptionally able packers carried over 300 pounds each. Of greater significance, Crook's use of Indian scouts was particularly controversial and was never accepted by General Sheridan. Their employment ultimately contributed to Crook's dismissal. Bigelow was not sure if Crook's use of Indian scouts was an original concept or patterned after the British use of native auxiliaries. Nevertheless, there was certainly no European precedent for the manner in which Crook employed them. Bigelow noted in his diary that the British

... drill and discipline their native auxiliaries, and officer them with a view to leading and directing them in action. General

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22Bigelow, On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo, p. 117.


Crook simply turns his natives loose in stronger numbers than the enemy, and with an unfailing supply of provisions and ammunition, relying upon those two advantages for their success.25

Thomas W. Dunlay, in Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army, 1860-90, notes that Crook took away the advantages formally bestowed on his adversary and transposed them to his own forces.26 Bigelow simply observed that "General Crook makes of his Indian auxiliaries, not soldiers, but more formidable Indians."27 It was clearly a stratagem that Bigelow endorsed.

Bigelow's detachment, which participated in the pursuit of Geronimo, was one of the regular army elements that guarded the mountain passes between Mexico and Arizona. It was Crook's strategem to put the Indian scouts on the trail of the Apache outlaws and position his regular forces in strategic locations to block Geronimo's safe passage and channel or restrict his free movement.28 Bigelow's role was an important one, although not the position of distinction he coveted. He conceded in his journal that

I had rejoined my regiment with the expectation of gaining in efficiency from experience in the field, and I realized the fact that the opportunities for doing so in our army were becoming fewer and harder to seize every year. I also realized that laurels were scarce along Indian trails, and that they grew in difficult places. It was principally for the practice of looking and reaching for them, with the hope that the skillfulness thus

25Bigelow, On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo, p. 44.


28Bourke, On the Border with Crook, p. 468.
acquired might some day serve me under more favorable conditions, that I aspired to getting on the trail of these Chiricahuas.29

Why did Bigelow seek combat duty? He might have hoped that valor in the field would have secured rapid promotion.30 The army promotion system was stagnant and First Lieutenant Bigelow knew that his normal progression to captain would occur slowly only through seniority.31 Perhaps he simply sought adventure. Bigelow's brother Poultney was a renowned adventurer, and John may have also desired similar excitement. Regardless, Bigelow principally sought to understand more of the nature of war, and this unassuming soldier did not seek to avoid Indian expeditions as did most of his colleagues.32

Why, then, did Bigelow not attempt to cull more lasting lessons from the U.S. Army's experience in the Indian wars? Apparently, he, like many others, viewed this experience as an aberration not likely to be repeated. Bigelow believed that waging a more conventional war, or preparing for it, was the only gainful purpose for the army. He was fearful that Indian-fighting experience might render the army unfit for future larger scale conflicts. He felt strongly that "other work than waging war may incidentally devolve upon an army without derogating from its dignity or efficiency, but when other work is its only work, and the only one for

29Bigelow, On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo, p. 2.


31See Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 20.

which it is fitted, the so-called army is but a police force.\textsuperscript{33} This restricting viewpoint was unfortunate, since his insightful commentary and analysis may have been the basis for a useful foundation for a doctrine or concept of unconventional warfare. Instead, Bigelow ignored the present Indian wars and projected his musing to future conventional wars. In that he was guided by the example of Sherman.

Thus, when General Miles relieved Crook in May 1886, Bigelow perceived no alteration in strategy.\textsuperscript{34} Miles, too, pursued a total war where Indian women, children, and other noncombatants were targets. In a bold, unrestrained, desultory tactic, Miles ruthlessly uprooted all the non-warring Chiricahua Apaches and relocated them in Florida.\textsuperscript{35} It was a stroke designed to isolate and demoralize the renegades Miles was chasing throughout southern Arizona and across the Mexican border with only limited success. To Bigelow, this counteroffensive in the rear of Geronimo's band was warranted; it fitted his conceptualization of absolute or total war.\textsuperscript{36}

Bigelow's concept of total war was not synonymous with unlimited war. In fact, his concept of total war was consistent with


\textsuperscript{34}Lane, Introduction to \textit{Chasing Geronimo}, p. 9.


Bismarck's construct of limited war. Robert Endicott Osgood, in a modern study of limited war, defines unlimited war as one "fought with every means available in order to achieve ends that are without objective limits." On the other hand, he suggests that total war is subject to limitations imposed by deliberate, defined political objectives. Total war is a distinctly modern concept. Bigelow did not use the term "total war," nor could he have fully anticipated the lethality of modern weapons. Nevertheless, Weigley writes that "once he had endorsed a warfare against people as well as armies, the sheer frightfulness of twentieth-century total war was already implicit in what he wrote." Yet Bigelow envisioned conscious limitations to the conduct of war. "When a war is determined on," he wrote, "the first step to be taken is to estimate the force that will be necessary for its prosecution."

Bigelow's concept of total war is best understood in contrast to Clausewitz's ideal of "absolute war." Clausewitz envisioned many gradations of war, of which "absolute war" was only the highest level. To wage war effectively, regardless of the level or intensity, combatants must constantly be aware of its highest form.

38Ibid., pp. 3-4.
realized that the absolute form of war never occurred but was restrained in part by the reasoned intentions of the belligerents.\textsuperscript{42} So too did Bigelow envision deliberate limits to total war. He cited the War Department's General Order Number 100 that defined the code of legitimate actions to govern the army as an obvious limitation.\textsuperscript{43} He discarded any notion, however, that the only legitimate target of war was the enemy's military forces.\textsuperscript{44} It is this calculated targeting of an enemy's people that distinguishes Bigelow's idea of total war. It was a predisposition he found rooted in American military history.

The Myth of Isolation and the Growth of Army Professionalism

Bigelow spent much of his free time during the Geronimo campaign writing an examination of the American experience in war. It helped him cope with the intermittent rigors of patrolling and the apparent isolation and monotony of garrison duty in frontier Arizona. Huntington suggests that this reclusion on the frontier nurtured an expanding professionalism within the army. Only a few officers, however, filled the idle hours by reading and writing on military subjects. Most of the lasting contributions to military literature were prepared by the officers who staffed the army's postgraduate military school system, particularly Emory Upton, Arthur L. Wagner, and Eben Swift.

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\item \textsuperscript{42}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 9.
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Few officers who saw extensive duty on the western frontier during the Indian wars produced important historical works. Most notable, perhaps, is John G. Bourke, Third Cavalry, whose studies On the Border with Crook and An Apache Campaign in the Sierra Madre are military classics. These studies are noted not only for the history they recount but also for their careful examination of Indian ethnology. Charles King wrote Campaigning with Crook in 1880, and it endures as a readable history of the American military frontier. The prolific King also penned over sixty novels that dealt with the Indian wars; they thrilled contemporary readers and did much to explain the plight and hardships of the frontier army to an indifferent civilian population. Bigelow, too, must be counted for his extraordinary works. He wrote with a detached passion for the army, the black "buffalo soldiers," and the course of American military history.

A few other officers on the frontier prepared forgettable expositions on army campaigns and experiences in the west or quickly ignored critiques of army equipment or training. These remain available for historians to review in the initial issues of the professional military journals that prospered during the era of the Indian wars. For the most part, however, these journals were edited, managed, and filled with articles by the officers assigned to the military schools. Lieutenant Charles B. Gatewood, a contemporary of Bigelow assigned to the Sixth Cavalry in Arizona and a fellow classmate at West Point, was compiling a history of artillery in the

45Army and Navy Journal, 23 December 1893, p. 297, reports that two of King's popular novels of army life were among the 150 most popular novels in the nation based on a survey of important libraries.
midst of the Geronimo campaign. It was never published and remains sequestered in a collection of Gatewood's private papers and correspondence in Tucson, Arizona. Gatewood gained fame, however, as one of General Crook's ablest commanders of Indian scouts. Official correspondence describes him as having "seen more active duty in the field with Indian scouts than any other officer of his length of service in the army." Gatewood deserves full credit for the surrender of Geronimo in 1886. Bigelow, Gatewood, and a few others assigned to the frontier typified a growing concern for professionalism. Other officers serving in the west turned to liquor to lessen the stress of their assignments. The vast majority of Indian army officers, however, simply performed their duty and remained indifferent to professional development.

More important, despite the appearance of physical isolation on the frontier, Bigelow, Gatewood, and other army officers interested in the intellectual development of the profession of arms, did not examine their roles in society in seclusion. Their thoughts, in many ways, reflected the same intellectual ferment found in concurrent civilian society.

Faulk, The Geronimo Campaign, p. 68.
Ibid., p. 38.
Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 90; see also Faulk, The Geronimo Campaign, p. 31.
Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 23.

concepts that civilian humanitarians espoused for the treatment of blacks and Indians. Bigelow always tried to deal fairly with the blacks in the Tenth Regiment and he had a reputation for efficiency and just treatment. In his personal narrative of the Geronimo campaign, "After Geronimo," Bigelow examines both military and civilian attitudes towards his black cavalry troopers; he recounts the requirements for their remedial education; and he bemoans the condition of their equipment, barracks, and diet. Arthur Woodward, in a Forward to On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo, observes that Bigelow's critique "reflects somewhat the undertone of a national awakening in this respect." Bigelow's summary of the sorrowful plight of his men in the structured military of his day may have helped to improve the status of blacks in the army. It was certainly unusual for a junior officer to criticize military procedure and army administration so candidly. Sociologist and historian Peter Karsten likens Bigelow and other army reformers to their contemporary civilian "progressives" in his study "Armed Progressives: The Military Reorganizes for the American Century."


Bigelow was indeed an "armed progressive," full of ideals and intent on exerting influence on the future direction of the army. In May 1884, at Fort Grant, Arizona, for example, he lamented in his diary the fact that Colonel (later Major General) William R. Shafter thought of the army principally as a national police force. Bigelow wrote critically that "I should want to leave the army if I had no higher conception of my career than that of a national police." Many officers disgruntled with slow promotions did leave the army. Bigelow, and many others, however, were devoted to national service and worked to bring about reform. Bigelow's father had carefully instilled in his sons, John and Poulney, this attachment to public service. The elder Bigelow selflessly served his country throughout his adult life, and believed that "public office was a trust not a perquisite." John Bigelow, Jr., acquired this outlook from his father, and it was nurtured over the years in frequent correspondence. Since his father was active in national and state politics, political reform movements, and the formulation of American foreign policy, young Bigelow was afforded a particularly informed perspective on current affairs.

Bigelow was never isolated from the mainstream of modern American thought. Many of his contemporary officers came from equally


55The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 16 May 1885, USMA.


well established families, similarly active in progressive society. Karsten states in a study of "Father's Occupation of West Point Cadets and Annapolis Midshipmen" that the officer corps was composed of men drawn "from more well-to-do families than the typical eligible male." Bigelow was not atypical. Gates indicates that quite possibly the officer corps, as a whole, was "not readily distinguishable from the nation's civilian elites, except, of course, in their primary concern with military affairs." Bigelow's career strongly suggests the correctness of Gates' conclusion and helps to debunk the myth of isolation.

Bigelow in Arizona

Despite the occasional travails of scouting in Arizona, Bigelow read voraciously, rarely leaving on patrol without a book. The publication of the Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant in 1886 and George B. McClellan's recollections, McClellan's Own Story, in 1887 spurred Bigelow's review of the U.S. Army and the history of warfare


62 Bigelow, On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo, p. 3.
in America. In 1886 the U.S. Cavalry Association was founded at Fort Leavenworth and began publication of a professional journal. This further invigorated Bigelow's study. Bigelow read the available professional journals and was particularly impressed with Arthur L. Wagner's prize essay for the United States Military Service Institution, "The Military Necessities of the United States and the Best Provisions for Meeting Them," published in 1884. Wagner was an instructor at the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth and was soon to be touted as the army's foremost tactician. Bigelow appears to have been influenced by Wagner's writings to a great extent. Although Wagner based his analysis of American military necessities on the European experience in war, Bigelow tested his precepts against an American model. Wagner's essay certainly convinced Bigelow that he must publicise his own views.

Bigelow's journal, "After Geronimo," provides a valuable record of the day-by-day activities of the cavalry soldier in the American west. It stands in marked contrast to the heroic epochs by General Miles and even Geronimo on this exciting period. He discusses not only the routine operations of a cavalry regiment in the field, but also provides vivid geographic descriptions of the country traversed in the course of the pursuit of Geronimo; he provides insightful portraits of the people he met, and describes the conditions to which his black troopers were subjected.


64Bigelow, On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo, p. 146.
Although Bigelow rarely mentions Geronimo himself or identifies him as one of the hostiles he pursued, Bigelow was at times close on his trail. John P. Clum, an Indian agent for the Chiricahua Apaches and later founder and editor of the Tombstone Epitaph, reports that Bigelow was very active in the pursuit. Bigelow picked up the trail of a portion of Geronimo's band after a skirmish in the Catalina mountains.65 General Miles also cites Bigelow. In a letter to his wife, Mary, on June 7, 1886, Miles indicated concern over the extended length of the campaign against Geronimo and the growing dissatisfaction being expressed in the newspapers. Although he had been dismayed by the inability of his troops to deal effectively with the Indian bands, he was currently enthusiastic over an ongoing pursuit. He told his wife that "Lieutenant Bigelow has been close behind them for several days. In fact, they have been hunted by one detachment of troops after another for 36 days." He continues, explaining to his wife that "they have tried every device to throw the troops off the trail but have not succeeded. They have been followed rapidly for about one thousand miles."66 Bigelow eventually chased the Indians into Mexico.

More importantly, the journal highlights the plight of the black "buffalo soldiers" in the frontier army. Bigelow bemoans the inadequacy of training, equipment, diet, and billets. Such


progressive criticism appears enlightened for the period and marks Bigelow as a reformer. Sociologist Morris Janowitz, in a study of The Professional Soldier, states that such self-criticism is essential for effective change:

But if it is to be more than self-castigation, self-criticism must have significant intellectual content. Intellectual ferment very often means stimulation from 'the outside,' even though the 'outsider' may be found within the profession.67

Bigelow was indeed stimulated from "outside" by the same humanitarian traits and reform-mindedness that motivated his counterpart civilian "progressives." He was, in fact, not isolated from civilian society but rather reflected the traits that marked the main currents of American thought.

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY: JOHN BIGELOW, JR.,
AND THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL WAR

The Adjutant General's Office

Bigelow’s reassignment to the staff of the Adjutant General in Washington, D.C., in July 1887 greatly facilitated his study of American strategy. Duty in Washington afforded Bigelow ready access to official records. The Adjutant General, for example, not only issued the army’s orders and commands, but was also the custodian of records and archives. In addition, the War Department had begun publishing The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies; 128 volumes were released between 1880 and 1901.

Bigelow arrived in the midst of controversy. Brigadier General R. C. Drum was the Adjutant General upon Bigelow’s assignment to the capital. The Adjutant General’s Department was the most

1U.S., Department of War, Special Orders No. 153, Adjutant General’s Office, Washington, D.C., July 5, 1887.


important of the ten autonomous War Department bureaus that operated under Secretary of War William C. Endicott. Together, the ten bureaus comprised the departmental staff, called the War Department General Staff. At the time of Bigelow's assignment, the departmental staff of the Secretary of War was in heated conflict with the Commanding General of the Army, Philip H. Sheridan, who directed the army in the field. The commanding general did not command the army and was instead opposed by the different bureau chiefs who issued orders direct to the field. The commanding general had no staff to forestall the erosion of his authority, and the War Department General Staff generally hamstrung his control over the army.

The problem was of long standing. Sheridan's predecessor, the great William Tecumseh Sherman, had tired of the bureaucratic struggle and simply moved his headquarters to St. Louis. He wrote:

I realized that it was a farce, and it did not need a prophet to foretell it would end in tragedy. We made ourselves very comfortable, made pleasant excursions into the interior, and had a large correspondence, and escaped the mortification of being slighted by men in Washington who were using their temporary power for selfish ends.

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4See C. Joseph Bernardo and Eugene H. Bacon, American Military Policy: Its Development Since 1775 (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Co., 1955), p. 298. The other bureaus were the Inspector General's Department, Quartermaster General's Department, Subsistence Department, Medical Department, Pay Department, Engineer Department, Ordnance Department, Signal Department, and Judge Advocate General's Department.


6Ibid., pp. 4-5.

Many official studies of the problem had been commissioned since the end of the Civil War, but the tyranny of the bureau chiefs continued unabated. Bigelow was well versed in the imbroglio. Before his assignment to Washington he had read Peter Smith Michie's biography of Upton, *Life and Letters of General Emory Upton*, which detailed Upton's criticism of the army's system of command.® Although Upton's proposal for army reform, *The Military Policy of the United States*, was not published until 1904, manuscripts had circulated among like-minded officers and a copy had been placed in the archives of the Adjutant General's Department.9 Interestingly, Bigelow's father had recently been commissioned to help the Secretary of the Navy rectify similar organizational inefficiencies in the navy.10

Arthur L. Wagner

Bigelow, as a junior officer, was confined to the routine planning and implementation of policy. Nevertheless, he began his tour in the Adjutant General's office with a thorough knowledge of his responsibilities and the controversies surrounding them. He understood he had an appreciably advantageous position from which to assay the army. Since General Drum was the principal military advisor


to the Secretary of War, despite General Sheridan's protestation to the contrary, Bigelow was witness to major army developments. His principal duty was the adjutant general of the District of Columbia militia with additional responsibilities for recruiting.\footnote{11} He took a particular interest, however, in the Endicott Board, authorized by Congress in 1885 to examine the weapons and defenses of the United States.\footnote{12} The Board was an indication of renewed national interest in the army, and the interest in increased military appropriations encouraged Bigelow. The convening of the Endicott Board proved that reform-minded soldiers like Bigelow were not intellectually far removed from progressive civilian congressmen, business leaders, and newspaper editors.\footnote{13}

In 1889 First Lieutenant Arthur L. Wagner published a notable account of The Campaign of Königgrätz: A Study of the Austro-Prussian Conflict in the Light of the American Civil War. It was a unique study and affected Bigelow very much.\footnote{14} As the title suggests, Wagner tried to highlight the American experience and evaluated Austrian and Prussian tactics in contrast to American methods. Wagner's thesis coincided with Bigelow's thinking and research. Wagner deplored the


\footnote{12}Bernardo and Bacon, American Military Policy, p. 247.


\footnote{14}Ganoe, The History of the United States Army, p. 363.
fact that the experiences of the American armies in the Civil War were generally disregarded by Europeans. He indicated in the preface to his book that "European military writers generally, and those of the Continent especially, still fail to recognize in the developments of our war the germ, if not the prototype, of military features which are regarded as new in Europe."15

Bigelow, too, questioned the overriding focus by military writers on the European experience.16 Not unlike Wagner, Bigelow lamented those within the U.S. Army who disregard the lessons to be drawn from the study of American military operations in deference to popular European examples.17 Wagner's main interest, however, was in tactics.18 He compared the tactical features of the Austro-Prussian conflict of 1866 to similar aspects of the American Civil War.19 Despite the utility of Wagner's comparison of European and American examples to instruct army officers on tactics, it was, nonetheless, another study of warfare on the European continent. Bigelow was intent on highlighting the American experience in war.


17 Wagner, The Campaign of Königgrätz, p. 4.


19 Wagner, The Campaign of Königgrätz, p. 84.
Spurred by the advances in American military thought brought about by Wagner, Bigelow worked in earnest to complete his treatise, *The Principles of Strategy*. Although Bigelow shared Wagner's interest in tactics, he was primarily concerned with defining American military strategy. He carefully differentiated between tactics and strategy, aware that they might often conflict with each other:

Tactics is the art of conducting war in the presence of the enemy; strategy, the art of conducting it beyond his presence. The province of tactics is the field of battle; that of strategy, the theatre of war, on which, to the strategist, the field of battle is as a point.  

Moreover, unlike Wagner, Bigelow was preoccupied with the political motivation for war. He accepted the premise that military power should be employed at the behest of political authority. Accordingly, national policy had to be stated in realistic political goals in order to translate military power effectively into fighting power.  

**Total War**

Bigelow recognized the need to delimit military activity by carefully defining political objectives. Nonetheless, he did not believe the United States Army should necessarily restrict the military means with which to seek the political objectives. He persisted in viewing an enemy's population as a legitimate target in war. War is armed conflict between nations and by that fact itself Bigelow envisioned the opposing populations as component parts of the

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21Ibid.

22Ibid., p. 228.
fray. Bigelow did not question the morality of such a doctrine of total war. He realized from his study of the Franco-Prussian War and his reading of Clausewitz that war was, of its nature, brutal. An examination of the military campaigns of General Sherman convinced Bigelow of the correctness of his viewpoint. Sherman reconciled the brutality of his punitive expeditions during the Civil War and Indian campaigns by noting that the survival and safety of the nation sanctioned his seemingly extreme measures. Bigelow's recognition of the importance of legitimacy in warfare is crucial to understanding his concept of total war. He condoned neither wanton destruction nor indiscriminate killing but rather called for the full application of military power in support of well-defined political aims.

Insight may be gained into Bigelow's rationale for the necessity of waging total war by examining an influential book he cites in the bibliography to his text on *The Principles of Strategy*. It is Lieutenant J. M. O'Connor's translation of Baron Simon Francois Gay de Vernon's *Treatise on the Science of War and Fortification*, a study that had also influenced Sherman. It was a standard text at West Point until 1836 and was employed extensively by Dennis Hart Mahan. Besides providing an overview of the grand strategy of Jomini and the Englishman Henry Lloyd, it presented a theory on the ethics of


war. Mahan cited it frequently. He used it to support his opinion during the Seminole War in 1836 that the Indians could be defeated if their food supply was destroyed.\textsuperscript{25} The O'Connor text supported Mahan's assertion that "there are times in a nation's existence when the safety of the State is the highest law."\textsuperscript{26} Sherman embraced this view, as did Bigelow. It helped Bigelow to coalesce his opinions on the necessity for total war.

Publication

By 1889 Bigelow was anxious to publish his thoughts. General John M. Schofield succeeded Sheridan as commanding general in August 1888, and Bigelow may have assumed his study of American strategy might be afforded some support by his former mentor. The Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan were published later in 1888 and Bigelow compared it closely with the recollections of Sheridan's contemporaries. Bigelow, meanwhile, rejoined the Tenth Cavalry in November 1889, after more than two years in Washington.\textsuperscript{27} His study of The Principles of Strategy was near completion, and he turned the manuscript over to his brother and father to seek a publisher. In 1891 the publishing firms of G. P. Putnam's Sons in New York and T. Fisher Unwin in London accepted it for publication. It was financed in large part by his father.


\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 38.

\textsuperscript{27}Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, 1802-1890, 3:285.
Bigelow had been unhappy with the map illustrations in many of the campaign studies he had read during the research for his book. As a result he took deliberate measures to assure that the maps accompanying his text were printed and bound properly. The result was a text lavishly supported by 32 detailed maps; most folded out so that they could be consulted easily while reading the narrative.

It was Bigelow's intent to offset the profusion of textbooks that detailed the lessons of European warfare and "discuss the subject of strategy in the light of American warfare, and thus furnish instruction for Americans, not only in the theory of this subject, but also in the military history and geography of their own country." In doing so, he performed a valuable service that of itself is notable. Nevertheless, although Bigelow did not profess to originality

28The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 3 December 1884, USMA.

29See, for example, T. Fisher Unwin to Poultny Bigelow, 16 February 1891, in The Colonel John Bigelow Papers, box 98, series 3, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (LC), Washington, D.C. Bigelow succinctly states his concern for proper maps to accompany campaign studies in an amusing passage in the preface to his later book The Campaign of Chancellorsville: A Strategic and Tactical Study (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1910), p. xiii: "I have tried to provide the reader with such maps as he will need, but am aware that I have not made his way a royal road. There is no comfortable way of reading military history. Whoever expects to follow a campaign reclining in an easy chair with a book in one hand and a ciger in the other is doomed to disappointment." J.P. Wisser, review of The Principles of Strategy: Illustrated Mainly From American Campaigns, by John Bigelow, Jr., in Journal of the United States Artillery 3 (July 1894):518, remarked that Bigelow's text is "supported with a number of maps sufficient to satisfy the most exacting; a supply so generous it is always a pleasure to see in any work relating to the art of war."

in the strategy he presented, he argued for total war, a mode of warfare hitherto not incorporated into army doctrine.\textsuperscript{31} Although Bigelow wrote that "as a rule, the primary object of military operations should be to overpower, and, if possible, to capture or destroy, the hostile army," he argued that the ultimate objective of offensive military action reached beyond the seizure of enemy territory and the defeat of the enemy army to the enemy's population, which he identified as the decisive objective in war.\textsuperscript{32} If Bigelow appeared inconsistent in urging war against civil populations, it was because he realized that

a design of operations should be based upon the thorough knowledge of one's enemy and of his circumstances and condition. Such knowledge is acquired only by a systematic study of his military institutions; of the political, military, and statistical geography, and of the social, political, and commercial systems, of his country; and, finally, of his history, with special regard to his wars.\textsuperscript{33}

Simple defeat of the enemy army may not be decisive. Bigelow quoted von der Goltz who asserted in \textit{The Nation in Arms} that "no plan of operations can with any degree of safety extend beyond the first collision with the enemy's main army."\textsuperscript{34} Bigelow had learned from his study of the Franco-Prussian War that "no plan adopted at the outset should be expected to prove altogether feasible after the first


\textsuperscript{32}\textsuperscript{32}Bigelow, \textit{The Principles of Strategy}, p. 263; see also Weigley, \textit{Towards an American Army}, pp. 95-96.

\textsuperscript{33}\textsuperscript{33}Bigelow, \textit{The Principles of Strategy}, p. 263.

\textsuperscript{34}\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 262.
general engagement." He drew upon American historical examples to show that defeat of an army in the field may not lead to peace until the will of the people to resist is broken. Menacing or even capturing the enemy capital may also be insufficient if the war is popular with the people. He had successfully drawn together the lessons of American military history and deduced the course of future conflict. Nevertheless, he could not escape the limitations of his formal military education.

Much of his treatise was pedantic, drawn as it was from the works of Jomini and belabored with mathematical and geometric equations. Although this pedestrian approach made the text more palatable to the army, Bigelow was much more effective when integrating history and the concepts of Clausewitz into the text. This more enlightened approach to military history and strategy reached fruition in 1910 in Bigelow's major contribution to military literature, The Campaign of Chancellorsville: A Strategic and Tactical Study.

Bigelow's use of geometrical diagrams in The Principles of Strategy may be discounted as a straining to reduce strategy to a series of scientific equations. It would be a serious mistake to account his intent for so little. Bigelow's text is much more complex. On one hand he clearly intends to capture readers schooled in the scientific precepts of West Point; but Bigelow disdained this fixation on science. He had lamented Upton's failure to be heeded simply because he was unscientific. Perhaps more basically, Bigelow's

35Ibid.
juxtaposition of geometry with case studies of American campaigns highlights the dichotomy of strategy as a science and art.\textsuperscript{36}

Clearly Bigelow believed that there were basic introductory principles that could be economically explained by geometric figures, and he freely displayed angles, lines, and curves to illustrate interior and exterior lines, lines of retreat, lines of supply, bases of operations, strategic and tactical points, and other basic concepts or principles. Nevertheless, Bigelow strongly believed strategy to be an art. He likely concurred in Jomini's assertion:

\textit{War in its ensemble is not a science, but an art. Strategy, particularly, may indeed be regulated by fixed laws resembling those of the positive sciences, but this is not true of war viewed as a whole.}\textsuperscript{37}

This problem of war as an art or science was exhaustively discussed by Clausewitz. Bigelow was certainly familiar with Clausewitz's reasoning. Clausewitz, for example, felt that "the term 'art of war' is more suitable than 'science of war.'" Nevertheless, he believed that "strictly speaking war is neither an art nor a science."\textsuperscript{38} As a result, Bigelow ignored rote principles of war but freely displayed the principles of strategy, not to guide battlefield activity but rather to direct historical investigation.


Bigelow's geometric diagrams are intellectual tools intended to help analyze and study history. More basically, however, Bigelow used the diagrams to define his terms so that army officers could better contemplate the campaigns and battles he recounts. Why? He realized that the art of war was being increasingly held hostage to technology. Therefore, he reluctantly acknowledged the necessity for a science of war, of which logistics, personnel mobilization, and weapons were necessary to prepare for the art of war. Bigelow realized that war was becoming more complex. The Industrial Revolution heralded breakthroughs in weaponry; the size of armies was expected to increase with the mobilization of civilian volunteers or conscripts. All this resulted in a nightmare of logistic requirements. A systematic approach was needed to plan for their employment and Bigelow believed his principles were pertinent for study.

Bigelow's study of the Franco-Prussian War had convinced him that the art of war must be served by scientific principles for staff planning. His analysis of The Principles of Strategy tried to close the gap between the art of war on one hand and the science of war on the other. Clearly he did not intend his principles to be applied by rote on the battlefield. On the contrary, the principles were to be used in inductive analyses of military campaigns to discern the art of war. Many of his examples stress the vagaries of war and demonstrate the inappropriateness of certain principles under certain combat conditions. Basically, Bigelow had come to believe that only through careful preparation of the battlefield could generals exercise their art. Systematic staff preparation was critical before the battle.
The Significance of *The Principles of Strategy*

*The Principles of Strategy* is not a definitive examination of the principles of war. Rather, it is a historical review of American campaigns and battles that illustrate the course of the military policy of the United States since the founding of the nation. Certain of the guiding principles of Jomini, Clausewitz, von der Goltz, and other military thinkers are explored, but *The Principles of Strategy* is not a simple textbook that should be used as a guide to practical action. Although it was of direct interest to soldiers, Bigelow was also directing his philosophical comments on the conduct of war to the civilian leaders of the nation.

Bigelow had gleaned the principles of strategy from the major and minor studies of the art of war. His purpose in presenting his text to the U.S. Army and public was not to divine different or new principles but simply to illustrate historically tested tenets with American examples. In doing so his study was much more original than he supposed. In his ambitious and successful attempt to demonstrate the basic principles that guide strategy based on the American experience, he described a coherent United States military policy of total war that had heretofore never been articulated. Nevertheless, the pattern Bigelow unfolded was clear and concise, and *The Principles of Strategy* became a concordat for a doctrine of political war.

Bigelow wrote little that was totally new. *The Principles of Strategy*, however, was a plea for modernization and standardization for a professional army that had too long been neglected by a
complacent Congress and populace. Bigelow tried to call national attention to the threats to the security of the United States and to outline a doctrine of military preparedness. The Principles of Strategy was important mainly because Bigelow assembled and laid out in orderly fashion the collected experience of the U.S. Army since the American Revolution. He did not attempt to hide his debt to others and openly identified his sources, and the text is noteworthy for some of the divergent works that Bigelow culled for facts.

Bigelow found von der Goltz to be particularly influential. Bigelow cites von der Goltz frequently throughout The Principles of Strategy. Bigelow surely heeded the warning von der Goltz presented in the opening of his treatise The Nation in Arms:

A military writer who, after Clausewitz, writes upon war, runs the risk of being likened to the poet who, after Goethe, attempts a Faust, or, after Shakespeare, a Hamlet. Everything of any importance to be said about the nature of war can be found stereotyped in the works left behind by that greatest of military thinkers.39

It may be assumed, therefore, that Bigelow considered his study of war somehow unique and of particular significance to warfare and its development in the United States.

What influence did Bigelow have on the conduct of war? It is difficult to assess such influence or if indeed his principles were ever put into practice. However, it is certain that the United States Army had no clearly defined nor well-developed tactical nor strategic doctrine prior to 1891. It may be that Bigelow's work was of only academic merit with no practical military application. Bigelow

negotiated with T. Fisher Unwin for complimentary copies of the book to be sent to prominent military men such as Schofield, Miles, and Wesley Merritt, and 200 copies were purchased for the government for distribution to post libraries. It may have changed the way army officers viewed war, if not the way they fought it.

In his ambitious overview of *The Principles of Strategy*, Bigelow summarized his growing understanding of the art of war. Bigelow fully subscribed to the concept that the successful conduct of warfare is an art. Inherent in such a belief is his understanding that generalship is capable of being developed through study and experience. He approvingly quoted Sherman's assertion that "there may be such men as born generals, but I have never encountered them, and I doubt the wisdom of trusting to their turning up in an emergency." Bigelow was convinced that warfare must be mastered through an acquired appreciation of the basic and immutable principles that have been discerned in the successful military campaigns of the past. He perceived those principles as the scientific core of war or as that portion of generalship which can be acquired by study. Bigelow does not identify new principles of war but draws freely from the campaigns of Napoleon and the analytical works of Jomini, Clausewitz, Halleck, von der Goltz, and other authorities.

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40A Contract concerning the Publication of a work entitled *Principles of Strategy* entered into by Mr. Poulteny Bigelow on behalf of the Author of the Work on the one hand, & T. Fisher Unwin, Publisher of the said work on the other hand," undated copy March 1891, box 98, series 3, LC.


42Ibid.
Bigelow knew that scientific or simple mechanical knowledge of the principles of warfare are insufficient for generalship. Despite the unchanging character of these essential scientific principles of strategy, Bigelow emphasized that war is never static. Bigelow postulated that in war uncertainty is the only constant:

No two armies have exactly the same marching power; no road, railroad, or other line of communication is absolutely straight; no two such lines are exactly as practical the one as the other. Changes in the weather, works of improvement, and acts of destruction may effect daily and hourly variations in the practicality of a line of communication.\(^{43}\)

Simple scientific knowledge of the principles of war, therefore, must be bolstered by extensive experience. Bigelow was well aware that a soldier's opportunities to acquire combat experience were limited, even during periods of hostilities. Consequently, he recommended the historical study of war as the only means of gaining the necessary experience.\(^{44}\) Moreover, he proposed that the historical study of American wars was particularly remunerative, and he recommended it not only to professional soldiers but also to civilians "as an essential part of a liberal education."\(^{45}\)

Bigelow ascribed to mobile warfare. He disdained set-piece battles that waste lives in futile, unthinking frontal assaults. He carefully described a strategy based on maneuver.\(^{46}\) He envisioned all effective applications of strategy as consisting of movements upon an

\(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 81.

\(^{44}\)Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{45}\)Ibid.

\(^{46}\)Ibid., p. 81.
The choice of an objective in support of the eventual aim of strategy will dictate the form of war, but it must be marked by rapid movement. Bigelow skillfully described Stonewall Jackson's brilliant Shenandoah Valley campaign in 1862 as a classic example of maneuver. Jackson was able to achieve tactical superiority in the course of several major battles despite being strategically outnumbered by a force frequently twice his size. Bigelow's concise sketches illustrated his concept of the basic principles of strategy: tactical strategy, the use of maneuver to overmatch the enemy on the field of battle; regular strategy designed to deprive the enemy of his supplies; and political strategy to embarrass the hostile government.  

Bigelow emphasized that political strategy had been generally ignored in the strategic studies prevalent in army schools. He reviewed the British operations in the southern states, 1776-81, during the American Revolution as a pertinent example. He recounted the multiplicity of the British command between Lord Cornwallis in the field, Sir Henry Clinton in New York, and Lord Germain, the British Secretary of War, in London. Bigelow addressed this ill-fated campaign also to demonstrate the importance of unity of command. It is mainly, however, a well-told example of how a political strategy of a war directed against the people may be misapplied. Through the review of the British bungling of this campaign against the people

\[^{47}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{48}\text{Ibid., p. 228.}\]
\[^{49}\text{Ibid., p. 257.}\]
in the southern states, Bigelow cautioned against a blind application of his concept of total war:

How far the idea of dispiriting a people may be advantageously carried is a function of most uncertain factors. The infliction of suffering on a people who can stand all that can be inflicted only makes the military problem more difficult by embittering them, and so the infliction of inadequate suffering is a cruel mistake.50

Bigelow believes victory must be accomplished mainly through the wise employment of maneuver inherent in tactical strategy, designed to outnumber the enemy in battle. Regular strategy or depriving the enemy of supplies and political strategy cannot carry the war alone.51

Bigelow did not envision war as a science. Nevertheless, he asserted his strategic thought through basic principles and Jomini's geometric projections. It was an expedient in deference to the military vernacular of the day. Additionally, however, these fundamental principles allowed Bigelow systematically to formulate a unique American doctrine of war. Perhaps most importantly, Bigelow's careful analysis of the history of America's wars and his generous use of graphic examples demonstrated a profound evolution of American military thought. He showed that America's experience in war indicated that wars could not be won simply by trying to engage the enemy in a decisive battle. Not only was it too costly in terms of life and property, but also war had become much more complex. History demonstrated how technology had altered the nature of war. It followed in Bigelow's view, that similar changes in how nations waged

50Ibid., p. 232.
51Ibid.
war were warranted. To Bigelow these changes indicated total war in which the object was to attack not only the enemy army but also the enemy population.

It was a strategy designed to break the will of the enemy in a most expeditious manner. The goal was to inflict maximum punishment on the enemy, while enduring the least possible loss of life and property to one's own side. Bigelow's strategy of total war aimed at the destruction of enemy morale in lieu of the physical annihilation of opposing armies. Although he claimed no originality in his views, his synthesis of historical lessons clearly produced a unique strategic outlook. Much of his perspective should be attributed to the influence of Sherman, but he stamped his own mark on the future of war with the publication of *The Principle of Strategy*.

Bigelow realized the army had no doctrine nor concept of action for future wars. He also understood that without a proper focus for professional development, there would be few officers prepared to fight effectively in the event of hostilities. Therefore, based on historical precedent, he articulated a flexible concept of total war that he believed was applicable to the future. Interestingly, Bigelow feared that the army was becoming too scientific. Technological advances in firepower and mobility had led some thinkers to believe that once careful preparations were made the generalship was complete. On the contrary, despite the critical importance of the scientific preparation of the battlefield, Bigelow understood that the art of war still prevailed and that good generals must be prepared to meet the unexpected and contend with the constant
friction of battle. In many respects, Bigelow had carefully blended the strategic concepts of Jomini and Clausewitz into an original construct of his own.

Bigelow is an excellent example of how developments within the military sector of society can accurately reflect the developments in society as a whole. His concern for the professional development and reform of the army grew from a general awareness of military factors that affected all sectors of society, not from an isolated perspective blinded to all but selfish military needs. His career belies the intellectual gap that some historians perceive between the military and civil sectors during the latter portion of the nineteenth century. Although many men shaped the doctrine, strategy, and development of the United States Army, few have been as overlooked or forgotten as John Bigelow, Jr.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Historical Significance of John Bigelow, Jr.

Few military historians acknowledge Bigelow at all, much less assign to him any noteworthy significance to the development of the American army, the advancement of military thought, or the evolution of strategic military doctrine. William Addleman Ganoe's pioneer study of The History of the United States Army, first published in 1924, provided a bibliographical listing of several of Bigelow's major publications, but ignored his influence on the army in traditional deference to Dennis Hart Mahan, Emory Upton, Arthur L. Wagner, and Eben Swift, among others. A succession of complementary military histories further obscured Bigelow. Important in his day, Bigelow has become a forgotten historical figure. One can search many military histories of the concerned period, vainly perusing for a critical assessment or even mention of Bigelow. Few military historians interested in this period of American military history are likely to resurface Bigelow.

Nevertheless, Bigelow is regaining some appreciation largely due to the work of Weigley but also on the basis of a U.S. Military Academy reprint of Bigelow's The Principles of Strategy in 1968 in the West Point Military Library series. The editors of this series have
selected books and journals of "outstanding interest and significance in military history," giving special consideration to "works which have shaped American military thinking." Little most military historians have uncovered support the editor's choice. A consensus, perhaps, would rate him a historical curiosity among the litany of military luminaries who have been studied in detail. A perfunctory dismissal of the unique significance John Bigelow, Jr., had on American military thought fails adequately to assess the state of the study of war in the United States prior to the turn of the century. American military officers drew satisfaction from an intellectual study of tactics and the special knowledge and attributes which set them apart from civilians. Moreover, their knowledge of tactics was drawn from the examination of European wars. Bigelow turned professional military attention to the study of American campaigns, and by examining strategy he identified the unique strain of American warfare. Weigley states that Bigelow's study of The Principles of Strategy was the only "American book-length study of strategy worthy of mention" published between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the First World War.2

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Weigley provides the main impetus for a re-examination of the significance of Bigelow. His excellent examination of the History of the United States Army, published in 1967, is the first useful successor to Ganoe’s study. Weigley inserts the phrase "the remarkable John Bigelow" between a short discussion of Emory Upton and Arthur L. Wagner. It appears Weigley thinks Bigelow has some significance, but the text offers little clue as to why he thinks so. It is Weigley’s earlier study of American attitudes toward war, Toward an American Army, published in 1962, that provides a comprehensive portrait of Bigelow’s apparent merit. Only Timothy K. Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army, published in 1978, and Edward M. Coffman, The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898, published in 1986, appear to have continued Weigley’s analysis. Weigley, however, has raised the issue of Bigelow once more in a thoughtful analysis of "American Strategy from Its Beginnings Through the First World War" in Peter Paret’s new edition of Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age, published in 1986.

Military Influence of John Bigelow, Jr.

Did the publication of The Principles of Strategy exert influence on the army? Yes. John Gooch, in a review of Paret’s Makers of Modern Strategy, says there has "been an identifiable American way in warfare that involves using large amounts of materiel to overwhelm the enemy power." He acknowledges, however, that "great favorably with Wagner and Bourke. Although Coffman has worked with Bigelow’s diaries, his assessment appears based on Weigley’s analysis.
thinkers do not appear to have had very much of a hand in its creation."³ Bigelow, however, successfully culled America's experience in war to identify and describe this distinctly American predilection. Weigley suggests that "with no influential American strategic thinkers presenting a persuasive contrary view," it was Bigelow's lucid description of "a strategy based on Grant's in Virginia that shaped the American military participation in the First World War."⁴ Weigley summarizes Bigelow's proper standing in American military thought in a telling bibliographical essay appended to his contribution on American strategy to Makers of Modern Strategy:


Can this influence of Bigelow be adequately measured? No. Nevertheless, Bigelow's campaign study of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte was widely distributed by the Ordnance Department in 1884 and it made


⁵Ibid., p. 902. It should be noted that Bigelow was a First Lieutenant when The Principles of Strategy was initially published in 1891.
him fairly well-known within the army by the time *The Principles of Strategy* was first published in 1891. His journal article, "After Geronimo," serially published in *Outing Magazine* during the period March 1886 to April 1887, also gained him a wide audience and introduced his name to civilian readers interested in military affairs. He was not unknown, then, when his quarto volume on *The Principles of Strategy* was released and reviewed in most of the major military journals and the *New York Times*. All of the reviews were generally favorable, and the printing of a second, revised and enlarged edition must attest to some widespread interest and influence.

**John Bigelow, Jr., and Army Professionalism**

Bigelow was satisfied that the professional study of the American experience in war was fruitful for a fuller understanding of the conduct of war and the principles that guide good generalship. His earlier study of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, however, convinced him that warfare was an ever-changing phenomenon constantly subjected to the vicissitudes of technology and other developments. He realized that to be successful in war the United States Army could not depend upon experience gained in the Indian Wars to find generals for a major conventional conflict. His study of *The Principles of Strategy*, therefore, was not a tome to immutable principles of war, but rather a systematic guide to study and analyze military history and learn what precipitated the actions of the opposing generals. This vicarious experience could be applied by junior officers to other campaign studies, field training, map
exercises, or routine training in order to better develop professionalism in the army.

Bigelow never intended his book to be a practical guide to action. He believed war was conducted in a dynamic environment that frequently demanded unconventional responses. On the other hand, he also believed a static framework or series of principles was required to better evaluate and study the history of wars and campaigns. This dichotomy was expressed in a title he contemplated for his study—"Abstract War, illustrated by Concrete." Although Bigelow finally entitled his consideration of American military affairs The Principles of Strategy, he did not enumerate a prescriptive list of actions to guide soldiers in combat. The principles of war usually associated with Jomini are often listed simply as objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, cooperation, security, surprise, and simplicity. Bigelow certainly discussed many of these concepts in his examination of American strategy, but he used them to evaluate historical examples. He did not generalize the American experience in war to discern principles of military conduct. Bigelow believed Grant's remark in his Personal Memoirs that "if men make war in slavish obedience to rules, they will fail."7

A shortcoming of Bigelow's exposition and understanding of the art of war was his apparent disregard of naval warfare. This may be the product of ignorance or design. Clearly his interest was in

6The Diaries of John Bigelow, Jr., 10 July 1884, John Bigelow, Jr., Papers, United States Military Academy Library.

land warfare, and his study of the Franco-Prussian War could do little to further stir his interest in the navy. Bigelow was certainly familiar with the seminal work of Alfred Thayer Mahan. He cited Mahan in the bibliography to *The Principles of Strategy*, and his brother, Poultey Bigelow, was a friend and admirer of Mahan. Bigelow may simply have confined his thought to war on land, not wishing to risk a superficial, cursory review of naval warfare in the aftermath of Mahan's exhaustive treatise. The paucity of his discussion of naval activity might also be attributable to the limited American examples.

**John Bigelow, Jr., and American Military Strategy**

Most of Bigelow's contemporaries were concerned with utilitarian aspects of tactics to improve the soldier's skills. Bigelow viewed war, however, on a more complex level. He examined strategy and believed that effective applications of military force must be guided by a political purpose or objective. He described three forms of strategy in his study of *The Principles of Strategy*: tactical, regular, and political. He fully appreciated the importance of chance in warfare and as a result could not ascribe to one form of strategy over another. Although he recognized the importance of political strategy, taking the war to the people, the forms of strategy might be applied in consonance or any one might take precedence depending on the circumstances. Although Bigelow described his strategies in terms of maneuver, he never believed war could be won by maneuver in lieu of battle. He recognized limited ends but did not limit military effort. He codified the Sherman ethic in American military strategy.
Although after his retirement from active service Bigelow devoted a great deal of time to geography, the history of discoveries, and languages, he continued his interest in military strategy. He published much commentary in the press, magazines, and journals. He published studies on American Policy: The Western Hemisphere in its Relations to the Eastern in 1914; Breeches of Anglo-American Treaties: A Study in History and Diplomacy in 1917; and World Peace: How War Cannot Be Abolished; How it May Be Abolished also in 1917. He also compiled volumes 4 and 5 to his father's Retrospections of an Active Life from material entrusted to him after his father's death.

Summary

His major measure of merit, however, was as a military historian and strategist. He had a substantial influence on doctrine during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He wrote with an awareness that military preparedness cannot be assured simply by correcting the mistakes of the last war. The lessons inherent in the historical evolution of strategy must be projected correctly to assess the dynamics of future battle. Bigelow understood the wanton destructiveness technology could impose on war and developed strategies to limit war. His significance must be measured in light of broad, representative contributions to military theory and history. Bigelow was particularly noteworthy and displayed a profound intellectual awareness of the problems of war. He had a favorable impact on the advancement of military thought, not only for the espousal of any one theory or doctrine, but rather for the aggregate efforts of his career. He was not always correct, and much of what he
had proposed did not weather well. Nevertheless, his influence upon the American military was pronounced.

True, Bigelow is probably the most overlooked of America's military critics, historians, and strategists who tried to cope with the technological, organizational, and doctrinal changes occurring in warfare during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, his original ideas and studies on strategy exerted considerable influence in the United States and Europe, although his contribution to the study and development of military history and strategy are rarely acknowledged.

That he has been overlooked cannot detract from his merit. As late as 1910 he demonstrated the futility and foolishness of the infantry frontal assault in his classic Civil War campaign study, The Campaign of Chancellorsville. Few generals of the opposing armies of the First World War displayed a useful awareness of this historical lesson. A misreading of Clausewitz led many of these battlefield commanders to endure disproportionately heavy losses in an attempt to mass superior forces at a decisive position. Bigelow appreciated the need for mobility in warfare, the skillful use of the defense, and the overriding influence of political policy.
WORKS CONSULTED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Public Documents


Diaries, Letters, and Memoirs


New York Public Library. Rare Books and Manuscripts Division. The Papers of John Bigelow.

99
Books, General and Reference


Holden, Edward S., ed. Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York Since its Establishment in 1802, by Major General


Book Chapters and Journal Articles


Newspaper Articles and Pamphlets

Army and Navy Journal, 1884-93.


SECONDARY SOURCES

Memoirs


Books, General and Reference


Book Chapters and Journal Articles


Pamphlets

