



# UNIFORM BEHAVIOR

POLICE LOCALISM AND NATIONAL POLITICS

EDITED BY  
STACY K. MCGOLDRICK  
AND ANDREA MCARDLE



## Uniform Behavior

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## **Police Localism and National Politics**

**Edited by**

***Stacy K. McGoldrick  
and  
Andrea McArdle***

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Stacy K. McGoldrick: To my grand father James McCloskey, a dedicated Philadelphia police officer.

Andrea McArdle: To my parents, the late James and Gloria McArdle.



UNIFORM BEHAVIOR

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# Introduction

*Stacy K. McGoldrick and Andrea McArdle*

In August 1997, Abner Louima was tortured and sexually assaulted in Brooklyn's 70th Precinct station house. As this incident began to create national shock waves, a personal advisor to Louima suggested he say that during the attack one officer had asserted that it was "Giuliani time," meaning that the police could act with relative impunity (Kocieniewski 1997, Toobin 2002). Although Louima later recanted this statement, the retraction came only after the quote had saturated media coverage of the event. Despite the fact that it turned out to be untrue, local communities were galvanized by the comment because they thought it embodied police culture under Mayor Giuliani. The brutality that Louima experienced and the discourse that swirled around his assault will likely be long discussed by urban sociologists and historians as evidence of New York City's political culture in the 1990s.

Beneath the sensational and polemically charged facts of this case is a mundane reality that may become far more noteworthy in the years ahead: in 1997 the public conceived of responsibility for police behavior as residing with the mayor of the city. Thus "Giuliani time" was different from "Dinkins time" or the time of any other mayor. In protests over the brutality and the controversial trials of the officers involved, demonstrators focused on the police chief and mayor. In other words, public discourse about city policing had a local context; the communities who were subject to those police forces drove debates and discussions, and new policing policies were rooted in local politics.

As we write this introduction, the catastrophe of hurricane Katrina is unfolding in the Gulf Coast. If Abner Louima personifies a sad legacy of police-community relations in the 1990s, Katrina may well come to characterize Homeland Security and policing during the war on terror. While most of us are haunted by the images of evacuees stranded in the New Orleans Convention Center without food and water, the scope of the suffering needs to be considered in terms of the failure of local

police forces to maintain order and public safety; the failure of the national guard and other U.S. security forces to move quickly, efficiently, and humanely; and the failure of the Department of Homeland Security and its federal emergency management agency to safely evacuate a dangerous city. The inability of various branches of law enforcement to coordinate, resulting in part from confused jurisdictional lines and overlapping geographic territories, speaks to the challenges ahead for any Homeland Security force to be able to deal with human disasters, either man-made or natural. The organization and management of police forces, along with the cultural understandings that develop around their practices and deployment, are not just about politics and power. As we have seen in the early fall of 2005, there are enormous consequences and many lives at stake when police work is carried out without proper care for human life and suffering.

Historically, American police forces have always been intimately connected to local political parties and the concerns of the local populations, usually the elites of that local population. In the case of the United States, the first police forces were institutionalized slave patrols that operated in southern cities. In the northeast, cities like New York and Boston developed police forces in response to calls for social order and those forces developed under the heavy influence of local political machines. As William Allison demonstrates in his piece for this volume, until calls by reformers during the Progressive era changed some departments, municipal police forces commonly replaced most of their patrolmen and officers when a new party came to power in the city council. Thus the connection between localism, municipal politics, and social order of policing was true from the inception of American police forces.

This tradition has been complicated by various interventions from the federal and state governments. The Progressive Era marked the beginnings of more complex interactions between local forces and federal authorities, especially in eastern cities. Chapters in this volume by William Allison, Val Marie Johnson, and Joseph Varga examine the nuances of these federal-local engagements during that period. More recently these interventions have included grant money to buy equipment and lawsuits over racial profiling, as chapters by Marilyn S. Johnson and Andrea McArdle demonstrate. Nevertheless, police departments varied largely from city to city, and they were shaped both institutionally and culturally by the cities, suburbs, and rural areas they policed. As this history of police localism has played a part in the vast political differences we have seen across the American landscape, one of the goals of this book is to reflect on the complicated relationships between police forces and the communities they police. Several chapters in this book, including Marilyn S. Johnson's and Andrea McArdle's accounts of New York City's police department, Kris

Erickson, John Carr, and Steve Herbert's analysis of local dynamics in Portland, Oregon, that ultimately led Portland to withdraw from formal cooperation with the FBI, and Anthony Pereira's study of policing in New Orleans, explicitly demonstrate this inherently American phenomenon by drawing on local experiences with police forces and the regional particulars of community struggles for police reform.

Perhaps the best way to understand the role of local politics in police operations is to investigate that ambiguous distinction with which citizens most often concern themselves—the line between formal and informal police duties. By informal policing we mean the casual (not explicitly managed or mandated) activities police officers engage in, which can include profiling, patrolling, or stop-and-frisks. The conflation of formal and informal elements in police work can be described through the metaphor of distance; if the informal activities of police reflect a conception of the proper distance between police and the community to be rather intimate, then police reform can be seen as the result of new debates and new powers seeking to reconfigure that distance.<sup>1</sup> At moments reformers have sought to widen the distance between police force and communities through professionalization (such as formal education and recruitment processes), militarization (formal tactics favored over the informal inquiries of the beat officer), and removal of the influence of municipal government over hiring and promotion. More recently, community policing and team policing have sought to reintegrate police officers into the communities they police. Finally, the policies of the Department of Homeland Security have had the effect of distancing police forces from communities by mandating certain activities over others (guarding the power plant because of the yellow alert instead of patrolling the neighborhood, for example). The salience of informal policing and community perceptions of police activities resurfaces in many periods when crises of urban identity appear.

William Thomas Allison provides us with one example of how struggles over informal policing represented a call for greater distance between police and communities with his discussion of the prevalence of the military metaphor and its link to professionalization among police forces in the first decades of the twentieth century. Reformers thought that separating police from local political machines, among other efforts to professionalize police officers, would help create a force less susceptible to corruption. In contrast, the first police forces in southern and northern American cities in the first half of the nineteenth century were intimate with local political structures and any attempt to separate the police from their patronage position within municipal governments was met with fierce and often violent resistance. The intimacy of local police departments with both the elites in the local community and political parties helped create an informal legitimacy

necessary within the American republican context. For example, Joseph Varga's chapter detailing the enforcement of a police commissioner's English-only mandate at a tenants' rally in Brooklyn, New York, during the post-World War I Red Scare examines how the police, in maintaining order, reflected the prevailing interests and insecurities of the most powerful members of the community.

In the post-September 11 world, U.S. police forces are experiencing an ever-increasing pressure to respond to the enforcement initiatives of the national government and its new Department of Homeland Security—from enforcement of civil immigration law to responding to the national color alert systems that register apparent shifts in levels of vulnerability to terrorist acts. Exploring the greater implications of Homeland Security and the “War on Terror,” scholars in this collection address the extent to which the changes and enforcement priorities introduced with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security will lead to a change in both the culture of policing and the locus of responsibility for the actions of police forces. While authors in this volume analyze the lineage of the localist orientation toward policing and moments of police reform, we also take into account the growing challenges of “Homeland Security” and its possible implications for the tradition of local control and accountability in policing. For example, if police are accused of abuse while enforcing their new national responsibilities related to antiterrorism, the question of political accountability becomes more complicated. While it is now politically untenable at best and absurd at worst to blame the president for municipal police abuses, there is increasing reason to believe that the expectation of purely local accountability for police forces is now being ruptured. With the onset of Homeland Security initiatives, the USA PATRIOT Act, and other legislation that seeks to coordinate the anti-terrorist tactics of police forces, a new dynamic in local police work has come to the forefront. In the post-September 11 era the police force is national, even international, rather than local, in its vision.

In the first years of the twenty-first century we appear to be undergoing a sea change in the scope of police operations and this anthology will explore the implications of new national priorities for community-police relationships. Bringing together the work of a diverse group of authors, this collection offers a new perspective on police studies, focusing on the impact of national policy imperatives on the tradition of localism and on the meanings attached to the dynamic, mutable relationships between local police forces and communities. We consider the impact of these significant if underappreciated changes in policing against other moments of shift in the culture, organization, and mission of U.S. police forces.

This book does not seek to analyze approaches to policing (i.e., community policing vs. zero-tolerance initiatives) or simply to offer case studies that document the experience within particular localities. Rather, the discussion of local policing will be more conceptual as we seek to draw insights into how various frameworks for police deployment illuminate social and cultural struggles. Thus, the anthology addresses how the conceptualization of policing and police culture as local has changed over time, how national and geopolitical imperatives of the moment are affecting communal and informal systems of governance, and what the history of state- or nationally imposed police reforms can tell us about the likely consequences of national antiterrorist initiatives such as those under the rubric of Homeland Security.

Foundational to any theory of policing is the idea that policing is not simply a matter of the formal laws that police enforce, or the kind of state that has jurisdiction over them, but is made up of informal, on-the-spot decision making that reaffirms, or can damage, police legitimacy. In such engagements, the police force acts outside its bureaucratic role as enforcer of the formal written law. A close examination of officers' actions in these gray areas can provide us with significant information about how police forces interact with local communities, and whose community interests are being advanced or attended to. Hegemonic community pressures on the police departments often get articulated both in the culture of policing and in the day-to-day ways in which police interact with nonhegemonic members of the community. For example, when a police officer decides to "stop and frisk" individuals in poor or racially segregated neighborhoods, the decision may reflect cultural conceptions of race, class, criminality, and hegemonic desires about enforcement priorities and the populations that the police should target. Joseph Varga's chapter on public-order policing targeting local tenant activism in New York City during the Red Scare, Val Marie Johnson's study of private and state policing of immigrant women's morality during the Progressive Era in New York City, and Anthony Pereira's examination of how policing in New Orleans has operated in a context of grave inequalities and social deprivation, illuminate this theme.

Another important aim of this anthology is to recover evidence indicating that great struggles over the scope and function of policing have occurred before, to account for how these battles have led to transformations in the distribution of authority between local and national levels of government, and to identify the altering dynamics of class, race, and gender in police-community relations. For instance, historically, police forces have developed locally in the framework of the political, cultural, and racial realities of the place being policed. In those contexts, there has been tension between communities' political desire to maintain local control over

their police forces and the occasional push for statewide or national control. We can see this struggle in the state takeover of the New Orleans police force in the wake of Reconstruction, for example, and in the White League assaults on police officers that resulted. Although it springs from a different set of concerns, this dialectic is once again in evidence in the war on terrorism. The tensions between local and state or federal institutions are documented in differently nuanced ways here in Marilyn S. Johnson's chapter on how federal intervention has followed a pendulum-like pattern, periodically advancing the struggle against police misconduct but at other times encouraging local police to engage in political surveillance and repression, and Erikson, Carr, and Herbert's analysis of tensions between the federal and local scales of governance of policing.

The political struggle over police roles now under way is being waged increasingly on the national and international as well as local fronts. Police forces are now expected to carry out national government initiatives in unprecedented ways. For example, Andrea McArdle addresses how local police forces are being recruited to enforce federal civil immigration laws and generally to protect the nation state in their role as "first responders" in the event of terrorist attack. Stacy K. McGoldrick's chapter traces how these changes in expectation and practice have been accompanied by a more nationalized discourse concerning crime and policing.

In addition to dealing with local crime, police now operate in the context of international events. Peter Manning's chapter on the emergent growth of cooperation among police agencies points out that a broader transnational security perspective, one that extends beyond the new priorities that police forces face as a result of the terrorist attack on September 11, has been transforming policing in the United States, particularly at the local level. Anthony Pereira's examination of local context in policing in New Orleans occurs within a larger framework of the state and its repressive mechanisms and relates policing to the salience of the right to human security and the rule of law in democracies. Joanne Klein's chapter examining the failed British policy of criminalizing terrorism in Northern Ireland during the "Troubles," the mid-1970s-to-1998 period of civil war between Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants, offers a comparative perspective on antiterrorist policing. It resonates strikingly with recent experience in the United States.

This book places in historical context the continuing push-pull dynamics between national politics and the entrenched tradition of local control over law enforcement in the United States. Drawing on the present sense of urgency around the war on terror and earlier national political initiatives that have sought to influence law enforcement at the local level, this book addresses key questions about how national and geopolitical developments

come to shape local policing and inform who decides how, and to what end, local police forces will maintain public order, interact with local communities, and address issues of accountability, oversight, and reform.

### Note

1. Stacy K. McGoldrick was inspired to use this metaphor from a similar usage in Davis, Diane E. "The Power of Distance: Rethinking Social Movements in Latin America." *Theory and Society*, 24(4) (1999), pp. 589–643.

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# The Militarization of American Policing: Enduring Metaphor for a Shifting Context

*William Thomas Allison*

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, many Progressive police reformers developed what came to be known as the military analogy to promote the professional model of police reform. The Progressives, social and political reformers active between the 1890s and early 1900s, wanted to clean up corrupt cities, and police forces seemed a logical place to focus their efforts; the military analogy's model and its accompanying rhetoric provided an apparently quick-fix, depoliticized framework to rid police forces of graft and corruption, and remold police into model agencies to maintain law and order in American cities. The concept applied military-style organization, structure, practice, and purpose to the professional model of policing. Furthermore, professional policing emphasized decentralized local organization rather than national centralized authority, which had been popular in Europe but did not articulate well with the American tradition of localism.

The military analogy also applied war-like terminology to crime policy and police theory, creating rhetoric and a vernacular that remain even though the analogy's use as a reform tool has waned. Indeed, the rhetoric may well be the lasting legacy of the militarization of American policing. Despite much criticism, the idea of a "war on crime" remains a consistent theme in American police and crime policy. This is the case even more so today as police agencies are expanding their mission to include the domestic



“war on terror” and still grappling with the implications of decentralization versus centralization for police organization.

### **The Military Model and the Spirit of Reform**

As part of the Progressive Era effort to clean up city politics and attack vice and other social evils, reformers demanded effective and efficient police departments.<sup>1</sup> Progressive reform set police on the path of professionalization and community-oriented policing methods that would achieve prominence in the last quarter of the twentieth century. During the Progressive Era, police departments experimented with civil service, training and education, and sharing experiences through nascent professional organization. Police work, like many other fields, such as law, medicine, education, even the military, evolved into a profession, in which practitioners of a career field established educational, ethical, and organizational standards. Indeed, the U.S. military had been one of the earliest career fields to become a profession in the nineteenth century. Progressives applied scientific management and corporate organization models to administering city governments and providing efficient city services. Ward politics and city boss machines complicated such concepts, especially in regard to police reform.

The military model and its rhetoric of police reform seemed to offer an alternative paradigm more fitting to what Progressives thought police ought to be doing—fighting a “war” against crime and vice. For example, Progressive politicians, such as then New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson (a great proponent of public administration) and New York City Police Commissioner William McAdoo, compared police in the United States to an army in both method and purpose.<sup>2</sup> The military model provided the organizational, strategic, and tactical reforms and methods to “fight” a “war on crime.” The military analogy’s rhetoric provided the rousing martial language that accompanied the military model to inspire police and assure the public.

During the Progressive Era the military analogy resonated with reformers, especially in overcrowded industrial cities, where crime had become a critical political and social problem. Police now warred on crime and the principal battleground was the American city. This characterization continued well into the twentieth century, and in 1929, New York City Police Commissioner Grover Whalen, who once commented “There is plenty of law at the end of a nightstick,” filled in the players in the vernacular of the analogy: criminals were the enemy, lawyers served criminals as diplomats, police manned the trenches as the last line of defense, and civilians played the role of unwilling combatants. However exaggerated, “good” and “evil”

fought for control of American cities. Unlike World War I, where “peace without victory” was the objective, nothing short of unconditional surrender would suffice in the war against crime. A small minority of Progressive police reformers, such as Raymond Fosdick and August Vollmer, feared the potential threat of militarism and its tactics to a free civil society and preferred a less-militarized model of reform that focused on education and scientific methods to promote police professionalism. But the ringing military rhetoric that dominated public debate often overshadowed their dissent.<sup>3</sup>

Police historian Robert Fogelson correctly asserts that the military analogy legitimized Progressive reformers’ attempts to separate police from partisan local politics. Furthermore, moving from political organization to “professionalization” was a common Progressive theme. For example, the U.S. Army and Navy had spent much of the nineteenth century depoliticizing their respective officer corps and striving toward becoming a professional fighting force. Generally, the military had avoided the corruptive grasp of party politics. Nor had it succumbed to unionization. Since police and the military shared somewhat common purposes, Progressive Era reformers saw military organization as a good model for policing. According to reformers, to successfully conduct a war on crime in American cities, police had to be truly independent of party machines and avoid the temptation of organized labor. By presenting police as a top-down military rather than a political organization, reformers boldly hoped to eliminate corrupt relationships between police and boss politics.<sup>4</sup>

These attitudes toward policing loosely resembled those in Europe, where police forces had long operated along military lines, much more so than American police ever dreamed of doing. Britain’s “bobbies,” the Italian Carabinieri, and French *Gendarmes*, along with Spanish, Russian, and Swiss police all followed a military organizational model under centralized state management rather than local control. The strong European tradition of centralized authority allowed for the success of the military model of policing in Europe. The significant absence of the military analogy’s rhetoric in European policing, however, made such a system palatable for European citizens and their sense of rights and civic responsibility. In the United States, tradition and history dictated the opposite—the traditional disdain for and fear of centralized authority had been so deeply rooted in American society that a sense of rights and civic responsibility forcibly forbade an armed centralized national police force. In the United States, then, police would come to be militarized but not on a national level, and not without some trepidation. Authority and control would have to remain primarily local.<sup>5</sup>

The military analogy of police reform had its initial impact on police reorganization and reform during the Progressive Era. By 1900, Los Angeles and

Milwaukee, among several other cities, had reorganized police departments along military lines and had even enthusiastically courted former as well as active military officers to command police departments. In accordance with military organization, departments became more locally centralized by consolidating precincts and streamlining chains of command and more specialized by adding detective bureaus, traffic departments, and vice squads. Departments added more administrative and operational support for patrolmen on the streets, much like industrialized armies had increased logistical and other support for troops in the field. Local centralization, consolidation, specialization—these became the watchwords of Progressive professionalized police reform according to the military analogy.<sup>6</sup>

### **Teddy Roosevelt's Experiment: Police Professionalization and the Military Ideal**

Theodore Roosevelt practiced the military analogy perhaps with greater zeal than any other reformer and certainly became its most popular advocate. With impressive energy, Roosevelt applied the military analogy model to the New York City Police Department (NYPD) as a member of the New York City Board of Police Commissioners from 1895 to 1897. The epitome of the nonprofessional military enthusiast, Roosevelt resigned his position on the Federal Civil Service Commission to serve as a police commissioner for New York City. He recognized this was a risky move, especially for a politician with national ambitions. In few places in the United States were corruption and police so intertwined as in New York City. Tammany Hall had controlled police graft since before the Civil War, and its grip on the NYPD was solidly entrenched despite efforts by reformers to loosen its hold. Up to that time, the commission had made little effort and less progress toward reform, even though establishing the commission itself was supposed to have been a move toward that very end.<sup>7</sup>

As a police commissioner, Roosevelt is more popularly known for his exploits, such as going on patrols and personally involving himself in several investigations. Often accompanied by Progressive journalists Lincoln Steffens, Stephen Crane, and Jacob Riis, he reveled in his “midnight rambles,” calling them “great fun.” All three journalists filled their newspaper pages with stories of Roosevelt, the hands-on reform police commissioner.<sup>8</sup> Roosevelt’s proactive approach seemed more intent on catching police who were not working than watching police at work. He enjoyed finding startled cops who were supposed to be on patrol sitting instead in a saloon with brew in hand or, worse, yet, caught in the act of accepting a bribe from a saloonkeeper or madam of a house of prostitution.<sup>9</sup>

Roosevelt promoted the military analogy through bellicose pronouncements that set an early standard for military analogy oratory. He claimed that no other city in the United States had “such desperate enemies to fight as ours,” and that the commission was “attacking corruption as it never before has been attacked.”<sup>10</sup> In *Cosmopolitan*, he described the police as a “half-military” organization that required the same structure, discipline, and values as “obtain to the Army and Navy.” Like soldiers, Roosevelt, wrote, police had to exhibit “vigilance, good judgment, . . . great energy, courage, and determination in the performance of their regular duties.”<sup>11</sup> In an essay in *American Ideals*, he beat the drums of war, calling for a “war against corruption,” “resolute warfare against every type of criminal,” and “war upon all criminals alike.” He promised to turn the NYPD into a force of “fighting efficiency.”<sup>12</sup> In *The Forum*, Roosevelt expressed his politically astute resolve to uphold the rule of law through clean police work:

In the end, we shall win, in spite of the open opposition of the forces of evil, in spite of the timid surrender of the weakly good, if only we stand squarely and fairly on the platform of honest enforcement of the law of the land. But if we are to face defeat instead of victory, that would not alter our convictions and would not cause us to flinch one hand’s breadth from the course we have been pursuing. There are prices too dear to be paid even for victory. We would rather face defeat as a consequence of honestly enforcing the law than win suicidal triumph by a corrupt conviction at its violation.<sup>13</sup>

His use of such military rhetoric was not lost upon his fellow commissioners. Avery Andrews, a Democrat, had graduated from West Point and Republican commissioner Frederick Grant, son of General Grant, had been a successful soldier in his own right, serving in the Indian Wars. Both championed the military analogy.

Roosevelt even allowed his military fervor to influence his opinions on the ethnicity of police officers. He despised Irish immigrants, who made up a large portion of the force and who had, he thought, a propensity toward corruption. Because of his idealized view of Prussian military tradition, he believed German immigrants should have made excellent policemen, but they, too, disappointed him.<sup>14</sup> Overall, he preferred native-born Americans who had recently served in the Army or Navy, which should come as no surprise considering the militaristic attitudes, such as duty to country, honor, and courage, Roosevelt championed.<sup>15</sup>

Roosevelt’s martial verse was not without substance. He instilled military discipline in the police force in order to weed out corrupt and incompetent officers. Whereas previously recruits had bought their way into the police force, rigid mental and physical examinations awaited recruits hoping to join the force under the Roosevelt Board. Over a third of the applicants

failed either or both examinations. Writing that like soldiers the best police should be those “who win promotion by some feat of gallantry on the field of battle,” Roosevelt put in place awards and promotion for meritorious conduct and bravery. He ordered precincts to conduct drill twice a week, marching in tight formation and practicing baton use. He instituted pistol practice and shooting competitions. His famous bicycle squad developed into what Roosevelt called a “remarkable . . . *corps d’elite*” that exhibited “devotion to duty” and “daring and skill.” Roosevelt wrote with great pride that “the police service is military in character, and we wished to encourage the military virtues.”<sup>16</sup>

Roosevelt met his end in New York City by insisting on enforcing Sunday liquor laws. Saloons and other establishments that served liquor had either ignored the law or paid off cops to look the other way on Sundays. Tammany Hall had openly flaunted its success in breaking the law. Roosevelt, a politician at heart, realized that sacrificing himself for the Sunday liquor law was not worth his political future. He resigned from the commission in April 1897 to take up duties as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for the McKinley administration. Neither Tammany Hall nor the state Republican machine in Albany mourned his departure and both had a hand in moving Roosevelt along to Washington. His impact on the NYPD in the short term suffered, as Tammany Hall experienced a brief resurgence at the beginning of the new century and reversed several of the Roosevelt Board’s reforms. Like many Progressive Era reformers, Roosevelt had attempted too much too fast, but he had brought national attention to the military analogy.<sup>17</sup>

The military analogy did not die with Roosevelt’s departure from police work. Just after World War I, New York City Police Commissioner Arthur Woods encountered problems similar to those that had confronted Roosevelt. A veteran of the war, Woods strongly supported the military analogy as the path to a solution. Writing in his *Policeman and Public*, published by Yale University Press in 1919, Woods promoted *esprit d’corps* among police, training and education, and professionalism in police departments to better wage war on crime. Woods maintained that the “departmental instinct of courage” made policemen “brave,” ready to face “danger in ways that are not commonly realized.” This danger in American cities was of a “different kind,” according to Woods, from “that which the soldier faces.” Whereas a soldier knew his enemy, a policeman did “not know who may be his enemy, and he must not be too quick to conclude that anyone is hostile.” For that reason, Woods warned that the military analogy must not be overzealous. Police, according to Woods, functioned as peace officers first and foremost: it would be “absurd if [policemen] appeared warlike.” He believed the crime problem in American cities required a war to fight it, but he also recognized the delicate position of

domestic police forces in a free society. If police became de facto military soldiers, the values and institutions of free society could be threatened. Still, Woods maintained that in some ways police were fighting a tougher war than soldiers in the military fought. Police faced “unceasing warfare” that required constant vigilance, lest they lose the “fight.”<sup>18</sup>

Woods believed that training and professionalism based upon military ideals would enable police to prevail in the war on crime. Police officers had to undertake continuous and effective training just as military officers underwent throughout their careers. Ongoing training and promotion based upon merit, according to Woods, would allow knowledge, skill, discipline, and efficient organization to improve police work at all levels. He recommended that police training schools and academies be established across the United States and be made mandatory for police service. It is important to remember that in 1919 police training was still an embryonic and somewhat unpopular concept in many American cities, especially those with strong political machines involved in police politics.<sup>19</sup>

Woods’s thinking represented a faddish crossover between the military and police work that had currency from the early 1900s through the 1920s. The linking of police reform with the use of the military analogy received great attention across the nation. Police departments of all sizes endeavored to apply the military-like methods that Roosevelt, Woods, and others championed. Several departments turned to military officers, hoping that the experience of military life and wartime campaigns could help lead cities to victory in the war on crime.

### **The Military Model and Reform in Philadelphia: The Machine Fights Back**

By far the most famous and extreme of these experiments of putting the military analogy to work under the command of a military officer was the experience of Philadelphia in the 1920s. Mayor W. Freeland Kendrick, a machine politician but nominal reformist elected in 1923, applied a radical form of the military analogy to superficially clean up the Philadelphia Police Department and curb crime. Using an active-duty senior general officer of the U.S. military to run a city police department represented a dangerous involvement of the military in domestic affairs. His choice for the job was renowned Marine Corps General Smedley Butler. A veteran of the Spanish American War, the Boxer Rebellion, and the occupations of Haiti and Nicaragua, Butler had earned a reputation as both a fighter and an administrator. He had twice been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and had declined to accept a third citation. In the eyes of reformers,

his colorful combat record and harshly efficient colonial administrations in Haiti and Nicaragua had prepared him well for ridding one of the largest American cities of crime. Mayor Kendrick wanted Butler because he was well known, full of bravado, and, as an officer, could be expected to follow orders, in this case from the Philadelphia political machine. The press praised the choice. John Stuart, writing for *Collier's*, called Butler the right “fighting cuss” for the job: “A hot time was promised.”<sup>20</sup>

Speak-easies, prostitution, gambling, and a multitude of other vices that shocked the strict moral mindset of the city’s upper-middle-class reformers ran rampant in Prohibition Era Philadelphia.<sup>21</sup> Deeply rooted in the fertile dirt of machine politics, ward bosses had managed to prevent long-term meaningful police reform. Butler was the man, the machine thought, who could lead a superficial reform of the police and wage a spurious war on crime, and thus satisfy public concerns while allowing the machine to maintain control of its lucrative illegal schemes. The bosses never intended that Butler win the war; only fight it so that it looked like he was winning. He had been hired as a “smokescreen.”<sup>22</sup>

Butler took office in 1924 and immediately went on the offensive, dashing Mayor Kendrick’s hope that he would follow orders. This was indeed “a new type of war for a Marine.” Butler pledged to “wage ruthless war on crime, vice, and to enforce prohibition.”<sup>23</sup> He gathered the Philadelphia police force in the opera house and delivered speeches urging the cops on to the fight as if they were about to go into battle in the Philippines or France. He boldly offered a promotion to the first cop who killed a gangster. To the press and city leaders, he promised to rid Philadelphia of vice in a mere forty-eight hours. Within those forty-eight hours, 75 percent of the 1,300 salons in Philadelphia had been closed down. The infamous “Tenderloin” district of the city had been wrecked, but only temporarily, as many of these establishments reopened in a matter of weeks. The *New York Times* ran the headline: “Butler Begins War: Undesirables Flee from Philadelphia.” Police in east coast cities set up roadblocks and posted extra patrolmen at train stations in the hope of preventing these “undesirables” from adding to their already infested streets.<sup>24</sup>

Butler took the concept of “war on crime” literally. He militarized the Philadelphia police force. Patrolmen sported new grayish-blue uniforms complete with Sam Brown belts, holsters, and bandoliers. Butler himself wore a custom uniform loosely modeled after his Marine dress uniform, adding a blue cape with two gold stars on its stiff collar symbolizing the rank of major general (Butler was only a brigadier general at the time). He set up military-style outposts on street corners and organized a special “bandit squad” armed with armored cars and sawed-off shotguns to raid prostitution houses, bootleggers, and crime dens. His attitude toward

criminals was not in the mold of the Progressives and reflected his own attitudes toward the occupied peoples over which he had reigned during his military career. He publicly claimed, "The only way to reform a crook is to kill him," and gave several similarly belligerent performances in speeches, radio addresses, and newspaper interviews.<sup>25</sup> That his administration epitomized the dangers of military rule was of little doubt, as *Literary Digest* concluded: "The inauguration of a military dictatorship in the city where the Declaration of Independence was signed is a sign of tendencies which distinguish American political currents in the twentieth century. In the very cradle of liberty, the civil government has been made subordinate to military government."<sup>26</sup>

Butler attacked the police department itself with equal vigor. Bucking the police reform trend of education and training, Butler abolished the department's School of Instruction and revamped promotion guidelines. All training would be on-the-job and under Butler's command. He notoriously barged into a station house, located the nearest sergeant who appeared to have "leadership qualities," and promoted him on the spot. It was about as close to a battlefield promotion as one could get in the "war on crime" under Smedley Butler. He took personnel and other resources from the traffic department and detective bureau and added to his patrol squads and special raid teams. Police themselves came up with creative names for various squads, such as the "Alcohol Expeditionary Force." He created a handpicked "shoe-fly" squad to rat out corruption within the police department. Butler centralized police organization along strict lines. He needed a "disciplined army in the war against crime," and thus had little choice but to try to remove the control of the bosses. Much to the chagrin of the bosses, but with Mayor Kendrick's grudging approval, Butler completely reorganized the city's police districts, consolidating them by half to twenty-two. To command each district, he personally appointed a new captain and two lieutenants, chosen from other neighborhoods in an effort to avoid the controlling arms of local ward bosses. Like his *gendarmes* in Haiti, Butler's Philadelphia police would not be manipulated by local political factions.<sup>27</sup>

Philadelphia, however, was not Haiti, and in the end the political machine of the City of Brotherly Love found Butler's tactics incompatible with its own strategic objectives. Even Mayor Kendrick had reached his limit with the flamboyant Marine general. Butler's tenure ended after less than two contentious years. Like Roosevelt in New York, Butler was too much, too fast, and showed that reformers using the military analogy had perhaps pushed their case too well. With one of the most famous military officers brought in to run the police, Philadelphia's experience with Butler received widespread publicity, which in the end was not flattering to either



side. Butler and Kendrick publicly argued over who had the final say over police appointments and dismissals. This small feud festered into a much larger crisis as the Philadelphia political machine pressured Kendrick to force Butler to relax enforcement of prohibition laws so that the machine could recoup some of its losses from Butler's antivice activities in 1924.<sup>28</sup> In late December 1925, Kendrick ordered Butler to step down as Director of Public Safety, declaring that "I had the guts to bring General Butler to Philadelphia, and I have the guts to fire him." As word spread of Butler's imminent departure, Philadelphia hotels planned New Year's Eve celebrations replete with flowing fountains of liquor. On December 26, Butler left Philadelphia for his home in San Diego.<sup>29</sup>

Butler's tenure in Philadelphia received mixed reviews. The *Christian Science Monitor* praised him for an effective war on robbery and violent crime, but took him to task for losing the battle to enforce prohibition. The *New York Times*, however, claimed that getting a drink in Philadelphia was nowhere near as easy as it was before General Butler took command. Few, not the least of whom was President Calvin Coolidge, enjoyed the idea of an officer of the American military being involved in the messy slander of big-city machine politics. The *New York Times* praised Coolidge's conclusion that Butler was no longer effective in Philadelphia and was not doing the Marine Corps good service by wishing to continue to work there. In a short time, Philadelphia returned to its pre-Butler ways and corruption again infected the police force. Butler never claimed to be a reformer, a notion he detested, but rather naively thought himself an officer doing his duty as ordered by his commander, the mayor.<sup>30</sup>

He would not leave police work for good after Philadelphia. For the rest of his life he campaigned for reorganization of local and state law enforcement along military structures that he outlined, including enlistment periods, housing of patrolmen, military organization of police bureaucracy, and combat-like methods to capture criminals.<sup>31</sup> Butler told the *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger* that "Sherman was right about war, but he was never head of police in Philadelphia."<sup>32</sup>

Despite the varied results of using military officers to run police departments, the use of the military analogy as a model for police reform had proven resilient among city officials and the general public. It helped establish more separation between police and local politics, and weakened the grip of police machines on municipal graft. It helped make local centralized police organization more efficient and professional. Moreover, citizens seemed to relate to the rhetoric and vernacular of the military analogy. The mission of American policing had been narrowed and clarified. Crime fighting (police work) and crime prevention (social work) now defined the role of police in American cities. Still, problems remained.

Heads of public safety and police chiefs in many cities had no tenure-like protection and thus only lasted two or three years before being run off by local political forces. Police reformers, both those supporting and opposed to the military analogy, agreed that for any reform of American police to be successful, the police executive needed more autonomy from the political whims of city boss machines.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Military Model and National Government**

Additionally, critics of the military analogy and the “war on crime” began to complain of police abuses of civil rights and other police “lawlessness.” By the 1930s, several large cities had established crime commissions not only to study crime but also to expose the entrenched military power of police. The “this is war” argument seemed to be wearing thin. Instead, the commissions suggested that economic, social, and educational “rearrangements” be put in place to address society’s ills and thus remove the impetus for crime. Although various crime commissions criticized police corruption and incompetence, they almost universally returned to the rhetoric left over from the military analogy. Even at the federal level, the rhetoric sometimes overshadowed substance. President Calvin Coolidge’s National Crime Commission, meeting off and on from 1925 to 1929, supported a renewed “war on crime,” but did little to back up its call to arms.<sup>34</sup> President Herbert Hoover replaced Coolidge’s commission with his more effective advocate of a “war on crime,” the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, which gave much-needed strength to the “war on crime” rhetoric, but, like its national and local predecessors, Hoover’s commission wanted it both ways. Police should fight crime like armies fight a war, but with limitations that did not infringe upon civil rights. One volume of its massive fourteen-volume report on crime in America heavily criticized police abuses, notably the “third degree.” While Americans seemed to support a war on crime, the methods that police used in this war made them a bit squeamish. Even more troubling for local law enforcement authorities was the threat of growing federal involvement in what had been largely a local issue.<sup>35</sup>

Diehard crime fighters found their most able and vocal campaigner in the young, brash director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover. Leading the charge for federal intervention in the crime problem, Hoover championed President Franklin Roosevelt’s law-and-order emphasis, which became popular among local police agencies, and was a staunch advocate of a federal role in local law enforcement. Hoover promoted a professionalized war on crime throughout the 1930s and

1940s. According to Hoover, the increase in crime represented a clear danger and threatened all Americans: "This army of crime is larger than any unified force in history. If this tremendous body of evil doers could be welded into a unit of conquest, America would fall before it not in a month, not in a day, but in a few hours."<sup>36</sup>

In fighting crime, Hoover strongly supported using the new investigative science called criminalistics. He established national fingerprint catalogs and crime labs, and placed highly trained agents in the field to assist local law enforcement. Hoover brought the power and resources of the federal government to bear locally on the crime war. While Hoover led the charge in the war on crime, he also came to symbolize the pinnacle of police professionalism. More than any single individual during the pre-World War II period, Hoover encouraged professionalized police by promoting the image of law enforcement officers as highly trained, skilled, and ethical defenders of the public good. Despite criticism Hoover received during his later years as the director of the FBI, he did at least publicly advocate a strict policy against use of the "third degree" and condemned police abuse of any sort. Hoover successfully infused professionalism with the rhetoric of the military analogy.

Hoover's prize accomplishment during the 1930s was probably the establishment of the National Police Academy in 1935. This national training school gave select local law enforcement officers extended training in the latest crime-fighting techniques from the best instructors in the nation, while Hoover used the academy to increase federal influence on local law enforcement. The FBI helped train local officers and improve crime-fighting techniques while crime commissions focused on improving local administrative and organizational capabilities. Both approaches aimed toward the common goal of efficient locally centralized policing through professionalization. Hoover, however, wanted a more national approach. Initiatives like the National Police Academy were directed at bringing together what Attorney General Homer Cummings called the "disorganized army" of law enforcement officers that had to this point "sought to contest the underworld in disjointed groups."<sup>37</sup>

A better-organized army to fight the war on crime was indeed a popular prescriptive suggestion. Justin Miller, Dean of the School of Law at Duke University, stated to a national radio audience in 1934 that "Consideration of a better army for the war against crime necessarily requires comparison with the existing army, and frank and honest recognition of present weaknesses." Instead of recommending reform from the federal level down, as Hoover wished, Miller wanted the stronger army to originate at the local level. Community leaders needed to take charge to recruit better personnel and cut away waste from local police agencies. Local police needed to