# THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1783-1848

John Dwiggins

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Supervisor of Dissertation

_____

Daniel K. Richter

Roy F. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor of American History

Graduate Group Chair

_____

Antonio Feros, Associate Professor of History

Dissertation Committee

Michael Zuckerman, Professor of History

Robert St. George, Associate Professor of History





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ABSTRACT

THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1783-1848

John Dwiggins

Daniel K. Richter

Between 1783 and 1848, citizens and political leaders of the United States recognized that the organization of the nation's armed forces was one of the most crucial problems in building a democratic society. Throughout the early national period, citizens, political leaders, policy makers, and a few engaged citizens struggled to determine whether the nation's military power and war-making capabilities should be situated within the people themselves – that is, in the great mass of its male citizens – or in a small army led by a professional military elite. Both options had profound political, social, and cultural implications. This dissertation reconstructs a discussion among a wide range of groups and interests about military institutions and democratic politics that extended across the early national period. It examines the growth of the regular army as well as the activities of veterans' associations, military academies, peace societies, and militia companies. I conclude that the citizen-soldier represented a democratic ideal of an army of the people, by the people, and for the people. But this ideal, over time, appeared increasingly impractical and unattainable to political leaders and certain groups of citizens. Debates about the type and character of the American military establishment ultimately transcended military considerations and became central to the construction of the American political order. The processes by which the professionals trumped the people as the source of legitimate military power illuminate previously unrecognized

aspects of early American political ideology as well as the contested and contingent construction of a democratic polity after the Revolution.

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# Introduction

Two new additions to the U.S. Capitol building in 1834 greeted visitors and lawmakers at the doors of the east portico: one marble statute of Peace, a robed woman, and one of War, a man in full Roman-style military uniform. An observer remarked that the two statues, both by Italian sculptor Luigi Persico, perfectly represented "the ideas of the People of the United States on peace and war," those being "in *peace* to be prepared for *war* – in war, to listen to the overtures of peace." To this observer, the two figures represented also a distinctly American way of waging war. "Our wars are in defence of our rights, and purely defensive; and, when the cause of war is removed, it then ceases," a principle "justly represented in the countenance" of War, which was calm, dignified, and, though dressed in classical garb, exhibited no aggression or cruelty in his countenance.[1]

Between 1783 and 1848, citizens and political leaders in the early republic recognized that navigating the correct path between peace and war was one of the most crucial problems in building a democratic society. The installation of the War and Peace statues in the Capitol building spoke to a common idea that war would be a constant in world affairs, but the United States, as the first truly democratic nation, would conduct its wars differently than all other nations. The organization of the nation's armed forces was of central importance in this idea. Throughout the early national period, citizens, political leaders, and policy makers debated whether the nation should locate its war-making capabilities in the great mass of its male citizens or in a small army led by a professional military elite. Both options had profound political, social, and cultural implications. Debates about the type and character of the American military establishment ultimately

[1] "The Statues of Peace and War," *Daily National Intelligencer* 16 December 1834.

transcended military considerations and became central to the construction of the American political order.

The first option – an army of citizen-soldiers – aligned with conventional Anglo-American attitudes about the military, but its proponents in the early republic adopted radically new approaches to organizing the military power of the people. For much of the eighteenth century, fear that a too-large or too-powerful military would undermine individual liberty, popular sovereignty, and representative government pervaded political thought and practice. To the extent that some military force would have to be organized, it was widely thought more proper to leave the responsibility of defending the republic to militia units comprised of the male citizens themselves. Constituting the people into a truly effective military force was nonetheless a difficult proposition. Those who most seriously pursued this ambition faced the task of re-establishing American political culture on a martial basis, creating a revolutionary society in which all male citizens could be soldiers. This political vision was an undertaking of many different people and groups, some of whom entered the realm of national policy-making but many of whom did not. Its proponents realized few, if any, of their grander ambitions, but they did not give up easily. Efforts to create a military of the people remained an integral part of political life throughout the early national period.

The other option – relegating military power to a regular army led by professional military elites – required no radical overhaul of political life but required citizens and political leaders to compromise the nation's founding ideals. Few significant figures advocated a regular army early on (Alexander Hamilton was a notable exception), but the idea found greater acceptance after the military disasters of the War of 1812. The

emergence of this professional military had roots in changing political, cultural, and international circumstances. Its growth after 1815 raised significant problems for a democratizing society. Some within the military protested its principles of authority, subordination, and discipline. Outside observers critiqued the military's subversion of principles of rights, justice, and equality. A growing number of political leaders and certain groups of citizens nonetheless looked beyond these questions and accepted a professional army. Regardless of the political problems that it presented, this army found multiple sources of legitimacy in the antebellum period.

Between the end of the Revolution and the Mexican-American War, a regular army led by military professionals took shape and gained greater official acceptance. The ideal of the citizen-soldier increasingly appeared militarily impractical and politically problematic to political leaders and certain groups of citizens. The growth of this military establishment was more complicated than the decline of revolutionary "republicanism" and the antebellum emergence of modern "liberalism." It was more complicated than pragmatic military concerns overriding revolutionary principles. The professional military establishment in early America was a product of multiple interests and ambitions, clashing in public polemics, policy proposals, reform movements, and even popular culture. The processes by which the professionals trumped the people as the source of legitimate military power illuminate previously unrecognized aspects of early American political ideology as well as the contested and contingent construction of a democratic polity after the Revolution.

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The tensions between militarism – the growth of military institutions and the values or norms that legitimated them – and democracy in the United States were of particular concern for scholars and political figures during the Cold War. Prominent figures like Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of the dangers of unrestrained militarization.[2] Others like diplomat and defense theorist George Kennan complained about the ways that democracy limited the growth of an effective system of national security. Kennan compared a democracy at war to a pea-brained prehistoric dinosaur: "You practically have to whack his tail off to make him aware that his interests are being disturbed; but, once he grasps this, he lays about him with such blind determination that he not only destroys his adversary but largely wrecks his native habitat."[3] Competing Cold War ideologies thus sought either a democratic practice that constrained militarization or militarist development that overcame the limitations of democracy. In either case, the two were considered mutually exclusive.

Cold War-era scholarship divided along similar fault lines. Historians examined the emergence of a growing national security state "on permanent war-footing" that was "incompatible with democratic ideas of personal liberty and self-government."[4] Some sought to counteract the garrison state by claiming an early American tradition of antimilitarism – suspicion of or hostility toward the growth of military institutions – as

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[2] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Military Industrial Complex Speech," accessed 8 November 2011, http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/indust.html.
[3] George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 66. Kennan made this point in a lecture at the University of Chicago in 1950.
[4] Louis Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power: A Study of Civil Control of the Military Power in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) 9-12, 2.

"an essential element of American freedom and democracy."[5] Samuel P. Huntington's often-cited work *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* aligned with George Kennan. Huntington lamented that, from the Revolution to World War II, American liberalism failed to "furnish means to think about war, peace, and international relations" and thus "faltered when applied to foreign policy and defense."[6] Later works continued to explore how antimilitarism and opposition to a permanent standing army were vital components of the revolutionary tradition and a primary feature of early national politics.[7] A long-standing scholarly orthodoxy asserted that, for better or worse, the ideals and principles contained within the American revolutionary tradition were incompatible with militarism and uniformly ensured that the growth of military institutions would be limited throughout much of American history.

The last decade has witnessed a renewal of historical interest in the character and evolution of American democracy. Recent scholarship has abandoned triumphalist narratives of gradual democratic progress, emphasizing instead that democratization was deeply contingent, often nonlinear, and persistently "accompanied by profound antidemocratic countercurrents."[8] Within this revisionist project, historians are

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[5] Arthur A. Ekirch, *The Civilian and the Military* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), vii.
[6] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 148.
[7] Lawrence Delbert Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: Free Press, 1975).
[8] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xx. Keyssar's book is a good example of a synthetic and wide-ranging attempt to re-conceptualize democracy in American history. Sean Wilentz's *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York:

reconsidering nearly all aspects of political life. On the Constitution and constitutionalism, books by Saul Cornell, David Waldstreicher, and Woody Holton have extended our understanding of the U.S. Constitution beyond the moment of its drafting and the months in which the public debated its ratification. They have shown how longer-running political conflicts – particularly over slavery and economic justice – provided a broader basis for how citizens and political leaders contested the organization of the national political order.[9] Examining the contested definition of citizenship is another central concern in the recent literature, as it points to ways in which exclusionary practices and ideas persisted in early American politics despite larger claims to liberty and equality.[10] Association – once considered a hallmark of civil society and democratic practice– is now understood to have been deeply problematic, raising questions about the bounds of legitimate political engagement in the early republic.[11] A few important new

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W.W. Norton & Company, 2005) is another large-scale effort to explore democracy as a contested and continually re-defined ideal in early American politics and society. For a shorter overview, see David Waldstreicher, Jeffrey L. Pasley, and Andrew W. Robertson, "Introduction: Beyond the Founders," in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[9] Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); David Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009); Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

[10] Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals: Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); for a recent example of further, and more specific, research into the contestation of early American citizenship, see Joanna Cohen, "'The Right to Purchases Is as Free as the Right to Sell': Defining Consumers as Citizens in the Auction-house Conflicts of the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 30, no.1 (Spring 2010): 25-62.

[11] Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 195-218; Albrecht Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together": Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840*

works even challenge the conventional wisdom that the federal government was ineffective or insignificant before the Civil War.[12] In directing attention to what a more diverse range of Americans, from the most elite political leaders to the most marginal and disenfranchised, thought about what a free and democratic society was and how that society should operate, recent historiography has introduced a greater degree of complexity to our understanding of early national political development.

Cold War-era scholars never had much doubt about how to fit militarism into their analytical schemes. Scholars today are less certain of what role militarism should have in their fractured narratives of early national political development. There is a great deal of agreement that democratic politics often took violent or militaristic form in early America. There is significantly less agreement on whether this violence should be taken as normative.

One approach to incorporating violence, war, and militarism into new understandings of political development emphasizes the reciprocity of martial and civic

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(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Johann N. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[12] Ira Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American Statebuilding," in *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*, Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 82-110; Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Daniel Walker Howe, in *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) does not make any particular argument about state formation or the efficacy and capacity of the antebellum state. His narrative is nonetheless littered with references to the potentially important role of both federal and state government in the changes in transportation and communication (especially with the growth of the Post Office) that, he argues, were of equal importance to the expansion of the suffrage in stimulating democratic development. See especially 203-242.

life in the early republic. Political scientist Jennet Kirkpatrick points to the innumerable ways in early America in which democratic pursuits took the form of popular paramilitary violence from groups like abolitionists, vigilantes, lynch mobs, and labor radicals.[13] Some historians are drawn to wars as remarkably formative periods for democratic politics rather than as deviations from a liberal democratic norm. Political and cultural historians have examined the importance of the military in American political and social development, the importance of war in national political culture, and the impact of war on social, racial, and gender relations at various times in the American past.[14] Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton offer a synthesis of North American history from 1500 to 2000 founded on the premise that "war itself has been an engine of change in North America for the past five centuries and indeed has largely defined that history's

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[13] Jennet Kirkpatrick, *Uncivil Disobedience: Studies in Violence and Democratic Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Kirkpatrick ultimately uses these cases of violence to assert the limitations of a democratic society that is not also imbued with countervailing principles of law and justice. See also Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 265-313. Though writing about a later time period, Hahn makes a significant contribution to our understanding of politics by pointing to how often Reconstruction-era political battles were not limited to party politics and the ballot box but also took the form of violent paramilitary conflicts throughout the South.

[14] For an early example, see Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed With Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 77-105 examines how the conduct of the Civil War led to expanded voting rights; Jennifer Green *Military Education and the Emerging Middle Class in the Old South* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), while not addressing war, argues that military academies were engines of social modernization in the antebellum South; on post-World War II political development, Beth Bailey positions the Army at the center of conflicts over equality and citizenship. *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

meaning."[15] They thus portray early America as a "world in which freedom and violence were…inextricably intertwined."[16] Other scholars point to the military's growth as a vital component of antebellum state formation. Expanded military power, they emphasize, did not produce a despotic or overbearing federal government but instead formed a crucial appendage of a liberal democratic state that used its martial resources to provide services to and secure benefits for its citizens.[17] Unlike the earlier historiography, which defined a Manichean struggle between military and civilian institutions, these recent scholars emphasize a more complex interaction between the two in the making of modern American democracy.

On the other hand, some scholars continue to insist that violence and militarism should be interpreted as troublesome counter-democratic trends in early American history. John L. Brooke outlines competing early national conceptualizations of the public sphere: a deliberative sphere based on reason and autonomous consent, and a persuasive sphere in which social hierarchies and disparities in political power intervened. Within this framework, Brooke suggests that antebellum political violence, from urban riots to more sustained domestic conflicts like Rhode Island's Dorr War or

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[15] Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000* (Viking, 2005), xiv

[16] Ibid., 210

[17] Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity," 82-110; Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight*, 154, 197-213; Katznelson and Balogh expand upon an earlier argument by Andrew R.L. Cayton, "'Separate Interests' and the Nation-State: The Washington Administration and the Origins of Regionalism in the Trans-Appalachian West," *Journal of American History* 79:1 (June 1992), 39-67; Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 73-146; William Hosley, *Colt: The Making of an American Legend* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) argues strongly for the importance of federal weapons contracting in the dynamic antebellum development of southern New England.

the Mormon Wars in Missouri and Illinois, should be understood as distortions of a deliberative democratic ideal and as "crises of constitution and procedure that overwhelmed routine deliberation."[18] Rachel Hope Cleves argues that critiques of French revolutionary violence provided a foundation for the development of antislavery ideology in the nineteenth century. True democratic ideals thus emerged from resistance to violence.[19] Stephanie McCurry's examination of the politics of secession on the eve of the Civil War explores a secessionist endeavor to launch "a modern proslavery and antidemocratic state, dedicated to the proposition that all men were not created equal," in which racial and sexual subjugation formed the basis of political organization.[20] The creation of this antidemocratic society had a militarist foundation, as secessionists advanced a "fraternal conception of the people" rooted in an ideological equation of freedom with warfare and citizenship with soldiering.[21] These antimilitarist histories may recognize that violence and militarism were, to some degree, integral to contemporary conceptions of liberty in the early republic. Yet they argue that violence and militarism were also, from a modern perspective, subversive of "true" democracy, as militarism

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[18] John L. Brooke, "Consent, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere in the Age of Revolution and the Early American Republic," in *Beyond the Founders*, 237-8.
[19] Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[20] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1.
[21] Ibid., 11-37. Quotation is on page 36. McCurry joins Linda Kerber's earlier study of citizenship in emphasizing the historical importance of arms-bearing and military service as the primary determinant of inclusion in the American political community. Both stress how this association of the military with citizenship meant that the women and non-whites who were legally exempt (or prohibited) from military service in the early U.S. would continually be denied meaningful political power; Kerber, *No Constitutional Right*, 221-302;

ultimately corrupted legitimate democratic processes and reinforced long-standing inequalities and relationships of domination.

I agree that militarism and liberty could often be mutually constitutive pursuits in the early American republic, but my analysis emphasizes this democratic militarism as only one vision, and by no means the dominant vision, of political order in early America. The creation of an exclusionary "fraternal" republic rooted in soldiering was a project that began long before the secessionist movement – indeed, as early as the first proposals for militia reform. Its proponents, however, were never so coherent and never so broadly influential as they may have been in the South in 1860 and 1861. Attempts to merge militarist values with contemporary understandings of revolutionary liberty thus need to be examined in the contexts of institution building and policy making in order to assess the extent of their influence over time in early American political life. Competing non-militarist or anti-militarist visions of American society offered plenty of resistance to the violent political vision that scholars like Anderson and Cayton suggest was dominant.

Still, the growth of military institutions and the spread of military values often did deviate from democratic principles, not just from a modern perspective but in ways that citizens and political leaders of the early republic themselves recognized and debated. This fact does not mean that we should categorically state, as some Cold War-era scholars did, that liberal democracy ensured that the military would remain weak. A professional military did emerge at this time, but it emerged in opposition to nascent democratic principles. Over the antebellum period, the military secured its legitimacy without abandoning many of its undemocratic practices. Understanding how this happened reveals much about the political and cultural means by which citizens and

political leaders debated how a democratic society should function and, in the end, established limits to democratization. Overall, the development of this antebellum military establishment reflects the remarkable ability of the American democratic system to compromise and preserve seemingly undemocratic institutions in exchange for security, stability, and prosperity.

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This dissertation attempts to situate violence and militarism in a new narrative of political development between the end of the Revolution and the Mexican-American War. Each chapter re-examines the institutional and ideological developments that sustained or constrained the growth of military institutions in early America with reference to five components of early American political development: constitutional thought, citizenship, rights, improvement, and empire.

Chapter one examines how the formation of the Society of the Cincinnati, an association formed by officers of the Continental Army, raised concerns about the status of military elites in the United States and provoked controversies about the political and cultural influence of martial institutions. This controversy produced three distinct bodies of constitutional thought that articulated broader ideas of power and political legitimacy in the republic. Members of the Society of the Cincinnati first articulated the principles of a military republic in which warfare and military service secured rather than subverted liberty.

Chapter two analyzes different attempts to realize the principles of military republicanism in practice. These attempts never amounted to a unified movement, but instead arose from various and diffuse proposals, within and outside of the federal

government, to make every citizen a soldier through the re-organization and improvement of the militia. Chapters one and two demonstrate that proponents of a military republic were on the whole unsuccessful but by no means defeated. Their ideas and political goals retained appeal and vitality even after the militia's disgrace in the War of 1812.

The professional military began to rise to significance after 1815. Chapter three examines the controversies surrounding the professional military's emergence with special attention to the troubled history of the United States Military Academy from 1815 to 1848. The Academy became an object of political and public attention when protests against the school's internal hierarchy and use of military discipline invited greater investigation into the antidemocratic tendencies of the developing professional military. Antimilitarist and democratic critiques of West Point became particularly strident in the 1830s, when hostile members of Congress sought its total abolition. These attacks on the institution, however, ultimately revealed weaknesses and limitations in bringing democratic principles to bear on the army in an attempt to limit its growth. Meanwhile, the Academy secured legitimacy from other sources, as officials and some citizens attributed economic, political, and cultural significance to the institution and its graduates.

Chapter four analyzes a network of private military academies founded by Alden Partridge, a former army captain who briefly served as superintendent of West Point. Partridge's educational career constituted one of the most sustained efforts to diffuse military expertise and martial values among a wider range of citizens. His successes and failures demonstrated the extent to which Americans considered this pursuit valid in the

antebellum era. As with West Point, popular receptiveness to Partridge's military academies depended upon communities' ability to integrate them into their own ambitions of improvement and prosperity. His political ambition to strengthen American democracy through military education, however, was less widely accepted.

Chapters three and four examine through specific cases the ways in which a greater number of citizens and political leaders abandoned the ideal of the citizen-soldier and accepted the growth of a professional military. Chapter five examines these trends in the context of broader cultural, political, and international changes after 1815. Questions of international security and continental expansion had a significant influence on the development of the American military profession. The aftermath of the War of 1812 and continued international security concerns caused some federal policy makers to lose faith in the militia and encourage the growth of a professional military. As the nation began expanding its borders to the south, west, and north, this professional military gained further acceptance as an effective agent of national interests. Both the professional military and the militia came under attack as anti-democratic institutions, yet these attacks only significantly affected the militia. At the same time, arguments that the preservation of American democracy depended upon pacifism established new antimilitarist principles for political development. The regular army remained controversial as it grew and matured. Its legitimacy and supremacy over citizen-soldiers by the end of the Mexican-American War was neither complete nor inevitable.

Could a democratic society prepare for war, or must it strive for peace? Did the perfection of the American experiment in government depend upon a military obligation for all citizens? If the citizens instead delegated those responsibilities to a permanent and

professional military establishment, would that military establishment corrupt or subvert the nation's founding ideals of liberty and republican government? These questions were central to processes of democratization in the early United States. A thorough understanding of democracy and political development thus depends upon an examination of the ways in which citizens, political thinkers, and policy makers struggled to answer those questions. The myriad answers they arrived at reveal the protean nature of democracy in America.

1.

# Battle Scars and "Ruined Constitutions": Military Service, Political Authority, and the Society of the Cincinnati Controversy, 1783-1812

The Society of the Cincinnati formed when the Continental Army disbanded, on 10 May 1783, in the Army's cantonment near Newburgh, New York. The Society took its name from the ancient Roman hero Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, who famously resigned from power and returned to his farm after defending Rome from invasion. The former officers who established the Society claimed they had done so to facilitate their transition from war to peace and to "perpetuate… the mutual friendships which have been formed under the pressure of common danger, and in many instances cemented by the blood of the parties."[22] Yet the emotions behind the Society's establishment were a more ambivalent mix of patriotism and pain, honor and resentment. David Humphreys, a member of the Society and former aide-de-camp to General George Washington, conveyed only a sense of anguish when he described the Revolution in a 1780 poem:

> What boding horrors gloom'd the darkning hour;
> When British Legions arm'd with death-like pow'r…
> And rapine's sons with wasting fire and sword,
> Spread death around – where'er your eyes ye turn'd,
> Fled were the peasants – and the village burn'd."[23]

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[22] This agreement, known as the Institution of the Society of the Cincinnati, is kept at the Library of the Society of the Cincinnati in Washington, D.C. It is also copied in the Society's first volume of proceedings, 1783-1811. Citation here is from the reprint in Francis Foster Apthorp, *The Institution of the Society of the Cincinnati Together With Standing Resolutions, Ordinances, Rules and Precedents of the General Society of the Cincinnati 1783-1920* (General Society of the Cincinnati: 1923), 8.

[23] A Gentleman of the Army [David Humphreys], *A Poem, Addressed to the Armies of the United States of America* (New Haven: T. and S. Green, 1780), 9.

Other members complained of returning home, after long absences, with only "scars instead of cash and ruined Constitutions in lieu of the spoils of War."[24]

The officers of the Continental Army, therefore, envisioned the Society of the Cincinnati as one way to come to terms with their experiences of wartime violence and establish those experiences as a new source of honor and authority in their new nation. They designed a bald eagle emblem, a silver medal, and a special diploma as symbols of their distinction and, in order to confine these honors among themselves, they declared that membership would pass only to their sons.[25] Outsiders immediately branded the Society a military aristocracy. Benjamin Franklin, for one, was dismayed that "a number of private persons should think proper to distinguish themselves and their posterity, from their fellow citizens, and form an order of *hereditary knights*, in direct opposition to the solemnly declared sense of their country!"[26] In thus redressing, as they saw fit, the damages to their own constitutions, the members of the Society of the Cincinnati initiated the first constitutional crisis of the new United States.

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[24] *The Institution and Records of the New Hampshire Society of the Cincinnati Formed by the New Hampshire Officers of the Revolutionary Army of the United States for the Laudable Purposes Herein Stated. Organized November 18, 1783. Last Meeting Held July 4, 1823* (Concord, N.H.: Ira C. Evans, 1893), 28-9; Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 343-6, describes the conflicted psychological state of many officers at the end of the war.

[25] On the design of the emblem, medal, and diploma, see *Journals of the Society, or Order of the Cincinnati, By Their Delegates in Genl. Meeting Convend. Comencing May, MDCCLXXXIV. Vol. I. To Which is Prefixed, a Transcript of the Proceedings in Camp, Upon the Foundation of the Order, A.D. MDCCLXXXIII*, General Society Archives, Box II (Bound Proceedings: 1783-1811), 10, Library of the Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C.

[26] Benjamin Franklin to Sarah Bache, 26 January 1784, in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, Jared Sparks, ed. (Boston: Tappan, Whittemore, and Mason, 1840), X: 58. Emphasis original.

The Cincinnati controversy provided the context in which American citizens and political leaders first debated the legacy of the revolutionary war on post-revolutionary politics and culture. Questions as to the terms on which soldiers and veterans of the war could be re-integrated into civic life and the possible dangers that a military elite posed to a republican society raised larger issues about the nature of the political order and the proper distribution of political power. Debates on these issues gave rise to three competing constitutional theories, each of which articulated a different idea about the status of military elites and the legitimacy of military institutions in the republic.[27]

Opponents of the Cincinnati in print and in politics raised concerns about the power of the military within the American social order. Military organizations, they argued, naturally presented threats to popular liberties and thus must be radically curtailed if not proscribed outright. These critiques created a basis for an antimilitarist constitutional theory that, regardless of its ineffectiveness in abolishing the Society of the Cincinnati, remained influential throughout the early national period.

At first, members of the Society defended themselves and their association with appeals to the fundamentally republican character of the Society. They argued that the Society was a civic and charitable association primarily and a military organization only

[27] My more expansive definition of "constitution" and "constitutional thought" is indebted to works by Saul Cornell and Woody Holton, who expand our understanding of constitutional debate in early America beyond the Constitutional Convention and ratification debates and instead examine more larger and longer-running contestations of power and authority within American republicanism. See Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), especially 51-120; Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

secondarily. The most visible figure in this effort was George Washington, who was unanimously elected president of the Society of the Cincinnati at its first meeting and remained in this position until his death. Washington envisioned a constitutional order in which military institutions and military leaders would have a prominent role. However, he attempted to ensure that military power would always remain subordinate to civil power. This vision may be somewhat awkwardly termed a moderate-militarist constitutional theory.

Washington's moderate-militarist path did not appeal to all the members of the Society. In a later stage of the controversy and even after the controversy had subsided, other members diverged from Washington and asserted their unique virtues as citizens and soldiers. They propagated ideas about the centrality of violence and warfare in the young republic's political culture and their own privileged role (as officers and gentlemen) in the new nation's destiny. These ideas of republicanism, nation, and military authority, which they developed internally through Society correspondence and externally through such public venues as pamphlets and Independence Day orations, amounted to a militarist constitutional theory that posited military institutions and martial values as essential elements of American republicanism. These more militarist members of the Society asserted the need for autonomy, authority, and even veneration for military elites in a republic.

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Pre-established suspicions of military elites and military institutions provided the basis of hostility to the Society of the Cincinnati. Opposition to standing military forces had been a central element of Anglo-American political thought throughout the

eighteenth century.[28] With the dissolution of the Continental Army at the end of the war, the Society of the Cincinnati preserved much of the Army's institutional culture and memory. The conflicts that ordinarily would have surrounded a national standing army, therefore, were redirected to the Cincinnati. Complaining of the difficulties of establishing the Society in Pennsylvania, Arthur St. Clair wrote to Baron von Steuben of "how Jealous the People of this Country are of any thing that looks like distinguishing the military Profession."[29] One month after St. Clair's complaint, a South Carolina judge named Aedanus Burke crystallized these popular jealousies into one sixteen-page pamphlet that outlined the cultural and political means by which he believed military institutions like the Cincinnati would subvert the American republic. The pamphlet, published under the pseudonym "Cassius" and titled *Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati*, quickly received nearly national distribution. It was reprinted in Philadelphia, New England, and elsewhere both in its full form and in newspapers.[30] Burke's pamphlet also inspired a French nobleman, the Count de Mirabeau, to write his own attack on the Cincinnati. Mirabeau's pamphlet was translated into English and

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[28] For an overview, see Lawrence Delbert Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 15-50.

[29] Arthur St. Clair to Maj. Gen. Steuben, Prince Town, 3 September 1783. General Society Archives, Box IX (Correspondence to the General Society), Folder 1G, Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.

[30] Cassius (Aedanus Burke), *Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati; Lately Instituted by the Major-Generals, Brigadier-Generals, and Other Officers of the American Army. Proving That it Creates a Race of Hereditary Patricians or Nobility. Interspersed With Remarks On Its Consequences to the Freedom and Happiness of the Republic. Addressed to the People of South Carolina, and Their Representatives* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1783). On the history of writing and publishing the *Considerations*, see Marcus Hünemörder, *The Society of the Cincinnati: Conspiracy and Distrust in Early America* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 26-71

published in the United States in 1785.[31] The two pamphlets constituted the most direct assault on the Society's legitimacy in the early national period.

Burke's chief critique of the Cincinnati, as stated in his subtitle, was "that it creates a race of hereditary patricians or nobility" incompatible with republican government. "This Order is planted in a fiery, hot ambition, and thirst for power; and its branches will end in tyranny," he charged; "in less than a century" the Cincinnati would bring about a total bifurcation of American society into nobles and "rabble."[32] Military institutions, however, produced a unique kind of aristocracy, as leaders of the military did not extract their wealth and power from the land but from other men. Political processes of command and obedience rather than material economic factors sanctioned their dominance. Ancient history – particularly the history of the Roman Empire at its downfall – amply demonstrated "that military commanders acquiring fame, and accustomed to receive the obedience of armies, are generally in their hearts aristocratics, and enemies to the popular equality of a republic."[33] By creating a hereditary institutional basis for this natural tendency of military men, Burke believed that the Cincinnati laid the foundation for a new anti-republican social order, although not one based on the conventional distinction between patrician and plebeian. When Burke invoked the concept of aristocracy in his attack on the Cincinnati, he referred instead to an imagined future social order built on the inequality between two classes, "one whose

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[31] The Count de Mirabeau, *Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus. To Which Are Added, Several Original Papers Relative to That Institution* (Philadelphia: 1785).
[32] Burke, *Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati*, 4.
[33] Ibid., 7. Mercy Otis Warren later quoted this line in her critique of the Cincinnati in the *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1805), III:280.

foundation is the *Army*, the other composed of the *Commonalty*," that would divide Americans so sharply that the end result may be civil war.[34] Burke thus engaged with some of the main pillars of American constitutional thought. His critique was rooted in a general understanding that individual ambitions combined with artificial distinctions to destroy liberty and institute tyranny. In the style of most political treatises, he appealed heavily to the examples of Roman history.

Burke went beyond these conventional arguments and explored the cultural as well as political foundation of military aristocracy. Popular "propensity…to the marvelous," he explained, would grant the Cincinnati "grandeur, antiquity, veneration and arbitrary power."[35] That the public ascribed this combination of qualities uniquely to military men imbued martial combinations like the Cincinnati with a special danger. The people too often "adore [military commanders] with a stupid veneration," he complained, which ultimately gave them license to pursue power and glory and "raise themselves to despotism."[36] Mirabeau, too, expressed concern about the Cincinnati's self-aggrandizement by means of "external signs" that "produce a great effect upon the weak imaginations of men."[37] And since the Cincinnati would publicly display their authority with exciting imagery of "battles and of victories, of blood shed for one's country, of tyrants vanquished, and of public liberty protected by the sword," they would have especially profound effect on the minds of citizens.[38] Surely, Burke reasoned, the wartime exploits of the Continental Army's officers were equal in daring and heroism to

[34] Ibid., 6.
[35] Ibid., 8.
[36] Ibid., 8
[37] Mirabeau, *Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus*, 10.
[38] Ibid., 11.

those of Hector, Achilles, or Aeneas. Thus, just as in the ancient past, "some sycophant poet would not be wanting to prostitute the talents which God gave him, for the vile purpose of dubbing with divinity, as Virgil did Augustus, a tyrant who had swallowed up the liberties of his country."[39] Popular culture contained the seeds of subversion.

Burke and Mirabeau feared a new social and constitutional arrangement that placed military leaders at the top and, through both institutional and cultural means, invested them with special political and moral authority. Mirabeau raised the specter of a social system that unjustly placed other public pursuits in a lower civic order. "In the true spirit of a praetorian band, they scruple not to be unjust towards the most distinguished of their coadjutors, who were prevented from taking arms by duties no less important," he lamented. "They have presumed to judge that the glory of the head ought to be subordinate to that of the arms."[40] Built into mythical archetypes, members of a military aristocracy would find themselves "with the eyes of all fixed upon them, as objects of such worship" that over the course of generations "the peers of Cincinnati might consider themselves as deriving their lineage from heaven."[41] They could then corrupt the pulpits and turn spirituality toward further solidifying their rule, culminating in a doctrine that held the masses without military distinction "*odious to the very gods*." The Cincinnati and the clergy could then, for example, consider "it an abomination to

[39] Burke, *Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati*, 6.
[40] Mirabeau, *Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus*, 4.
[41] Burke, *Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati*, 6.

intermarry with them."[42] Thus would the American republic decline into a martial state with foundations in politics, culture, and religious belief.

The idea that the military establishment posed the greatest threat to a free society through attitudes and cultural practices, rather than institutional or constitutional structures, distinguished Burke and Mirabeau from others who had previously written on the dangers of a standing army or military class. Their pamphlets on the Society provided a complex anatomical dissection of power and despotism that targeted their cultural origins as well as their political foundations. This analysis led them to propose an antimilitarist constitutional theory that justified the political exclusion or disfranchisement of military elites. Burke suggested that the United States might follow the practice, pursued "in wise republics," of banishing military commanders or otherwise barring them from attaining positions of influence. He speculated, in fact, that the Roman Cincinnatus had not forsaken power due to his virtue, but because "that republic had wise laws to bridle the ambition and controul the factions of potent citizens, and we have as yet no such laws."[43] Mirabeau also recommended that a republican society rely on foreigners to command its armies and exile its military leaders following the end of conflicts.[44]

Within the Society of the Cincinnati, Burke's pamphlet elicited both fear and scorn. Some members of the Society dismissed it altogether. The Delaware chapter

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[42] Ibid., 6.
[43] Ibid., 8.
[44] Mirabeau, *Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus*, 39. Rumors also circulated that the Rhode Island state legislature had gone so far as to propose disfranchisement for members of the Society. Warren's *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* reported this to have been the case, III:291.

boasted in a circular letter to the other state chapters that "the attack, or rather the compliment paid us by the learned *Cassuis*, we hope will have no other effect, than to excite us to laudable ambition."[45] Yet in some states, the publication excited serious political resistance. "A pamphlet, said to be the production of a judge Burke in So. Carolina, has created opponents to the Cincinnati," Adam Boyd wrote from Wilmington, North Carolina, to Henry Knox in Massachusetts. Though "the whole appears to me altogether chimerical," Boyd reported that "terrible things have been threatened against us, & I do expect our assembly, in their April sessions, will be moved to suppress the Society."[46] Ultimately, the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati dissolved in 1791; it was the shortest-lived chapter. Others reported that in Virginia opposition to the Cincinnati had "become violent and formidable, and call'd for serious consideration," while in South Carolina "almost all the various classes in the state…were opposed to the Institution in its present form."[47] Burke had advocated a purely antimilitarist republic, and legislators and citizens across the nation seemed intent on creating it.

As the most prominent figure associated with the Cincinnati, George Washington's public reputation was most at risk. In a lengthy letter, Thomas Jefferson confessed to Washington that he "wished to see you standing on ground separated from" the Society, so that the general's "character…may in no instance be compromitted in

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[45] Delaware Society, Circular Letter, 6 November 1783. General Society Archives, Box XIII, Folder 2B, Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.
[46] Adam Boyd to Henry Knox, Wilmington, 29 December 1783. General Society Archives, Box XIII (Papers of State Societies), Folder 5B, Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.
[47] Winthrop Sargent, Secret Journal of the Cincinnati, First General Meeting May 4-17, 1784, Tuesday 4 May 1784, General Society Archives, Box I, Folder 2 (Vellum-bound Proceedings, 1784), Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.

subordinate altercations."[48] A guest at Mount Vernon, the Chevalier de la Luzerne, commented that Washington was "much perplexed as to the course that he should pursue."[49] Another friend in the French military was more helpful. The Chevalier de Chastellux wrote in March 1784 to assure Washington "that this establishment being confined in proper bounds, will triumph over all the enemies it meets in America and I hope your country will understand how to unite the glory of the military to the liberty of the citizens."[50] These words of encouragement offered Washington the key through which he hoped to redefine the Society, secure its legitimacy, and quiet fears of military aristocracy.

Confining the Society within "proper bounds" required clarification of the relationship between the Cincinnati, as military leaders, and civil republican government. As Washington explained in a circular letter to the members of the Society, they must "leave a lesson to posterity that the glory of soldiers cannot be completed without acting well the part of citizens."[51] This phrase had specific meaning for Washington. It implied, primarily, a transition from military to civil life rooted in the total abnegation of the former. In order to conform to republican expectations, the Cincinnati must not only be willing to forego military pride and distinction but also deny their previous experiences as soldiers as constitutive of any unique civic identity. Washington's biggest

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[48] Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, Annapolis, 16 April 1784, in Edgar Erskine Hume, ed., *General Washington's Correspondence Concerning the Society of the Cincinnati* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1941), 135.
[49] The Chevalier de la Luzerne to the Count de Vergennes, Mount Vernon, 12 April 1784 (trans. Edgar Erskine Hume), in ibid., 80.
[50] Chevalier de Chastellux to Washington, Paris, 6 March 1784, in ibid., 106.
[51] Washington's Circular Letter After the May 1784 Meeting, in ibid., 174.

fear, as he expressed it to Arthur St. Clair, was the emergence of "a line of separation drawn between this Society and their fellow-citizens."[52]

Two pseudonymous pamphlets by "A Member of the Society" and "An Obscure Individual" offered responses to Burke and advanced ideas similar to Washington's. Both pamphlets denied that the Cincinnati posed a threat to the republic and emphasized the ease of transition from military to civilian life alongside the complete subordination of the former to the latter. "An Obscure Individual" appealed to the essentially apolitical nature of soldiers. That "a soldier seldom looks further forward than to the end of his musket or backwards beyond his knapsack" was axiomatic proof that "no great depth of design will ever be found in the institution of the order of the Cincinnati."[53] In refutation of Burke's claim that military ambition naturally led to aristocracy, "A Member of the Society" explained that the Cincinnati had conquered no territory, had taken no spoils, and could easily leave their soldiering past behind them as they returned to "the peaceful condition of citizens" that they had only "left…for a while, to defend their rights and liberties against their hostile invaders."[54] A strategy to secure the Society's republican legitimacy took shape among these three initial responses to antimilitarist critiques. This strategy depended upon the members of the Society renouncing all military distinction and offering proof to the public that they would truly follow in the example of their

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[52] Washington to St. Clair, Mount Vernon, 31 August 1785, in ibid., 232.
[53] An Obscure Individual, *Observations on a Late Pamphlet Entituled, 'Considerations Upon the Society or Order of the Cincinnati,' Clearly Evincing the Innocence and Propriety of that Honourable and Respectable Institution. In Answer to Vague Conjectures, False Insinuations, and Ill-Founded Objections* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1784), 24.
[54] A Member of the Society, *A Reply to a Pamphlet, Entitled, Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati, &c. Published in South-Carolina* (Annapolis: Frederick Green, 1783), 23.

namesake, Cincinnatus, and return to their homes, forgetting the power that had once belonged to them.

Such assurances in print apparently did not suffice to quiet the Society's initial opponents. Presiding over a national meeting of the Society in May 1784, Washington warned the assembled delegates that Congress was considering a measure to deny citizenship to any person with a title, a measure "he knew…to be levelled at our Institution." Washington gravely told those assembled, "if we *did* not make it conformable to their [the Congress's] sense of republican principles we might expect every *discouragement* and even *persecution* from them and the states severally." Indeed, "99 in a hundred would become our violent enemies."[55] Washington therefore ordered a special committee of five members to revise the Society's governing charter (known as the "institution") in order to formally align the Society with republican principles and his own vision of military subordination to civil power. Specifically, Washington wanted the revised institution to "strike out every word, sentence, and clause which has a political tendency," abolish hereditary succession of membership, and require each state Society to incorporate with their respective legislatures – all measures deemed essential to "shew a generous confidence in our Country, which might be productive of favorable sentiments and returns."[56] Nonetheless, the Society of the Cincinnati refused to adopt the new institution and ultimately declared it defeated in 1800. Washington's suggested reforms

[55] Winthrop Sargent, Secret Journal of the Cincinnati, First General Meeting May 4-14, 1784, Tuesday 4 May 1784, General Society Archives, Box I, Folder 2 (Vellum-bound Proceedings, 1784), Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.
[56] "General Washington's Suggestion For Changes in the Institution," Philadelphia, 4 May 1784, in Hume, *General Washington's Correspondence*, 152-3.

advanced a constitutional vision of constrained military power that most members of the Society did not accept.

Provisions in the proposed institution placed significant constraints on the actions of the Cincinnati. Its revised language downgraded the "State Societies" into "State meetings," and specified new powers of oversight for the national meeting.[57] Whereas the original institution only empowered the national meeting to convene once every three years to discuss "the principles of the Institution…and the best measures to promote them," the revisions specifically enumerated the national meeting's powers "to regulate the distribution of surplus funds, to appoint officers for the ensuing term, and to conform the by-laws of the State meetings to the general objects of the Institution."[58] Another significant revision required state meetings to "make applications to their respective legislatures for grants of charters."[59] Once chartered, state meetings would entrust their funds to the state legislature or rather (with properly deferential language) see that their funds be "loaned to the State by permission of the legislature." State legislatures were then expected to use these funds "as may be most correspondent with the original design of the Institution," that is, for charitable relief to veterans and their families.[60] This new provision would in effect forge a public-private partnership between the Society and state legislatures in which the Society provided funding and administrative support for a state

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[57] Edgar Erskine Hume, *Sesquicentennial History and Roster of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia, 1783-1933* (Richmond: Published by the Society, 1934), 30. My comparative analysis of the original and revised institutions is enabled by Hume's helpful juxtaposition of the two at the beginning of his volume of documents of the Virginia Society, and all citations to either institution in this section will refer to them as written in this volume.
[58] Ibid., 30.
[59] Ibid., 31.
[60] Ibid., 34-5.

system of veteran pensions. Having stripped the state societies of much of their autonomy, with the disbursement of their funds controlled by the legislature and their internal regulations overseen by a national meeting, Washington hoped his new structure for the Society might dispel some of the greatest fears of corruption and aristocracy.

The new institution also made subtle changes to the language and rhetoric of the original that redefined the Society's values and group identity in order to align them with what Washington understood to be more acceptable republican political ideals. The most significant rhetorical alterations came in the institution's preamble. Changes in the first sentence notably erased violent conflict from both the revolutionary past and the Society's identity. The original preamble began: "It having pleased the Supreme Governor of the Universe, in the disposition of human affairs, to cause the separation of the Colonies of North America from the domination of Great Britain, and after a bloody conflict of eight years, to establish them free, independent, and sovereign States…." The revised institution shortened this first clause to read simply: "It having pleased the Supreme Governor of the Universe to give success to the arms of our country, and to establish the United States free and independent."[61] The revisions notably removed the original preamble's allusions to bloodshed along with its strong sense of violence and struggle as conditions of independence. Revisions further clarified that while the Society commemorated its role in the revolutionary struggled it would also strive "to inculcate to the latest ages the duty of laying down in peace, arms assumed for public defence, by forming an Institution which recognizes that most important principle…and to effectuate the acts of beneficence, dictated by the spirit of brotherly kindness towards those officers

[61] Ibid., 27.

and their families, who unfortunately may be under the necessity of receiving them."[62] The revised preamble redefined the Society's functions in terms of civic duties so as to avoid accusations of martial ambitions.

Washington's reforms were rooted in a particular ideal of the role of the army and its officers in a republican government. Washington himself was uniquely situated to this ideal, but it was out of step with the interests and demands of the rest of the Cincinnati, who received the revised institution with skepticism if not outright hostility. Initial reactions to Washington's proposed institution developed into a militarist constitutional theory that ascribed a privileged role in the political order to the military and its officers. This militarist constitutional theory originated in a strident assertion, in direct response to Washington's plans for the Society, that martial organizations should not be subordinated to civil authorities, nor should the members of such organizations forego their identities as soldiers in the interest of merging with an undifferentiated mass of republican citizens. It presented a vision of a martial republic that vindicated military elites as uniquely privileged citizens with special claims to power.

This militarist vision denied the need for reform. In a circular letter to the other state societies, the New Hampshire Cincinnati urged their compatriots to not "yield to Arguments that have no force" and "acknowledge dangers that cannot exist" by modifying their institution. Any changes to the Society or capitulations to its critics must be fiercely resisted, as they would "imply a concession that by our serving as Soldiers we have forfeited our rights as Citizens, and are not entitled to those Privileges which our

[62] Ibid., 27.

fellow subjects enjoy with out controul."[63] The notion that soldiers could not or did not deserve the same privileges as other citizens unless they abandoned their identities as soldiers – an idea embraced by Burke, Mirabeau, and Washington alike – particularly rankled the officers from New Hampshire. The outcry over the Society's decorations, medallions, and eagle order proved that soldiers were singled out, unjustly and unnecessarily, for repression. The New Hampshire Cincinnati pointed out that other societies, associations, and corporations adopted such ornamental symbols, and they demanded to know why "the Officers of the American Army alone [are] deprived of it."[64]

The sentiments of the New Hampshire Society struck a chord with the other meetings. The New Jersey Society (which eventually accepted Washington's revisions to the institution) copied the circular almost entirely into their own proceedings as sentiments they deemed "proper to observe" alongside their approval of Washington's proposals.[65] Alexander Hamilton and the Cincinnati in New York advanced their own reasons for their rejection of Washington's plans for incorporations. Hamilton wrote that incorporation would be counterproductive, as public attempts to "secure the sanction of a legal establishment" might only exacerbate the public anxiety about the Society. Granting Society funds to the legislature, furthermore, was improper and inefficient. The Cincinnati themselves "might be able to dispose of its funds to much greater

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[63] *The Institution and Records of the New Hampshire Society of the Cincinnati Formed by the New Hampshire Officers of the Revolutionary Army of the United States for the Laudable Purposes Herein Stated. Organized November 18, 1783. Last Meeting Held July 4, 1823* (Concord: Ira C. Evans, 1893), 27. A manuscript version of this circular is included in General Society Archives, Box XII (Papers of the State Societies), Folder 1C, Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.

[64] Ibid., 28.

[65] *Cincinnati, With the Bye-Laws and Rules of the New-Jersey State Society* (Trenton: James Oram, 1808), 34.

advantage."[66] Subordination to civil power was not a particularly popular idea among the members of the Society.

Unlike Washington, many other members of the Society did not worry about a "line of separation" between themselves and other citizens. They instead clung to that line as the continuing source of their civic identities. For those members of the Society who lacked lucrative postwar prospects, righteous assertion of their prerogatives and privileges as soldiers were all that remained, leaving them unable to conform to Washington's vision of an ideal soldier-turned-citizen. Daniel Gookin, a member of the Society in New Hampshire, complained that the officers in his state "were Mostly Farmers Labourious Men Those who Survived the war after being unused to Labour for 7 or 8 years found it very painful to go immediately to the plow."[67] A speaker at the yearly meeting of the Massachusetts Cincinnati stated publicly what Gookin had confined to private correspondence: that the Cincinnati had resigned their positions only to return to economic desolation, limited opportunities, and a generally hard life. "Have you realized those blessings for the attainment of which your treasure has been exhausted, the eloquence of your patriots has been exerted, and the blood of your heroes been sacrificed?" he asked.[68]

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[66] *The Institution of the Society of the Cincinnati… Together With Some of the Proceedings of the General Society, And of the New-York State Society; Also, A List of the Officers and Members of the New-York State Society, From Its Organization to the Year 1851* (New York: J.M. Elliott, 1851), 51-2.
[67] Daniel Gookin to unknown, undated, in *Institutions and Records of the New Hampshire Society of the Cincinnati*, 57.
[68] William Hull, *An Oration Delivered to the Society of the Cincinnati in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts July 4th, 1788* (Boston: Benjamin Russell, 1788), 12.

Feelings of pain and loss provided the basis for claims of entitlement among the Cincinnati. The New Hampshire Society's circular described how its members had returned from the war "to our families who had patiently borne a long and painful absence; many of them falling from a state of Affluence to the most trying Circumstances." Yet Congress "being unable to fulfil its contracts," the Cincinnati "had no means for relieving their wants."[69] Thus, the circular asked, "can it possibly be expected that we should tamely submit to give up into the hands of the respective Legislatures the small funds which we established with the price of our blood to be disposed of as they shall think proper, without our having the least controul over it or voice in disposing of it?"[70] Pointing to their battle scars, the Cincinnati increasingly asked, "can our land, now reposing under the smiles of Peace and Independence, purchased at the expense of a fractured limb or a dismembered body; be unmindful of the offering?"[71] Washington had demanded that the members of the Society forget their martial past. Members of the Society, in turn, demanded that the nation and its leaders always remember it. They began to argue for military service as a source of political privilege.

Out of similar sentiments of pain and loss, the Cincinnati considered themselves to have a unique investment in the new Federal Constitution of 1787. Some of the Cincinnati, in fact, perceived the Constitution as a product of their making. One member's history of the Constitution's creation and ratification celebrated how the

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[69] *The Institution and Records of the New Hampshire Society of the Cincinnati*, 28-9.
[70] Ibid., 29.
[71] Samuel Whitwell. *An Oration Delivered to the Society of the Cincinnati in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. July 4, 1789* (Boston: Benjamin Russell, 1789), 19-20.

Cincinnati "zealously employed their talents and influence in rearing up a constitution which might preserve and perpetuate" those "fair fruits of our glorious revolution…about to be blighted in the bud" that they had done so much to secure.[72] Robert Livingstone similarly exhorted the New York Society to not "lose sight of" the goal of strengthening the federal government: "having pursued it through fields of blood, let us not relinquish the chace, when nothing is necessary to its attainment, but union, firmness, and temperate deliberation."[73]

That many members of the Society of the Cincinnati supported the Constitution is not surprising; their president, after all, had chaired the constitutional convention in Philadelphia. On the surface, the Constitution was a clear expression of the ideals Washington voiced to the Society in 1784. It defined the government's military capacities and provided for institutional checks and balances on the power of the military. Article I, Section 8, ensured that all armed forces (army, navy, and militia) would be subordinate to the Congress, and further that Congressional appropriations for military purposes could not last longer than two years. Article II, Section 2, granted the executive powers as Commander in Chief of the armed forces, ensuring that civil powers would doubly constrain the military's power. While the Constitution clearly expressed some of the principles Washington expressed in his 1784 circular, the ways in which the Society

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[72] William Smith, *An Oration, Delivered in St. Philip's Church, Before the Inhabitants of Charleston, South-Carolina, on the Fourth of July, 1796, in Commemoration of American Independence. By Appointment of the American Revolution Society, and Published at the Request of that Society, and Also of the South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati* (Charleston: W.P. Young, 1796), 10.

[73] Robert R. Livingstone, *An Oration Delivered Before the Society of the Cincinnati of the State of New-York; In Commemoration of the Fourth Day of July* (New York: Francis Childs, 1787), 11, 12-3.

attempted to stake their own claims on it only exposed the tensions between themselves and Washington.

A member of the Society, Alexander Hamilton, one of the authors of the *Federalist* papers, was also one of the most influential figures in determining the Constitution's meaning. Not surprisingly, most of Hamilton's essays included among the *Federalist* papers pertained to the military establishment and argued in favor for a national government with expanded military capabilities. Hamilton at times made overtures to the Washingtonian ideal of subordinated military power and assured readers that under the Constitution there would be no threat from a military establishment, as its power would be properly placed in the hands of the legislature.[74] Yet Hamilton believed that there could be few legitimate restrictions on that power. "The circumstances that endanger the safety of nations are infinite; and for this reason no constitutional shackles can wisely be imposed on the power to which the care of it is committed," he wrote in *Federalist* number 23.[75]

Public ceremonial declarations of support revealed other ways in which some members of the Society projected their ideas of military power and privilege onto the federal constitutional order. Drawing analogies between the field of war and the arena of politics, the Cincinnati linked their observance of Washington's rule as president with their obedience to him as their commanding officer. "When soldiers, our greatest pride was a promptitude of obedience to your orders – as citizens, our supreme ambition is to maintain the character of firm supporters of that noble fabric of Federal Government,

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[74] Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* 24 (19 December 1787), *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 116-7.
[75] Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* 23 (18 December 1787), ibid., 112.

over which you preside," declared the Massachusetts Cincinnati in a statement commending Washington's election.[76] Other state societies issued similar statements. Members of the Georgia Society explicitly asserted their own privileged role in the new nation's destiny. "We flatter ourselves," they wrote to Washington, that "we may justly be supposed to have a more lively degree of sensibility in our affection from the relation in which we stand, as Officers who had the honor to serve under you during the late war."[77] The South Carolina Cincinnati likewise addressed Washington "as soldiers who partook with you in many of the dangers and hardships which attended the general army under your command."[78] A national statement drafted by the gathered Societies at the 1790 triennial meeting in Philadelphia echoed this sentiment and informed Washington that "when we say we love and revere you as a Father we not only speak the language of our own hearts, but we speak the language of all, who have fought, suffered, and conquered under your command."[79]

Washington responded by affirming the intimate links between himself and his fellow Cincinnati. Nonetheless, he also seized the opportunity to push his constitutional vision upon them. His reply to the Cincinnati of South Carolina declared his gratitude to "the friends of good government in general" and specified that he "counted upon the favorable sentiment and conduct of the officers of the late army in particular." He had a certain kind of officer in mind, however: those who "were formerly distinguished by their

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[76] "Address by the Massachusetts Cincinnati," in Hume, *George Washington's Correspondence*, 360.
[77] "Address by the Georgia Cincinnati," in ibid., 376.
[78] "Address by the South Carolina Cincinnati," in ibid., 364.
[79] "Address to the President of the United States From the Delegates of the State Societies of the Cincinnati, Philadelphia, 4 May 1790," in ibid., 369.

eminent fortitude and patriotism in the military service, during the most trying occasions" but were "now, mingled in the mass of citizens, conspicuous for a disinterested love of order, and a jealous attachment to the preservation of the rights of mankind."[80] Similarly, Washington responded to the accolades of the Massachusetts Cincinnati by reminding them of his expectations that they "will transmit to posterity an example which must command their admiration, and obtain their grateful praise."[81] His invocation of an example to posterity surely called to mind the language of his circular letter urging approval of the revised institution and reminded the Cincinnati that he still expected them to abandon their martial identities in the process of becoming true republican citizens. The addresses and accolades of the state societies subtly denied this request, however. The other members spoke assuredly as both citizens and soldiers in ways that suggested that, as officers, they spoke with a uniquely privileged voice that other citizens lacked.

Still, Washington's vision of soldiers-turned-citizens and subordinated martial power did not totally disappear from the Society. Some members continued to publicly proclaim themselves true followers of their namesake, whose "expectations were more than gratified" after the war, and thus returned "the sword…to its scabbard: the implements of death to their place," and returned "like Cincinnatus, to their domestic concerns."[82] In South Carolina in 1800, one speaker before the annually assembled Society similarly mythologized his listeners as soldiers who had "retired to the rank and

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[80] "Reply to the South Carolina Cincinnati," in ibid., 365.
[81] "Reply to the Massachusetts Cincinnati," in ibid., 361.
[82] Elijah Waterman, *An Oration, Delivered Before the Society of Cincinnati, Hartford, July 4, 1794* (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1794), 6.

occupations of citizens, uncorrupted by the vices and disorderly habits usually contracted in camps, in a long course of war; and have given examples of industry, regard of social order, and submission to the laws."[83] Some Cincinnati qualified such affirmations, however. A speaker before the South Carolina Cincinnati at their 1798 meeting, for example, explained that they had "gladly retired into the walks of private life…not distinguished from the poorest citizen," but only "under [Washington's] auspices, and by his skilful management."[84] Cincinnatus, and his modern-day counterpart George Washington, remained an ideal, though perhaps one to which some Cincinnati conformed only grudgingly.

Exhortations that the Cincinnati remain content with the tranquility of civic life gradually gave way to promises that they would one day pick up their swords again and reclaim their martial powers. An orator before the South Carolina Society's annual meeting, for example, commanded his listeners, "whose swords, after delivering us from an odious vassalage, now sleep in silence, in their peaceful scabbards," that they must be prepared to serve as "the guardians of a national honor." The Society's martial power, therefore, must remain alert and active. "Should the injustice of other nations drag us reluctant from the paths of peace," he said, "we confidently anticipate a renewal of those

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[83] John J. Pringle, *An Oration, Delivered in St. Philip's Church, Before the Inhabitants of Charleston, South Carolina, on the Fourth of July, 1800. In Commemoration of American Independence. By Appointment of the American Revolution Society, Published at the Request of that Society, and Also of the South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati* (Charleston: W.P. Young, 1800), 17-18

[84] Henry William DeSaussure, *An Oration, Prepared, To be Delivered in St. Philip's Church, Before the Inhabitants of Charleston, South-Carolina, On the Fourth of July, 1798. In Commemoration of American Independence. By Appointment of the American Revolution Society. Published By Request of That Society and Also of the South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati* (Charleston: W.P. Young, 1798), 13-4.

exploits, which crowned *us* with success, and *you* with glory."[85] An ode delivered before the Rhode Island Society in 1801 similarly affirmed

> No tumults here will thrive,
> While hoary Vet'rans live
> to guard the State;
> Their sword for public law
> And Order, they will draw,
> Excite submissive awe
> In Empire great.[86]

Over time, the officers of the Society of the Cincinnati transitioned in their self-perception from hesitant soldiers who met the call to arms but eagerly returned to domestic life to lionized "conquerors…upholding with their swords the infant republic."[87]

This transition in the way the Cincinnati understood the connections between their martial and civic identities ultimately resulted in the Cincinnati more confidently embracing the former throughout the 1790s and early 1800s. This vindication – sometimes glorification – of themselves as officers led some Cincinnati to articulate a theory of republican government in which American liberty could only persevere if it were continually and violently guarded against foreign and domestic threats. The Cincinnati celebrated the men who participated in the military response to the Whiskey Rebellion, for example, as purified republicans who "spurned the comforts of habitual ease, to endure the toils of war, in a rugged and mountainous country." Having "remembered nothing but the outrage to the laws, and the necessity of vindicating them;

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[85] William Smith, *An Oration…on the Fourth of July, 1796,* 23.
[86] William Ellery, *An Ode Addressed to the Society of the Cincinnati* (Newport: 1801), 1.
[87] Nicholas Biddle, *Oration Delivered Before the Pennsylvania State Society of Cincinnati, on the Fourth of July, MDCCCXI* (Philadelphia: C. and A. Conrad, 1811), 9.

they rushed to the field, they rescued the federal edifice from the meditated attack."[88] Some Cincinnati welcomed the possibility of war with France in 1798 for the opportunity it provided to once again show how "four millions of freemen, with arms in their hands, determined to be free, united, and inhabiting a great and fruitful country" would as ever be the most resilient defenders of liberty.[89] Cataclysmic violence became the crucible for a stronger national character as "that…temper of Americans, which, in times of peace, is forbearance and gentleness," transformed "under the pressure of the war into invincible fortitude."[90] Such declarations imagined an American republic in which bloodshed and combat provided the authenticity necessary for full citizenship and the exercise of liberty.

These ideas became especially strong among a second generation of Cincinnati who, far removed from Aedanus Burke's warnings, asserted the principles of martial republicanism more thoroughly and with much more force than did their elders. Thus, a twenty-five-year-old Nicholas Biddle delivered perhaps the strongest statement of militarist constitutional thought before the Pennsylvania Society in 1811. While celebrating the nation's independence, Biddle urged, it was crucial that Americans "not forget that, under heaven, we owe it to the patriots of the revolution: that we chiefly owe it to that gallant army, whose remains are now sharing with us the festivities they won."[91] As this generation of veterans aged and approached death, Biddle urged proper memorialization as the foundation of republican longevity. Biddle, in fact, considered monuments and memorials to war heroes to be the only truly eternal aspects of a republic.

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[88] William Smith, *An Oration… on the Fourth of July, 1796*, 16-17.
[89] DeSaussure, *An Oration…On the Fourth of July, 1798*, 43.
[90] Ibid., 5.
[91] Biddle, *Oration Delivered Before the Pennsylvania State Society of Cincinnati*, 19.

"They will long survive our freedom," he declared, pointing to ancient republics "of whose fallen greatness there exists at this hour scarcely any thing except the monuments of their heroes." He worried that a future traveler in America, exploring the "ruins of our republic" and finding no similar martial monuments, "will tread with indignation the soil of a people who merited their ruin, because they knew not how to reward the champions of their freedom."[92] Liberty would die where heroes of the war were not properly venerated.

In line with Biddle's associations between heroic veneration and the perseverance of liberty, other members of the Society demonstrated an understanding that American liberty was in a product of struggle, and that it could only persevere if continually and violently guarded against foreign and domestic threats. In 1810, the South Carolina Cincinnati celebrated that, despite "the storms that beat upon its youthful branches, and almost shook it from its base," "the tree of liberty has become strong, towering and luxuriant."[93] This recently won strength, nonetheless, only affirmed the necessity of continually and forcefully asserting American liberty. "If we would be heard," the orator that day implored the citizens assembled, "we must speak from our cannon – if we would be felt, we must draw our swords!"[94] Similar sentiments appeared in Nicholas Biddle's address. "Let those who would disturb its peace touch but the soil of this country," he said, and "instead of finding furious and divided factions…should they not be met as they

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[92] Ibid., 23.
[93] Hext M'Call, *An Oration, Delivered in St. Michael's Church, Before the Inhabitants of Charleston, South Carolina, on the Fourth of July, 1810. In Commemoration of American Independence, By Appointment of the American Revolution Society, and Published at the Request of That Society, and Also of the South-Carolina State Society of Cincinnati* (Charleston: W.P. Young, 1810), 4.
[94] Ibid., 17.

landed, by the armed and united vengeance of seven millions of free people," and added "so shall we preserve our freedom – thus shall the republic long stand."[95] These statements advanced a radical idea of freedom as indelibly linked to warfare.

The ideological tenor of the Society thus diverged over the years from Washington's more moderate hopes for a compromise with antimilitarists like Burke. The final repudiation of Washington's constitutional vision occurred gradually and came from both within and outside the Society. As the Cincinnati issued public declarations of their particular importance to the republic, Washington still struggled to convince them to accept his reforms. Out of a lack of enthusiasm if not outright opposition to the revised institution, the rest of the Society adopted a strategy of non-cooperation and, throughout the 1790s, simply refused to send delegates to the triennial national meetings. Without enough delegates present for a quorum, the national meeting could never effectively vote to adopt or reject the revised institution.[96] Finally, after Washington's death, the Society officially put the reform program to rest. At a national meeting in Philadelphia in 1800, on the same day that the members read a memorial for their recently deceased president, a committee declared "that the Institution of the Society of the Cincinnati, remains as it was originally proposed and adopted by the Officers of the American Army at the Cantonments on the banks of the Hudson river, in 1783."[97]

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[95] Biddle, *Oration Delivered Before the Pennsylvania State Society of Cincinnati*, 27.
[96] Those delegates who did attend the national meetings futilely reprimanded the other states for not sending delegates; see, for example, *Journals of the Society* 6 May 1796, 91-92, General Society Archives, Box II (Bound Proceedings: 1783-1811), Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.
[97] *Journals of the Society, or Order of the Cincinnati, By Their Delegates in Genl. Meeting Convend. Comencing May, MDCCLXXXIV. Vol. I.,* Wednesday, May 7, 1800,

The reform plan had one final chance at implementation when the Connecticut Cincinnati attempted, at last, to incorporate and entrust their funds to the state legislature. The first unsuccessful application to entrust the Society's fund of ten thousand dollars to the legislature for the relief of widows, orphans, and disabled veterans came in 1795. Additional attempts followed in 1800, 1802, and 1803. The final petition, in October 1803, made an impassioned plea for charitable relief for the "decayed superannuated officers of your line, who have been thrown out of their ordinary pursuits of business by the war, were afterwards unable to gain a livelihood by new occupations either on account of their age or infirmity; and for whose declining days no particular provision was made by their Country."[98] After the legislature denied this petition, the Cincinnati Society voted to dissolve. In a valedictory address, David Humphreys, Washington's former aide, attributed the motives of the state legislature to continued "jealousy" of the Society. The legislators "must…have judged the evil to be apprehended from the Society's continuance would overbalance the good to be expected from the preservation of so considerable a fund, destined for so beneficent a purpose."[99] The state legislature itself made no indication of its motives in rejecting the petition, although continued antimilitarist hostility to the Cincinnati may have been the only legitimate reason for turning down an offer of over ten thousand dollars. In this case, Washington's ideal of

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101. General Society Archives, Box II (Bound Proceedings, 1783-1811), Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.

[98] Petition of David Humphreys and John Mix, 10 October 1803, Series 3, Volume 6 (1795-1820), 83b, Connecticut Archives – Revolutionary War Records, Connecticut State Library.

[99] David Humphreys, *A Valedictory Discourse, Delivered Before the Cincinnati of Connecticut, in Hartford, July 4th, 1804, on the Dissolution of the Society* (Boston: Gilbert & Dean, 1804), 5.

properly subordinated military authority foundered on the shoals of persistent antimilitarist constitutional thought that still had some power to deny officers a place in political life.

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The legacy of revolutionary violence and the new republic's relationship to its own wartime past were the real issues at the heart of the Cincinnati controversy. In the decades after 1783, the Society of the Cincinnati and its critics expressed a wide range of concerns about war, militarism, and republicanism. To some, the permanence of the nation's recently secured independence and freedoms necessitated an active suppression of the nation's recent violent history and possibly the disenfranchisement of those who had fought for independence. More moderate voices – including some prominent leaders of the Cincinnati such as George Washington – argued that the Cincinnati should readily abandon their identities as soldiers in the interest of becoming full republican citizens. In response, a significant faction within the Society asserted that not only was such abandonment difficult (if not impossible), it was not desirable. Amidst this debate, the Society propagated new conceptions of citizenship and liberty and attempted to define a new American political community forged by revolutionary war.

2.

## Every Citizen a Soldier: Militia Reform, 1790-1820

The questions and concerns that the Society of the Cincinnati controversy raised continued to occupy citizens, political leaders, and policy makers in the new national government in their efforts to build the American military establishment. Historians have analyzed the growth of the military establishment in the early republic largely in relation to its two constitutive parts: the militia and the regular army. The regular army typically consisted of soldiers enlisted or conscripted into formally organized regimental units and commanded by career officers. The militia, on the other hand, was much larger. It theoretically consisted of all able-bodied male citizens organized locally but coordinated under some central authority. Regulars fought because they had been hired or forced to do so and for state, rather than personal, objectives. If placed under the control of a corrupt leader or government minister, they could easily be used to tyrannize the people. The male citizens who composed the militia ostensibly fought because it was their obligation, as virtuous citizens, to uphold their constitutional order and defend their liberties.[100] These crucial distinctions between the regular army and the militia, and the supposed antagonism between them, provided a narrative of power and liberty that

[100] Lindsay Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 13-50; Lawrence Delbert Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988), 153-173.

resonated strongly in Anglo-American political discourse throughout the eighteenth century.[101]

In reality, the irreconcilability of the two was mostly an ideological fiction. In most conflicts of the colonial and early national period, the military establishment consisted of diverse combinations of regular soldiers and citizen-soldiers. Large mobilizations of armed forces in major North American wars, such as the Seven Years War or the Revolutionary War, had been mixtures of regulars and militia.[102] Therefore, when American citizens, policy makers, and political thinkers in the early republic discussed their military establishment, they may have had any number of arrangements of the nation's armed forces in mind.

Support for and reliance on the militia remained a central part of early republican military policy. The constitutions of the states of North Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and of the independent republic of Vermont included provisions for the preservation of the militia, as did the Bill of Rights in the federal Constitution. A 1792 act of Congress required all white men of suitable age in the nation to serve in the militia. Whether all men took this obligation seriously was a different matter. Many sought exemptions from militia service. Those who did serve often appeared at musters unarmed and performed their duties with a lack of discipline that made a mockery of the entire institution. Nonetheless, the militia's importance to the

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[101] Saul Cornell, *A Well Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12.
[102] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001); Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 36-53.

American republic was a common refrain in political discourse even decades into the nineteenth century. The glory and virtue of the militia, one critic complained, was a "song…incessantly sung" in early national politics, to the point that "he who doubts the truth of it is deemed a political infidel."[103]

Historians have struggled to explain why, in spite of the militia's many problems, it retained so much political interest and support throughout the early republic. Early national political interest in the militia has been interpreted as part of an anti-federalist critique of centralized political power or, in another framework, as an attempt to assert the civic superiority of the landed elite over the immigrants and urban poor who made up the regular army.[104] These interpretations treat the militia as a mere proxy for larger political concerns. They ignore the fact that some important policy makers and citizens thought seriously about the militia in its own right as a military institution. For this small but persistent faction, the militia was integral to efforts to create a strong American military but avoid the perils of a large regular army, by placing military power – not just in the form of weapons but in the form of military expertise as well – into the hands of the people.

Early proposals for militia reform reveal what the creation of this military of the people would entail and why it proved so elusive. Efforts to improve the militia were rooted in a radical idea that the republic could only be perfected if placed upon a secure

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[103] "The Militia," 29 March 1810, *American State Papers* Class V (Military Affairs) (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-61) (hereafter *ASP:MA*), I:263.
[104] John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 46-77; Cress, *Citizens in Arms*, 94-134; Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 74-94; Cornell, *A Well Regulated Militia*, 5-6; Michael Bellesiles, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*, 2nd ed., (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2003), 207.

martial basis. In this ideal martial republic, every citizen would be a soldier. Some also argued that only soldiers should be able to claim certain political privileges. Proposals to train American men in arms and make soldiers out of citizens emerged sporadically both in and out of Congress between 1790 and 1820. Each successive attempt adopted a different approach. By 1820, proponents of a martial republic abandoned obligatory militia service and turned instead to military education as the ideal means of creating a military republic. Ultimately, federal policy makers were powerless to create this martial republic, but the ideal remained a special pursuit of independent groups and citizens.

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In January 1790, Secretary of War and member of the Society of the Cincinnati Henry Knox submitted a comprehensive report on the militia to the first Congress. Knox was preoccupied with the possible tensions between a republican system of government and its defense needs. He sought to create a strong military establishment that would not undermine the "safety of the great principles of liberty." The military could remain consonant with republican values, Knox concluded, only if it were "formed of the people themselves, and supported by their habits and manners," rather than constituting a distinct and isolated class.[105] Martial and civil society had to merge seamlessly. This integration paralleled the hybrid martial-civic identity that some members of the Society of the Cincinnati fashioned for themselves. Much like many other members of the Society, Knox conceived of a new political culture on martial principles and saw the militia as the

[105] "General Knox's Militia Plan, 18 January 1790," *Annals of Congress* 1st Congress, 1st Session, II: 2141.

best means to achieve that goal. When Congress took up the responsibility of formulating legislation for both the regular army and the militia, debate therefore revolved around this central proposition.

Knox was by no means alone in desiring a nation of citizen-soldiers. Thomas Jefferson also argued that martial and civic life must be thoroughly integrated in a republic.[106] James Jackson, a Representative from Georgia and later a Jeffersonian Republican, likewise claimed that "in a Republic every man ought to be a soldier, and prepared to resist tyranny and usurpation."[107] Outside of the federal government, a Boston minister preached that military knowledge should be a common civic pursuit. "A people ignorant of the art of war and destitute of the qualifications and virtues which adorn the character of soldiers, must be in constant danger of falling under the yoke of bondage," he proclaimed.[108] Another sermon by minister Samuel West argued that "too great a distinction between the civil and military characters is productive of evil. The wisdom of government should aim to unite both in the same persons," making American men's identities as citizens indistinct from, indeed dependent upon, their service as soldiers.[109] Alexander Hamilton offered one of the few contrary opinions. Regarding claims that the militia was the country's "natural bulwark," Hamilton responded that "this doctrine in substance had like to have lost us our independence." Making the case for a

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[106] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 104.
[107] Remarks of James Jackson of Georgia, 16 December 1790, *Annals of Congress* 1st Congress, 1st Session, II: 1853.
[108] David Osgood, *A Sermon, Preached at the Request of the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company, in Boston, June 2, 1788, Being the Anniversary of Their Election of Officers* (Boston: Benjamin Russell, 1788), 15.
[109] Samuel West, *The Christian Soldier: A Sermon, Preached Before the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company, On Monday, June 2d, 1794; Being the Anniversary of Their Election of Officers* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1794), 13.

well organized and well trained regular army, Hamilton argued that "the steady operations of war against a regular and disciplined army, can only be successfully conducted by a force of the same kind."[110] Hamilton's complaints about the militia were nonetheless the exception in early American politics.

Knox went further than most in using the principle of martial-civil integration as the basis for a radical redefinition of American citizenship. His proposal should not be taken as representative or typical in early republican politics, but rather as instructive of the furthest limit of conceptualizing the nature of republican citizenship and tying that citizenship to military service. Arguing that "every man of the proper age and ability of body, is firmly bound by the social compact to perform, personally, his proportion of military duty for the defence of the State," Knox proposed training camps that all men age eighteen to twenty-one (designated the "advance corps") would be required to attend annually. At the completion of the training term, all men would receive a certificate and have their names entered in a register.[111] The certificate and register entry would then "be required as an indispensable qualification for exercising any of the rights of a free citizen."[112] "It ought to be a permanent rule," Knox concluded, "that those who in youth decline, or refuse to subject themselves to the course of military education, established by the laws, should be considered as unworthy of public trust, or public honors, and be

[110] Alexander Hamilton, Federalist #25, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 123.
[111] "General Knox's Militia Plan," *Annals of Congress* 1st Congress, 1st Session, II: 2145.
[112] Ibid., 2150.

excluded therefrom accordingly."[113] In Knox's vision of the republic, military service determined the exclusionary limits of the American political community.

In this, Knox was not entirely alone. George Washington's 1783 "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" had similarly spoken of the militia in terms of obligation. "Every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a free Government," Washington had said, "owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defence of it."[114] Knox, though, used militia obligation to seek a militarization of American public life. "The advanced corps and annual camps of discipline are instituted in order to introduce an operative military spirit in the community," Knox explained.[115] Far from undermining republican principles, diffusion of this "military spirit" would insure that the growth of the military establishment would never undermine American liberty. Standing armies endangered republican societies when they grew insular and distant from the norms and values of the body of the people, "forming a distinct class in the community."[116] The militia could never present such dangers because, by virtue of consisting of the people themselves who rotated between civilian and military life, it aligned the military establishment with the cultural mainstream.

The cultivation of proper martial culture was therefore just as important as the establishment of proper martial institutions. Culture, or what Knox called "habit," was important because there were no inherent differences between the regular army and the

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[113] Ibid., 2161.
[114] "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment," *Writings of George Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), XXVI: 389.
[115] "General Knox's Militia Plan," *Debates and Proceedings* 1st Congress, 1st Session, II: 2153.
[116] Ibid., 2143

militia. The militia, if infiltrated by the wrong "habits," could easily become a standing army in all but name.[117] Knox also argued that civilian life could benefit as much from martial values as the military would benefit from the infusion of civilian values. Subjecting the nation's youth to a rigorous system of military discipline would be conducive to improvements in other social and economic fields. "The habits of industry will be rather strengthened than relaxed by the establishment of the annual camps of discipline," he explained, and young men will find "a natural solicitude to establish themselves in society."[118] An argument that republican liberty and national prosperity depended upon wide diffusion of martial values thus formed the core of Knox's plan of militia reform.

Debates in Congress over Knox's plan focused especially on the question of whether all white male citizens had an obligation to serve as soldiers. Absolute demands for universal service in original versions of the militia bill raised the suspicions of some members of Congress, who not only saw mandatory service as an undue burden on a large portion of the nation's male population but also complained of a "manifest impropriety" in the idea. Such a requirement, they argued, "could not conduce either to the acquisition of military knowledge, or the advancement of morals."[119] In response to efforts to equate citizenship with military service, some members of Congress argued for exemptions for certain groups on the grounds that "many characters in society cannot,

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[117] Knox made this point regarding a "militia of substitutes" in which not all men are required to serve but rather can hire substitutes; Ibid., 2145.
[118] Ibid., 2154
[119] Remarks of Elias Boudinot of New Jersey and Thomas Fitzsimons of Pennsylvania, 16 December 1790, *Annals of Congress* 1st Congress, 1st Session, IIL 1852.

and ought not to be compelled to bear arms – Ministers of the Gospel, &c."[120] Arguments in favor of including exemptions within the militia law were partly rooted in practical concerns, partly in political considerations, and partly in a belief that some sectors of society ought to remain distinct from the military for moral considerations. Demands for exemptions emerged from an understanding that there were multiple ways to act the part of citizen and that soldiering should not be considered the solitary or most privileged path to citizenship. The organization of the militia was thus a political problem with potentially huge significance for the meaning of American citizenship. The greatest underlying difference between Knox and his detractors in Congress was over how citizenship should be determined and practiced.

The militia law that ultimately emerged from Congress included Knox's idea of universal obligation but was more strongly a product of those who argued that republican citizenship should not be defined in purely martial terms. Only months after Knox submitted his proposal, Elias Boudinot submitted a second proposal for militia reform with much less stringent requirements for organization and training. Boudinot's plan called for only four days of militia training annually (six days for men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five), with some federal supervision of militia training but no federal funding of militia companies.[121] The Uniform Militia Act that emerged from Congress in May 1792 was based more on Boudinot's proposals than on Knox's vision. The law mandated "each and every free able-bodied white male citizen" in the nation to serve in the militia but reserved the power to determine exemptions to the state

[120] Remarks of Jeremiah Smith, 21 February 1792, *Annals of Congress* 2nd Congress, 422.
[121] Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1776-1865* (Boston: Little Brown, 1968), 183-4.

governments. Any semblance of Knox's comprehensive plan of organization (complete with certificates and registries) was notably absent. The law was also silent with regard to how much militia companies should train and made no provisions for federal support of any militia organization. Instead, Congress devolved the powers of enlistment and enforcement to the local commanders of individual companies, who were given responsibility to ensure that all men within their territorial boundaries fulfilled their obligation.[122] The Act abandoned Knox's definition of citizenship as an active obligation owed to (and closely regulated by) the federal government in favor of one in which the relationship between soldiering and citizenship was much less clearly defined.

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Henry Knox's militia plan may have been too ambitious and ascribed too much power to the federal government to even stand a chance in Congress. Without some degree of national organization and efficiently administered training, however, the militia would only be a source of military failure and, at its worst, domestic disorder. Militia companies provided ample proof of this fact throughout the 1790s.

The militia's inefficacy as a fighting force was its most glaring problem. While Congress debated the Uniform Militia Act, news arrived of the defeats of a combination of militia and regular troops under the command of General Arthur St. Clair against the Miami Indians. Congressional investigation into the defeats exonerated St. Clair's leadership while pointing to systematic flaws in the expedition, such as "fatal mismanagements and neglects, in the quartermaster's and military stores department,"

[122] "An act more effectually to provide for the National Defence, by establishing an uniform Militia throughout the United States," *Annals of Congress* 2nd Congress, 1392-4.

which kept the expedition poorly supplied with nonfunctional or otherwise unsuitable equipment.[123] These reports specially emphasized the incompetence of the militia forces that had been called out from Pennsylvania and Kentucky. As one major testified, "amongst the militia were a great many hardly able to bear arms, such as old infirm men and young boys. They were not such as might be expected from a frontier country, viz: the smart active woodsmen, well accustomed to arms, eager and alert to revenge the injuries done them and their connexions."[124] This officer's critique spoke to the problem of relying on the supposedly innate abilities of American men to provide sufficient military power. If the militia were to remain the dominant military institution in the republic, then some system of training and discipline was necessary. The only alternative was an army of regulars, which is what the federal government had to resort to in order to secure control in Ohio. In 1792, Congress established the Legion of the United States, a small but disciplined force of regulars under the command of General Anthony Wayne.

Aside from their military weakness, early national militia companies were often a source of disorder and political instability. The involvement of militia companies on both sides of domestic insurrections such as the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion revealed the ways in which the militia could easily become an agent of faction and disorder when not organized under a national administrative framework. The rebellion, a violent protest against a federal tax on liquor (which in rural regions often doubled as a form of currency) originated within militia units in western Pennsylvania that had originally been

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[123] "Causes of the Failure of the Expedition Against the Indians, in 1791, Under the Command of Major General St. Clair, Communicated to the House of Representatives, on the 8th of May, 1792," *ASP:MA*, I: 36.
[124] "Court of Inquiry on Gen. Harmar," *Annals of Congress* 2nd Congress, 1116.

called out to join the Indian wars in Ohio.[125] These companies in fact "appropriated the rituals and rhetoric of the militia muster to…give their actions legitimacy."[126] Other prominent cases of domestic insurrection or unrest in the early national period had their origins within collective actions mediated through local militia companies. Five years after the Whiskey Rebellion, for instance, militia companies in southeastern Pennsylvania provided the organizational force for another tax revolt in what came to be known as Fries's Rebellion.[127]

The federal government's response to the Whiskey Rebellion relied upon its limited powers to call out militia units from the states.[128] This federally directed attempt to assemble a force to suppress the rebellion divided local militia companies along partisan lines, forcing militia units into new roles that alienated them from their traditional role as unified defenders of popular liberties. In Philadelphia, the militia companies that responded most enthusiastically to the call for volunteers were those organized by local Federalists such as Francis Gurney and William MacPherson.[129] Militia responses to Fries's Rebellion in 1799 were even more sharply divided along partisan lines. Again, Federalists dominated, and their sometimes brutal counterinsurgent

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[125] Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 178.
[126] Cornell, *A Well Regulated Militia*, 79-80.
[127] Albrecht Koschnik, *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together": Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 125; Cornell, *A Well Regulated Militia*, 79-81, 96-7.
[128] Even then, the ability to call out these militia units depended upon close cooperation with state governors; see Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 167.
[129] Koschnick, *"Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together,"* 106-7.

tactics became a clear target for the Republican opposition.[130] Albrecht Koschnik's study of associational life in early national Philadelphia explains that self-formed militia companies and military societies in that city undermined the militia's civic ideals in many ways even as they fulfilled those ideals in other ways. "The volunteers' public role as defenders of state and nation clashed with their equally public, yet fundamentally different preoccupations as partisan associators," Koschnik writes. "The tension between partisanship and the defence of the commonwealth ran through all debates over the purpose and functions of the volunteer militia."[131] As local economic interests and political ideologies clashed, militia companies became increasingly factional and encouraged greater partisan political violence.

The emergence of this partisan militia system could be linked to the ways in which the 1792 Uniform Militia Act ambiguously defined the militia as a local body co-opted for national goals. This framework defined two competing, and often irreconcilable, functions of the militia in the early republic: they were simultaneously to be local representatives of popular liberties as well as agents of the national political order. Domestic insurrections and the responses to them reveal how, under the weak 1792 militia law, the militia came to serve two civic ideals that were in conflict with each other.

In spite of these persistent problems, no additional plans to turn citizens into effective soldiers passed through Congress during the rest of 1790s and the first decade of

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[130] Ibid., 127-8.
[131] Ibid., 90; Saul Cornell explores similar tensions in the functions of the early national militia, especially as revealed during Shays's Rebellion. Cornell, *A Well Regulated Militia*, 33.

the 1800s. Congress received proposals for militia reform in 1794, 1795, and 1796, none of which had any more success than Knox's 1790 proposal.[132] A Congressional report in 1803, in fact, identified the weak 1792 Uniform Militia Act as the furthest limit on Congressional power regarding the militia's training or organization.[133] An 1810 report of a Congressional committee re-emphasized legislators' unwillingness to "innovate" further on the militia system.[134] Between 1792 and the end of the War of 1812, few policy makers at the federal level demonstrated serious interest in training the people in the art of war.

Federal inactivity left the militia's improvement to the state governments and independent reform efforts. Only a few state governments showed active concern for the militia and took concrete measures for its improvement. Vermont and South Carolina, for example, authorized purchasing agents to procure arms from European manufacturers.[135] Some state governments printed regulations and training manuals for the militia's edification.[136] Local militia associations offered perhaps the best hope that

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[132] C. Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers and the War of 1812* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 8-9.
[133] J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 132.
[134] "The Militia," 29 March 1810, *ASP:MA*, I: 263.
[135] Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 185-6.
[136] See, for examples, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, by Baron de Stuben. To Which are Prefixed the Laws and Regulations For Governing and Disciplining the Militia of the United States. And the Laws for Forming and Regulating the Militia of the State of New-Hampshire. Published by Order of the Hon. General-Court of the State of New-Hamsphire* (Portsmouth: J. Melcher, 1794); *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States: To Which Are Added the United States Militia Act, Passed in Congress, May, 1792, and the Militia Act of Massachusetts, Passed June 22, 1793* (Boston, 1794); *Regulations For the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States: To Which Is Added: Rules and Articles for the Better Government of the Troops, Raised, or to be Raised, and Kept in Pay, By*

members of militia companies might acquire any degree of expertise. Specialized military clubs like New York's Washington Military Society, established in 1796, offered a means by which officers of the militia companies in New York City could meet and pursue "improvement in military tactics."[137] The Society organized regular meetings and exercises, and in its bylaws enforced military discipline in dress and conduct.[138] Similar associations for the improvement of local militia emerged in this period in places from Sanbornton, New Hampshire, to Charleston, South Carolina. Boston's Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company (formed in 1638) continued to combine civic and military activities in ways similar to the Society of the Cincinnati.[139] The growth of such institutions was modest – military societies would become a larger phenomenon after the War of 1812 – but their activities in the 1790s and early 1800s still suggest the seriousness with which some men approached the militia and the ways in which they attempted to compensate for the shortcomings of federal and state militia laws.

These elite military associations, however, had few pretenses about diffusing their military expertise among a larger group of male citizens. They instead understood militia service as a basis from which to claim greater political and moral authority for themselves. They positioned themselves as civic leaders, their military discipline crucial

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*and at the Expense of the United States of America* (Halifax, N.C: Printed and published agreeable to an Act of the Assembly of the State of North Carolina, by Hodge and Wills, Printers to the State, 1794). These editions are in the Library of the Society of the Cincinnati.

[137] *The Constitution and Bye-Laws of the New York Washington Military Society. Published by Order of the Society, 27th Oct. 1796* (New York: William A. Davis, 1796), 3.

[138] Ibid., 7-8, 11-2.

[139] Joseph Woodman. *A Discourse: Delivered by the Particular Desire of the Military Society in Sandbornton, August 19th, 1794* (Concord: Bell and Davis, 1794); Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 217-8.

to the "encouragement and promotion of decency, order and virtue, and the suppression of vice, profaneness and immorality of every kind." They spoke unabashedly of using their "influence, for the election of suitable and well equipped persons, to offices in civil government."[140] The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston was especially active in defining a central and crucial role of the soldier and officer in the preservation of American republicanism, as "the protector of [the nation's] honour and her interests."[141] One orator explained that, independent of any considerations of military preparedness, the Company's discipline and habits of "order and subordination" were naturally conducive to "the improvement of the morals and manners of men."[142] Members of these militia companies imagined their martial activity as having a distinct civic importance within the type of republic they envisioned. They pursued, as their own prerogative, the principles of martial republicanism that Knox had been unable to implement for all male citizens.

Some citizens and associations sought other, nongovernmental, ways to spread military knowledge as widely as possible. In 1803, the Virginia Society of the Cincinnati considered bequeathing its funds to the Washington Academy in Richmond. According to the chapter's minutes, one member even suggested "appropriating the funds of the Society to a Military Academy…provided that in future it take the name of the Cincinnati

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[140] Woodman, *A Discourse*, 13.
[141] Samuel West, *The Christian Soldier: A Sermon, Preached Before the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company, On Monday, June 2d, 1794; Being the Anniversary of Their Election of Officers* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1794), 8.
[142] James Kendall, *Preparation for War the Best Security for Peace: Illustrated in a Sermon, Delivered Before the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company, on the Anniversary of Their Election of Officers, Boston, June 2, 1806* (Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1806), 22.

Academy."[143] In 1817, the Society contacted Thomas Jefferson about establishing a "Cincinnati professorship" and a "school for the military arts of gunnery and fortification" through a twenty thousand dollar grant to the University of Virginia.[144] In 1800, Philadelphian John Ely published a plan to establish military instruction for young boys by creating a "Corps of Boys" consisting of one thousand youth age twelve to fifteen in the city. Ely, like Knox, asserted the civic importance of military training and advocated wider access to specialized military knowledge as a way to radically improve republican society. "Every possible care should be taken to keep the military spirit alive," Ely wrote, and the instruction of young boys in preparation for their military service as men was the ideal way to not only keep martial fervor active in a time of peace but also preserve the republic by further ensuring that every citizen could be a soldier.[145] Republican printer William Duane made an effort at popular military education with the publication of tactical manuals and, in 1810, a military dictionary. Duane intended to correct a "state of general indifference or unacquaintance with the business of war" among American citizens.[146] These private initiatives, meager as they were, nonetheless

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[143] Minutes of the Virginia Society, 13 December 1803, in *Papers of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia, 1783-1824*, Edgar Erskine Hume, ed. (Richmond: Published by the Society, 1938), 70.
[144] Thomas Jefferson to Judge Brooke, Vice President of the Virginia Cincinnati, 7 November 1817, in Ibid., 258.
[145] John Ely, *A Plan to Render Our Militia Formidable: Shewing That the Most Effectual Way to Preserve Peace in the United States Will be to Let Military Knowledge Form a Part of the Education of Boys. Together With a Short Address to People Who Are Scrupulous About Bearing Arms in Defence of Their Country* (Philadelphia: John Ormrod, 1800), 7.
[146] William Duane, *A Military Dictionary, Or, Explanation of the Several Systems of Discipline of Different Kinds of Troops, Infantry, Artillery, and Cavalry; the Principles of Fortification, and All the Modern Improvements in the Science of Tactics* (Philadelphia: William Duane, 1810), iii.

may have been the only attempts between 1790 and 1812 to provide military instruction to anyone outside of the regular army.

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By the late 1790s, military policy makers in the federal government increasingly ignored the militia and redirected their attentions to the creation of a select and specialized regular army. After a controversial military buildup in preparation for a war against France in 1798, Federalists emphasized specialization as a means to compensate for the shortcomings of the militia and avoid the necessity of a large regular force. As Secretary of War James McHenry explained to Congress in 1800, "in proportion as the circumstances and policy of a people are opposed to the maintenance of a large military force, it is important that as much perfection as possible be given to that which may at any time exist."[147] The perfection to which McHenry referred was generally considered to encompass an intellectual approach to warfare, such that advanced knowledge of strategy and tactics and technological sophistication in the fields of artillery and military engineering could make up for the small size of the regular army. This call for specialization implicitly rejected the idea the every citizen could become a soldier. "The art of war…calls for profound study; its theory is immense; the details infinite," McHenry explained. It was impossible, he claimed, "for an officer of militia to obtain a competent knowledge of these things in the short space his usual avocations will permit him to devote to their acquisition."[148] Proponents of military specialization argued that a

[147] "Military Academy, and Reorganization of the Army," 14 January 1800, *ASP:MA*, I: 133.
[148] "Military Academy," 13 February 1800, Ibid., I: 142.

scheme of universal military service was impractical and that only a select few could truly hope to obtain the requisite skills that made an effective soldier.

The Jeffersonians who took control of the federal government after 1800 did not altogether abandon these ambitions. In some ways, they continued Federalist military policies. Historians have questioned and gradually revised the notion that Thomas Jefferson or his supporters were remarkably or stridently opposed to a regular army.[149] Once in control of the federal government, Jeffersonians worked within the framework of the regular army that the Federalists had constructed.[150] Congress ultimately had few qualms about nearly tripling the size of the regular army, which it did between 1807 and 1808, and subsequently using that army to enforce the Embargo Act of 1807.[151] This increase of the army precipitated an increase in federal military spending, from about 35% of the federal budget in 1805 and 1806 to about 50% in 1809.[152]

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[149] The most systematic revision of this idea was done by Theodore J. Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson's Army: Political and Social Reform of the Military Establishment, 1801-1809* (New York: New York University Press, 1987); the idea found earlier, and more tenuous, form in Cress, *Citizens in Arms*, 166 and Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 128-130; for a more recent overview see Peter Onuf, "Introduction," in *Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy: Founding West Point*, Robert M.S. McDonald, ed. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), 1-22; Robert M.S. McDonald, "West Point's Lost Founder: Jefferson Remembered, Forgotten, and Reconsidered" *idem.* 182-206 traces a political history of the idea of Jefferson's antimilitarism. In the antebellum period, graduates and supporters of the U.S. Military Academy were reluctant to recognize Jefferson's role in creating the Academy because they perceived him as the ideological predecessor of Andrew Jackson, who was hostile to the Academy.

[150] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 105-6.

[151] Ibid., 109-10; Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson's Army*, 169-70, 176-9; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 137-9.

[152] Ira Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American Statebuilding," in *Shaped By War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*, Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 93 (Figure 4.3).

Jefferson shared James McHenry's interest in the intellectual advancement of the regular army, although Jefferson advocated intellectual improvement as something that could contain the army's worst potential for abuse.[153] Jefferson thus succeeded in implementing one long-standing Federalist goal: the establishment of a military academy. The creation of the United States Military Academy by the Jeffersonian Congress in 1802 was fairly modest. The law merely authorized the President to create a corps of engineers and specified that "the said corps when so organized, shall be stationed at West Point, in the State of New York, and shall constitute a military academy."[154] As the next chapter will discuss, the Academy took many years to reach a point where it had much influence or importance within the military establishment. Nonetheless, its creation in 1802 fulfilled an objective that had been on the minds of Federalists and military leaders like George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Baron Von Steuben since the end of the Revolutionary War.[155]

As President, Jefferson had no more success on militia reform than did previous Federalist administrations, though he urged Congress to consider a national re-organization on several occasions. Without reform, his enthusiasm for the institution began to subside.[156] The ideal of the citizens in arms waned in the eyes of other Republicans who worried about its radical potential following insurrections such as the

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[153] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 105.
[154] "An Act fixing the Military Peace Establishment of the United States," *Annals of Congress*, 7th Congress, 1st Session, 1312.
[155] Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 44-8.
[156] Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson's Army*, 162-3. Crackel notes that part of Jefferson's waning support for the militia was the fact that militia commanders were often Federalists, even in Republican areas.

Whiskey Rebellion.[157] The most significant Jeffersonian attempt to reform the militia diverged from previous endeavors to organize and properly train the citizens and instead appropriated two hundred thousand dollars to arm the militia at federal expense. The size of the militia was estimated at seven hundred thousand men, and the sum appropriated would, at best, procure fourteen thousand arms.[158] This act therefore did not promise any dramatic overhaul of the militia or much improvement in its operations.

This seeming reversal of Republican ideas about a federal military establishment suggests that, at its heart, Jeffersonian opposition to a regular army was rooted more in opposition to the Federalist Party than in sincere ideological concerns. The reorganization of the peacetime military establishment in 1802, of which the creation of the Military Academy was a part, had the effect of reducing the size of the regular army but was not, as Theodore Crackel points out, motivated by anti-army ideology.[159] The Jeffersonian Military Peace Establishment Act instead reduced the regular army in ways that targeted Federalist-dominated departments, such as the General Staff. Additionally, the consolidation of companies – creating an army of fewer companies with more troops within each company – decreased the number of officers needed and thus allowed a purge of Federalist appointees.[160] While accepting the regular army, Jeffersonians hoped to republicanize as well as Republicanize it, primarily by using the Military Academy to ensure that the officer corps would, in the future, consist of loyal Jeffersonian appointees

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[157] These Republicans critiqued localized and more spontaneous actions of militia companies and argued for stronger regulation of the militia at the state level. Cornell, *Well Regulated Militia*, 81.
[158] Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812*, 12.
[159] Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson's Army*, 2-3.
[160] Ibid., 44-5.

who conformed ideologically to the party's vision.[161] When Jeffersonians expanded the army in 1808, they did so with the intent of further packing it with their partisans.[162] Jeffersonian Republicans, therefore, did not significantly reverse the trends toward reliance on a small and select regular army that the Federalists had initiated at the end of their rule. They in fact expanded that army while consolidating their own control over it.

The War of 1812 forced political leaders to think about the militia again. The Battle of Tippecanoe, in which a joint force of regular army and western militia under the command of career officer William Henry Harrison attacked allied forces under the Shawnee Tenskwatawa, is considered the first significant engagement of the War of 1812. Harrison's defeat of the Shawnee pushed their leader Tecumseh into an alliance with Great Britain, which, combined with increasing tensions on trade issues, led to a declaration of war in June 1812. In his attack on Tenskwatawa, Harrison relied on local militia in largely supplemental roles, following Secretary of War William Eustis's advice to use militia only to replace regulars killed or wounded.[163] The official report of the battle explained that Harrison had placed two companies of militia on the front line during march and kept three companies of militia in reserve. He positioned the soldiers, however, in one line, "or what is called Indian file," because it would be both better "in

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[161] Ibid., 14, 71. As evidence of ideological conformity, Crackel cites letters of recommendation for the earliest cadets, which usually emphasized the cadet's adherence to republican principles.
[162] Ibid., 160-175.
[163] William Eustis to William Henry Harrison, War Department, 3 October 1811, William Henry Harrison Papers (Presidential Papers Microfilm) (Washington: Library of Congress, 1958), Series 1, Reel 1.

that kind of warfare" as well as more suited to the movements of "raw troops."[164] Thus, though the victory at the Battle of Tippecanoe was mostly the work of regulars, Harrison at least figured out a way to put the militia to good use.

Political leaders could not presume that such effective use of the militia would be the norm. In the months before the War of 1812 there was much doubt that the militia would play a significant role in any American military undertaking. As a fuller scale war with Great Britain approached, the state legislatures of Kentucky and North Carolina urged Congress to consider national measures to put the militia in proper order. The Kentucky legislature largely echoed Knox's 1790 plan in asking for a division of the militia into age groups and implementation of a systematic training program in military discipline for all men under the age of twenty-one.[165] The militia's confederated organization obstructed the mobilization for war when the governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut refused to acquiesce to the Madison administration's demands for troops.[166] Though military historians typically identify the small size and poor organization of the regular army as additional roots of military failure, the persistent inability or unwillingness of both federal and state policy makers to provide for the militia's organization and training throughout the early national period must also be considered a cause of the near defeat.[167]

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[164] "Northwest Tribes," 19 December 1811, *American State Papers* Class II (Indian Affairs) (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832) (hereafter *ASP:IA*), I:776.
[165] "The Militia," 6 March 1812, *ASP:MA*, I: 318; Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812*, 17.
[166] "Refusal of the Governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut to Furnish Their Quotas of Militia," 6 November 1812, *ASP:MA*, I: 321-326.
[167] Jeremy Black, *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009); Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, argues that military failures were

Any history of the War of 1812 amounts to a catalog of American military failures and shortcomings: invading British troops forced the President to flee the capital and burned the White House; defending militia sometimes found themselves provisioned with pikes instead of guns; militia troops demonstrated new levels of ineffectiveness when they refused to follow their commanders who ordered them to attack the British in Canada. If not the nation's finest military moment, the War of 1812 nonetheless had profound political importance. Since neither militia nor regular troops could definitively claim responsibility for the "victory" (or, rather, bear the sole burden of the blame), the question of who was truly responsible for the American gains and losses in the war remained unsettled.[168] This fact allowed room for the growth of a political mythology that extolled the virtues of the citizen soldier and provided a basis for subsequent democratic assertions of popular rights and privileges.[169] The war and its aftermath thus brought new political attention to the militia that resulted in renewed attempts to reform and improve its operations.

The militia acquired new political importance after the war as it provided a basis from which male citizens could widely claim certain public privileges and entitlements. This new role for the militia was evident as early as the Battle of Tippecanoe. Official response to the battle erased all distinctions between the militia and the regulars in

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indicative of more systematic problems in the Madison administration, and not simple shortcomings of the militia; Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812*, 4-16 apportions more blame to the militia system.

[168] Daniel Walker Howe opens his comprehensive study of the Jacksonian age with precisely this question; see Howe, *What Hath God Wrought?: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17-8.

[169] John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol For An Age*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 13-29.

apportioning praise. A Congressional committee gave credit to the militia – "only a few weeks withdrawn from the pursuits of civil life" – *alongside* "their brother officers and soldiers of the regular troops." The committee seemingly forgot the militia's past record of poor performance and gladly took the Battle of Tippecanoe as new definitive proof that "the dauntless spirit of our ancestors, by whom the war of the Revolution was so ably and successfully maintained, has not been diminished by more than thirty years of almost uninterrupted peace, but that it has been handed down unimpaired to their posterity."[170] This official narration of the battle advanced a conception of liberty linked to revolutionary violence (the committee was careful to specify the *war* of the revolution as the source of the American "spirit").

Within this conception, the man in arms who remained a soldier at heart even in time of peace re-emerged as a model of the true American and the highest order of citizen. After the Battle of Tippecanoe, James Madison suggested to Congress that "the families of those brave and patriotic citizens who have fallen in this severe conflict, will doubtless engage" their "favorable attention."[171] A Congressional committee considered Madison's message and Harrison's report alongside memorials from the General Assembly of the Indiana territory and from officers and soldiers of the Indiana militia and resolved to not only provide pension benefits to the wounded soldiers or their families, but also to extend the timeline of debt repayment on public lands purchased by any killed

[170] "Provision for the Officers and Soldiers Wounded, and the Families of Those Killed, in the Engagement With the Indians on the Wabash, in 1811," 8 January 1812, *ASP:MA*, I: 312.
[171] "Northwest Tribes," *ASP:IA*, I:776.

or wounded officers or soldiers.[172] This official recognition of combat veterans and their families as a special class of citizens with unique claims on public resources imbued the militia and militia service with a political significance that was removed from their actual military significance. The response to the Battle of Tippecanoe established a precedent for the new way in which the militia would become central in democratic politics after the war.

These responses to the Battle of Tippecanoe also marked the beginning of a larger redefinition of the civic status of war veterans after the War of 1812. Veterans had an ambivalent civic status throughout the period of the early republic, as the controversy over the Society of the Cincinnati showed. Former soldiers may have received admiration or respect from the public but could never expect special compensation of any sort.[173] Between 1815 and 1820, more political leaders came to understand military service as a means by which white male citizens could claim a range of public entitlements and benefits. Ideas similar to those found in the official responses to the Battle of Tippecanoe became more common in political discourse and federal policy-making. The 1818 Revolutionary War Pension Act was perhaps the greatest achievement in military policy after the war. The Act was born of President James Monroe's particular sentiment for Revolutionary War veterans as emblems of republican virtue and a class of citizens especially worth of federal aid. The Act provided $96 per year for

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[172] "Provision for the Officers and Soldiers Wounded," *ASP:MA*, I:312.
[173] John Phillips Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Pres, 1999), 1-5.

enlisted men and $240 per year for officers of the revolutionary armed forces.[174] Between 1817 and 1820, Connecticut, New York, and Mississippi all exempted militia members from the property and taxpaying requirements for suffrage.[175] Other proposals for benefit programs came before Congress at the same time. Newton Cannon, a representative from Tennessee, proposed in 1820 that Congress defund the U.S. Military Academy and instead direct that funding to the education of war orphans.[176] Such measures suggested a different way of understanding and thinking about both citizenship and an emergent form of democratic politics founded upon a wider distribution of public resources mediated through the military.[177]

The aftermath of the war also witnessed new federal attempts to re-organize and reform the militia. After the war, Secretary of War George Graham recommended an age-based division of all men eligible for militia service and the institution of federally organized and funded training camps.[178] The author of a more novel proposal was the hero of Tippecanoe himself, William Henry Harrison, who served as head of a House

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[174] Resch, *Suffering Soldiers*, 93-118.
[175] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 38.
[176] Remarks of Newton Cannon, 8 March 1820, *Annals of Congress* 16th Congress, 1st Session, I:1603-4.
[177] Modern democratic politics relies upon the construction of morally normative categorizations of who needs and who deserves certain privileges. As Theda Skocpol has argued, militarist judgments of soldiers, veterans, and their dependents as a specially entitled class dominated in the origins of American social democracy. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 151. Skocpol's brief examination of post-1815 pension programs suggests that they differed from post-1865 programs in size though not necessarily in principle, *idem*., 105-7.
[178] Robert P. Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality: Civil-Military Relations in the Jacksonian Era, 1815-1845* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2009), 33.

Committee on the Militia in January 1819.[179] Like Henry Knox, Harrison sought to reform the militia so as to put real military power in the hands of the people, enabling a militia of citizen-soldiers to match European armies in skill and sophistication. "Let our militia be instructed," he claimed, "and America would be equal to a contest with the rest of the world united."[180]

Also like Knox, Harrison saw widespread militia training as a necessary step to permanently securing republican liberty. Most of his proposed reforms returned to themes of the meaning of republican citizenship and the pursuit of liberty, both of which he understood in martial terms. "The safety of a republic depends as much upon the equality in the use of arms amongst its citizens, as upon the equality of rights," he explained. "Nothing can be more dangerous in such a Government than to have a knowledge of the military art confined to a part of the people, for sooner or later that part will govern."[181] A nationally organized militia was the best means for "the diffusion of military discipline, and a military spirit through the whole body of the people."[182]

Harrison argued that previous federal and state laws aimed at supporting the militia had failed because they only instituted training camps that were few and far between and were ineffective because the "sentiments and habits of a free country" inevitably produced "a superior restlessness under restraint, than is to be met with in the subjects of a monarchy."[183] From ancient history, Harrison had learned that the earliest

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[179] Harrison had actually written the report in 1817, and in 1819 merely resubmitted it for the consideration of the House.
[180] "The Militia," *Annals of Congress* 15th Congress 2nd Session, 2402-3.
[181] Ibid., 2403.
[182] Ibid., 2405.
[183] Ibid., 2405.

republics had overcome these obstacles through military education of the young, and reasoned that such a system in the United States would be the only stable foundation for the type of militia the nation required.[184] Thus, he proposed a comprehensive system of universal military education that would "extend, without exception, to every individual of the proper age." This comprehensive reach necessitated the instruction "not be given in distinct schools…but that it should form a branch of education in every school within the United States." Furthermore, "the whole expense of the establishment should be borne by the public treasury." Essentially, Harrison proposed the construction of a national public school system, operating on both elementary and secondary levels, so pervasive that it would effectively "produce an important change in the manners and habits of the nation," establish a new martial basis for American political life, and guarantee the future strength of the militia. Harrison perceived no dangerous or anti-republican tendencies within this ambitious plan. In his sense of it, the reforms constituted neither authoritarian command nor despotic indoctrination against any individual's will. It was not a "conscription which withdraws from an anxious parent a son," he said, nor a "Persian or Turkish mandate to educate the youth within the purlieus of a corrupt court." Harrison instead cast it as an incentives program, in which "means are furnished by the Government" for "the American youth…to qualify themselves…for the sacred task of defending the liberties of their country."[185]

Harrison's proposal for the national militia revived the earlier ideal of active martial citizenship, but sought new means for its practice. Knox had considered militia

[184] Ibid., 2406.
[185] Ibid., 2407.

service as an obligation that the citizen owed to the government. Soldiering alone demonstrated the virtue that was the prerequisite for citizenship. Harrison abandoned Knox's ideas of obligation and compulsory service and instead outlined a plan for the militia's growth through a comprehensive national system of entitlements. This system promised to create a new kind of political order with the militia at its center: not a martial republic but a martial democracy that defined military expertise as a benefit that the government must distribute equally among its male citizens.

Harrison's acceptance of the militia as a source of military power was fast falling out of fashion in the federal government, however. In the decades after the War of 1812, the insistence on a specialized and well-trained regular army intensified among political leaders. These leaders returned to the pre-war trend of isolating military expertise in a specialized military class, and so the U.S. Military Academy assumed a new prominence in political and military affairs during the antebellum period. Abandoned by the federal government, Harrison's idea that popular military education might be the best means to militarize the citizenry and secure popular liberties persevered among non-governmental proponents of the militia. While the creation of a martial democracy became less and less of a policy concern at the federal level, private and voluntary pursuits of a martial democracy continued into the antebellum period. The final, and perhaps most coherent, attempt in the early republic to make the militia work came in the form of a private initiative to build a network of military academies that will be the subject of chapter four.

3.

# Contesting the Postwar Military Establishment: Riots, Rights, and Reverence at the U.S. Military Academy, 1815-1848

As Secretary of War for the latter part of the War of 1812, James Monroe had learned a lesson about the fragility of American independence and the necessity of matching Europe's military power. "Other powers knowing our weakness will calculate on it, and regulate their conduct by it," he warned members of Congress. "We must either submit to wrongs, insult and humiliation, or resent them by engaging in war unprepared for it. The spirit of the nation, as already observed, will not submit to the former, and recent experience has given us abundant admonition of the latter."[186] He pushed for a peacetime reduction of the military to no less than 20,000 troops (about three times the size of the pre-war peacetime force), along with the construction of new fortifications along the east coast and the Mississippi River. He also urged measures by which "the knowledge which has been acquired in the science of war may be preserved and improved."[187] This last wish naturally turned his attention to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, which had languished in relative obscurity since its founding in 1802.

Upon becoming president in 1817, Monroe initiated a period of reform and expansion for the Corps of Engineers, the Military Academy, and the cause of military science in the United States. With the help of an energetic and ardently nationalist Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, Monroe's administration advanced one of the

[186] Monroe to the Military Committee of the Senate, 22 February 1815. *The Writings of James Monroe*, Stanislau Murray Hamilton, ed. (AMS Press, 1969) V: 325.
[187] Ibid, 326.

nineteenth century's most ambitious plans of military build-up.[188] The Military Academy became a chief beneficiary of this program, and from 1817 to 1848, the school grew in both size and organizational complexity, maturing as a professional military institution and each year dispersing new graduates across the nation to construct coastal fortifications, build turnpikes and highways, and pacify frontiers.

The Academy's growth after 1815 put it at the center of debates about the growth of a professional American military. These debates, at first, had roots in a traditionally republican critique of corrupt military elites but quickly shifted to concerns about the military's rigid power hierarchy and its incompatibility with democratic ideas of rights and equality. These concerns, however, never cohered into a unified rights-based critique of the military that could have limited the professional military's public power and influence in the decades after 1815. Meanwhile, the Military Academy secured popular acceptance as it became integrated into new visions of national growth and prosperity that emerged as results of dynamic capitalist development and cultural change.

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The U.S. Military Academy had a long road to travel before it could reach this point. After its founding in 1802, the Academy struggled in poverty and isolation. Three small buildings – a mess hall, academic hall, and barracks – clustered alongside faculty housing on the south end of a forty-acre plain that served as the parade ground. No road connected the Academy to any of the surrounding villages. No one would even think to build a road until 1832, an effort that nonetheless fell apart when the superintendent behind it resigned. The only point of access, the Hudson River, froze shut during the

[188] See chapter five of this dissertation.

winter; for the rest of the year one small dock constituted the post's only tenuous connection to the outside world.[189] This alienation spoke to a larger problem of the academy's insignificance in national affairs. By the War of 1812, the Academy had graduated only seventy-one new officers, few of whom rose to prominence during the war.[190]

Though isolated and insignificant, the Military Academy could still present larger problems. One professor warned that the Academy's alienation contained the seeds of real danger. In "this dark & isolated spot," wrote Jared Mansfield, "violations may be committed unknown to the Govt, & to the public."[191] In June 1817, five members of the academic staff alerted President Monroe that the Academy's superintendent, Captain Alden Partridge, had transgressed the boundaries of his military authority and effectively established himself as the petty dictator of the post. In their account of recent abuses perpetrated by Partridge, Professors Jared Mansfield, Andrew Ellicott, Claudius Berard, David Douglass, and Claudius Crozet outlined the ways that Partridge had prostrated the government of the Academy to his own will: admitting cadets who had not met the legal requirements, recommending cadets for army commissions without the consent of the academic staff (in some cases before the cadets had completed all requirements), and generally allowing the academic quality of the school to disintegrate. Partridge's

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[189] Thomas Jefferson Cram, Extracts from "Recollections jotted down during half a century's active service – four years as a Cadet – forty-six years as an Officer in the United States Army," 28-9, Thomas Jefferson Cram MSS, USMA Archives and Special Collections, West Point, NY. Cram complains likewise of the poor river access, but see also Stephen Ambrose, *Duty, Honor Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 33 for description of the dock and nearby roads.
[190] Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 38-40.
[191] Jared Mansfield to President James Monroe, June 1817, Box 4, Alden Partridge MSS, US Military Academy Archives and Special Collections (hereafter APMSS-USMA).

usurpations did "not come under occular observation or could not be known to any," they warned, but inevitably produced "a kind of ultra Mil[itary] Authority superseding the laws & Govt, which never could be allowed even by the greatest despotisms."[192]

Mansfield, Ellicott, Berard, Douglass, and Crozet undoubtedly exaggerated their plight. Their idea of "military despotism" was more rooted in a jealous regard for their own privileges than a thorough understanding of history and political theory. In a separate letter, for example, Mansfield wrote at length about how Partridge, who was responsible for assigning housing to the professors, had provided Mansfield with quarters too small for his family. Their complaints, if sometimes petty, were nonetheless grounded in a very legitimate demand for transparency and regularity in the school's administration. They asked Monroe for a new superintendent who had "a sacred regard to the laws of his country & scrupulously enforces the regulations of government" and "who consider[ed] the public duty and public interest as paramount to any personal indulgence or private acquisitions."[193] This overarching urge to substitute rational, systematic procedure for individual caprice caught Monroe's interest and induced him to act. Partridge's critics saw his removal from the Academy as a crucial moment in rooting out aristocratic corruption and despotism in the hopes of making a more republican Military Academy.

Orders to replace Partridge came down the chain of command, and on July 17, 1817, Chief Engineer Joseph Swift ordered a young engineer named Sylvanus Thayer to

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[192] Jared Mansfield, Andrew Ellicott, Claudius Berard, David B. Douglass, and Claudius Crozet to President James Monroe, undated 1817, Box 4, APMSS-USMA; only Mansfield, in a separate letter to Monroe, went to the length of branding Partridge's abuses "despotism," in Mansfield to Monroe, June 1817, Box 4, APMSS-USMA.
[193] Mansfield, Ellicott, et al. to Monroe, Box 4 APMSS-USMA.

West Point to take command. Partridge seemingly accepted the regime change calmly, although he did place Professors Mansfield and Ellicott under arrest before Thayer arrived on July 28. Once in control, Thayer wasted no time in drafting new regulations and proposing administrative reforms for then-Secretary of War George Graham.[194] Partridge, though, received word from friends still at the Academy condemning the new administration as a "junto" of "vile miscreant wretches who are busy in their accustomed underhanded undertakings."[195] Partridge also received written testimonials from the cadets of their highest approbation and personal loyalty.[196] Spurred by these warnings and confident of a warm reception among the cadets, he decided it was his duty to go back to West Point and wrest command from Thayer.

A professor later testified that, when Partridge landed on the dock at West Point on August 29, the cadets ran out of their barracks and across the plain, where he "saw them pull off their hats and heard them cheer." Down at the dock, according to this professor, all but two or three cadets greeted Partridge with handshakes. Partridge made his way to a nearby residence. There, the cadet band provided him with more fanfare.[197] The next morning, Partridge met Thayer and demanded his old quarters, which Thayer

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[194] See Sylvanus Thayer to George Graham, 1 August 1817 and Graham to Thayer, 6 August 1817, West Point Thayer Papers II, U.S. Military Academy Archives and Special Collections (hereafter WPTP).
[195] John Wright to Alden Partridge, 11 August 1817 and 23 August 1817, Reel 1, Alden Partridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter APMSS-LoC).
[196] Benjamin Vining et al to Alden Partridge, 19 July 1817; Ethan A. Hitchcock to Partridge, 29 July 1817, Reel 1, APMSS – LoC.
[197] Jacqueline S. Painter, ed. *The Trial of Captain Alden Partridge Corps of Engineers: Proceedings of a General Court-Martial Convened at West Point in the State of New York on Monday, 20th October 1817, Major General Winfield Scott, President* (repr. Northfield: Friends of the Norwich University Library, 1987), 33-4.

refused. Recalcitrant, Partridge asserted that he "had a legal right to the Superintendance of the Academy as being the Senior officer of Engineers present," and he accordingly assumed command.[198] Thayer put up very little resistance, only notifying the Secretary of War that Partridge had "forcibly assumed the command & the Superintendance of the Military Academy," before leaving for New York City.[199] Partridge promptly issued orders to all cadets and staff at the Academy that he was again in command, and that they were to parade before him, with arms, the next morning. For good measure, he also placed Professor Douglass, who had moved into Partridge's old quarters, under arrest.[200] Partridge's second tenure as superintendent of the Military Academy was short-lived. On September 1, Chief Engineer Joseph Swift ordered Partridge's arrest. By late October, he stood before a court-martial accused of neglect of duty, "conduct unofficerlike and to the prejudice of good order and military discipline," disobedience of orders, and mutiny.

Although a very brief affair, the Partridge mutiny nonetheless aroused a host of fears and deep-seated anxieties about the dangers of the regular army, especially as news of the events leaked, imperfectly, out to New York newspapers and to the public at large. The *Commercial Advertiser* reported that "a serious Mutiny had occurred among the Cadets at the Military Academy at West Point," while the *New York Columbian* ominously warned "we have not heard what flag captain Partridge has hoisted since he

[198] Alden Partridge to Joseph G. Swift, 31 August 1817, WPTP II.
[199] Thayer to George Graham, 30 August 1817, WPTP II.
[200] Painter, *Trial of Captain Alden Partridge*, 36-7.

set up for himself!"[201] It seemed to the *Columbian* that the American republic might soon go the way of its ancient predecessors and decline into military upheaval and Caesarism. These reports interpreted Partridge's protest and the upheaval at the Academy within the traditional terms of republican anti-standing army ideology that was suspicious of seemingly power-mad military elites.

In seeking exoneration, Partridge faced a delicate public relations situation in which he needed to defuse public apprehension of any abuse of military power while also, ideally, convincing the public as to the propriety of his own abuse of power. Days after his arrest, he expressed to Joseph Swift his belief that "the rights and Prerogatives which attach to my Station as an officer, are a sacred deposit committed to me by My God and My County – and can be wrested from me only with my life."[202] Perhaps because of Partridge's tendency to make such strident declarations of privilege, Philadelphia newspaper editor and politician William Duane discouraged publication of any statement in newspapers, as "it will be advisable for you as a military man not to *appear* at all in the papers." "The public requires to be touched with the skill [of] a physician," Duane wrote, "and it requires long *practice to treat the patient properly*."[203]

However, Partridge had already published a lengthy defense in the *New York Columbian* on September 12, one day before the date of Duane's letter. In this plea, Partridge assured the public that he never employed nor contemplated violence against

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[201] "Mutiny at West Point," *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), 2 September 1817; "Mutinous Proceedings at West Point," *New-York Columbian*, 2 September 1817.
[202] Partridge to Swift, 3 September 1817, WPTP II.
[203] William Duane to Alden Partridge, Philadelphia, 13 September 1817, Box 4, Alden Partridge MSS, Norwich University Archives and Special Collections, Northfield, VT (hereafter AP-NUSC).

any constituted authority and declared that "the right which I had to the command, and the reason why I thought it necessary to exercise the right, will be made known at some future time." In Partridge's mind, no one was guilty of anything more than "giving vent in a regular, decorous, and customary manner to the noblest feelings which adorn human nature, those of genuine friendship and respect."[204] Partridge was impetuous and brash, but he was no military despot. Ultimately, the court martial that delivered its verdict on November 11, 1817 acquitted Partridge of neglect of duty, unofficerlike conduct, and mutiny, but convicted him of disobedience of orders.

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Firmly in command at West Point, Thayer became one of the most important figures in the American army in the nineteenth century.[205] A quick sketch of his personal life and values illuminates some of the ideological and psychological foundations of the army's development. Limited surviving correspondence reveals that he came from a New England family that valued defiant self-assurance and stern self-righteousness in the face of opposition. "If you had not enemies, it would be because you had not worth," his mother Abigail was wont to remind him.[206] Thayer's colleagues and commanders in the military, however, seemingly supplanted his family as the chief influence on his values and worldview. As a young engineer, Thayer wrote to his commanding officer, Chief Engineer Joseph Swift, much more often, and in more intimate detail, than anyone else. Before orders came from Monroe assigning Thayer to the Academy, Swift arranged for

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[204] Alden Partridge, "To the Public," *New-York Columbian*, 12 September 1817.
[205] He is known as the "Father of West Point" and still revered today at the Academy. Sidney Forman, *West Point: A History of the United States Military Academy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950) , 49-60.
[206] Abigail Thayer to Sylvanus Thayer, Braintree, 18 January 1820, WPTP III.

Thayer to travel to France as a special envoy of the Corps of Engineers. This journey placed Thayer in Paris in the propitious if anarchic time after the downfall of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. Though he had some difficulty in visiting the academies and fortifications that were his primary objective, he became impressed with the global importance of France's political situation and wrote lengthy letters reflecting on it. "France is in every respect a conquered country & rigorously so treated," he remarked to Swift. The allied forces of Europe had seized all French fortresses, arms, and munitions, "stripping France of all future means of resistance." Conquering armies also stripped the nation's cultural treasures, thousands of paintings being "dispersed thro Europe to ornament individual palaces & be lost to the arts." He witnessed the Duke of Wellington attempt to sit in the King's box at the theatre only to meet cries of "a bas les Anglais" ("Down with the English!") and to be driven out by the crowd. He described Parisian nights filled with shouts of "Vive L'Empereur," and how street battles among monarchists, Bonapartists, and the occupying British army broke out at public appearances of the new French king.[207]

Perhaps Thayer was grateful to leave this war-torn country, perched precariously on the brink of uprising and despotism, and take up a new life on an isolated and tranquil plain above the Hudson. He may have returned with a deepened sympathy for the fallen revolutionary regime, or maybe the experience instilled within him a hardheaded appreciation for the fragility of world affairs to match James Monroe's. Perhaps he returned to the United States with distaste for the degradations, both cultural and political, that conquering armies could bring about, or with a deeper appreciation for the

[207] Sylvanus Thayer to Joseph G. Swift, Paris, 10 October 1815, Ibid.

destructive qualities of mass armies in general. He might then have emerged from the experience with an abhorrence of disorder and an appreciation for properly constituted authority above all else. Thayer and Monroe together reveal that the ideal of military professionalism that gained strength after 1815 had its origin in a postwar sense of profound international insecurity. Monroe viewed the international situation with the cool analytical approach of an established policy maker, but Thayer, younger and with first-hand experience of the anarchy and violence that pervaded Restoration-era France, situated the ideal in a much more personal context.

Thayer's agenda as superintendent of West Point consisted of an overhaul of the Academy's academic and military functions. He aimed to make the Academy the foundation of a new American military profession. Securing institutional autonomy for the Academy was first on his mind. Under the 1802 law that established the Academy, the school was simply a special organization within the Corps of Engineers. The commander at West Point was understood to be whichever senior officer of the Corps was present, leading to confused or continually shifting chains of command. Thayer addressed this problem by constituting the school as "an organization….distinct from that of the Corps of Engineers" and under the command of the superintendent appointed by the President. With this major reform, Thayer could both clarify the chain of command and concentrate all authority within himself, enabling more rigorous pursuit of his other administrative and academic reforms.

These reforms largely pertained to the admission, examination, and graduation of cadets. Thayer clarified that cadets ought never be admitted before they were sixteen years of age, that they must be examined thoroughly upon admission, that they must

complete a four-year curriculum, and that they would receive a degree and a recommendation only upon completion of the four-year program. He also introduced a system of class rank, with the top five cadets of each class designated as "distinguished" and given top recommendations for positions in the Corps of Engineers. Thayer saw these new academic practices as essential to fostering fruitful competition among the cadets and impelling them to higher academic standards. However, he also joined such reforms with a broader vision for the intellectual improvement of the United States Army as a whole. By granting the Academy and its Academic Staff the prerogative "to guard the Corps of Engineers against the admission of any member not duley qualified," he hoped to preserve "the scientific character of that Corps."[208]

As Thayer worked to make the officer corps more scientific, he also instituted reforms that aimed to make West Point's young scholars into more competent and disciplined soldiers. He proposed assigning Army officers as instructors of Tactics and Artillery and divided cadet classes into military companies for the sake of drill in "all the various field and garrison duties of an officer, non commissioned officer and Private."[209] To this end, the War Department appointed Captain John Bliss, an officer in the Infantry and personal friend of Thayer, to serve as both Instructor of Tactics and Commandant of Cadets during parade and drill.[210] In very little time, Thayer changed a lot in both the Academy's daily operations and its general functions within the military as a whole. Less than half a year into his tenure as superintendent, he had already attracted the positive notice of the War Department, which sent him word of its "entire Satisfaction

[208] Propositions for the Re-Organization of the Military Academy, February 1818, Ibid.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Sylvanus Thayer to John C. Calhoun, West Point, 14 February 1818, Ibid.

which your plans and proceedings affords to every one who feel an interest in the Academy."[211]

In November 1818, a group of cadets dramatically interrupted the Academy's rapid progress. A large-scale protest against Thayer's reforms quickly went beyond the school's walls and initiated an intense discussion among policy-makers and citizens about the compatibility of Thayer's professional military ethos with American principles of liberty and democracy. This protest was the second controversy to emerge from the Military Academy and occupy the public's attention, yet it differed from the previous controversy significantly. The responses to Partridge and his mutiny exhibited the trademarks of a republican critique of the military, in which a corrupt officer, a shadowy conspiracy, and unchecked ambition inevitably led to a lawless usurpation of power. Thayer's political opponents did not brand him as a nefarious Caesar but as a more modern autocrat, as Andrew Jackson reportedly called him.[212] Responses to Thayer's command shifted public critique of the military from a republican paradigm to a democratic, or rights-based, paradigm that put greater emphasis on the liberties of individuals within Thayer's modernized military system. In protesting Thayer's reforms, the cadets introduced a new way to think about the dangers that military institutions could pose to American liberties.

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[211] Christopher Van Deventer to Sylvanus Thayer, Department of War, 2 February 1818, Ibid.

[212] Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 109. During Jackson's presidency, West Point's commandant of cadets, Ethan Allen Hitchcock, met with him after Jackson intervened in a disciplinary procedure against a cadet. According to Hitchcock, Jackson said of Thayer, "Why, the autocrat of the Russias couldn't exercise more power!" The source for this comment, however, is a 1909 edition of Hitchcock's diary, and the story is possibly apocryphal.

The initial cause of the protest was Captain John Bliss, Thayer's newly appointed Commandant. In a manner understood today as typical of army drill sergeants, Bliss enforced discipline with methods ranging from verbal abuse and insults to physical assault, in some cases throwing stones at cadets during parades. The cadets responded to this mistreatment in the way they thought best accorded with American principles of right and justice: they elected a five-person committee to petition for a redress of grievances from Major Thayer. In their petition, Cadets Thomas Ragland, Charles R. Holmes, Charles R. Vining, Wilson M.C. Fairfax, and Nathaniel H. Loring walked a fine line between obedience to rank and confident assertion of right. They acknowledged their low military status, but hoped regardless that "the Superintendant of the Academy will sufficienly notice the injuries they have received, to do them justice," urging Thayer also to accept that "the rank of persons presenting charges [is] not material."[213] They expected a degree of equality in Thayer's military. As it happened, they were mistaken. Thayer responded with "a degree of astonishment" at "the combination of a considerable number of the young men, forming themselves…into a deliberative assembly, corresponding with him, through the medium of an organized Committee, and even dictating to him the measures, which they consider proper for him to pursue."[214] Judging their dissent "in direct violation of all military principles," he ordered the arrest of the

[213] *An Expose of Facts, Concerning Recent Transactions, Relating to the Corps of Cadets of the United States' Military Academy, at West Point* (Newburgh: Uriah C. Lewis, 1819), 15.
[214] Ibid., 17.

five members of the committee.[215] Twelve months later, they stood before a court-martial.

The contrasts between the cadets' understanding of the appropriate operations of a professional army and Thayer's reformist vision of the same were never drawn as starkly as they were in the aftermath of the protest. As the cadets understood it, their duties and obligations as soldiers were subsumed within and secondary to their rights and privileges as gentlemen and citizens of the United States. In a public appeal, an 1819 pamphlet titled *An Expose of Facts, Concerning Recent Transactions, Relating to the Corps of Cadets of the United States' Military Academy, at West Point*, the five cadets asked "can it really be believed, that when a soldier engages in the service of his country, he forfeits his right of remonstrating against tyrannical oppression, and personal abuse?"[216] In a letter to then-Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, they indicted the Academy as "an organized system of violation, not only of the rules of common civility, but of the laws of our country."[217] Thayer, however, rejoined that "to promote, or even to join in any combination, or system of measures, having in view the slightest opposition to the constituted authorities, is not only in a military, but in a civil point of view, a crime of the first order."[218] He likewise wrote to Calhoun that "the radical cause of the disturbances to which the Military Academy is liable, is the erroneous and unmilitary impressions imbibed at an inauspicious period of the Institution [Partridge's tenure as superintendent] when they were allowed to act as though they had rights to defend, as a corps of the

[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid., iv.
[217] Ibid., 27.
[218] Ibid., 18.

army, and to intrude their voice and opinions with respect to the concerns of the academy."[219] Calhoun agreed. He urged Thayer to relieve Bliss of his duties but assured him nonetheless "that your conduct as Superintendant of the Military Academy, in the unpleasant occurrences...has been satisfactory and approved."[220]

In New York newspapers, opinion pieces by supporters and critics of West Point offered competing interpretations of the conflict. An anonymous critic in the *New-York Daily Advertiser* warned that "the Government which has been assumed for [West Point's] management, is nothing less than that of *martial law* in all its rigor," applied not only to cadets but to civilian professors and instructors as well. Only a "system of government founded on the rights of the different classes of persons connected with this Institution and adapted to its peculiar wants" could "render this expensive establishment tolerable to the nation, or worthy of its patronage." The *Daily Advertiser*'s editors seconded the writer's demands, remarking that "the evil complained of appears to us to be one of a serious character that requires a remedy from the authority under which it is maintained."[221]

A response in the next day's *National Advocate* chastised the *Daily Advertiser* piece for its "puerile" logic: "With respect to the absurdity of establishing martial law, we would ask the writer what kind of law or organization would he establish in a *military* academy?...To find fault with a *military* academy, because its organization is not *civil*, is very absurd in our opinion."[222] This supporter of West Point tellingly did not address

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[219] Ibid., 40.
[220] Ibid.
[221] "Military Academy," *New-York Daily Advertiser*, 6 December 1819.
[222] "Military," *National Advocate* (New York, NY), 7 December 1819.

Thayer's supposed "tyranny," because clearly he did not consider it worth arguing. His defense of West Point rested on the assumption that, even in a modern democratic society, some portion of the population would naturally be subject to constraints on their liberty from which others were exempt.

Public acceptance of West Point – indeed, of the very idea of a military profession – hinged upon widespread acceptance of a wholly distinct martial society, separated from the norms and values of American civil society and governed by opposing principles. The cadets hoped to prevent this possibility with the wide circulation of their pamphlet, and there is some evidence that they were successful. Editors at the *National Advocate* opined in January 1820, "the academy at West Point has failed to answer public expectation; and we have just finished the perusal of a pamphlet which fully explains the course, and satisfies us that the principals of that academy are not qualified for their situations." The Academy's disciplinary regime was especially obnoxious for being inflicted upon "sons of gentlemen, cautiously and delicately reared and impressed with a high and honorable sense of the military character." However, the editorial added, "we should regret to see such conduct tolerated even by our soldiers in the ranks." According to this writer, the only suitable military was one based on principles of equal rights in which each commander would "consider himself the father, not the master; the friend, not the oppressor… the man who would inspire love and confidence, affection and industry: not the haughty, dictatorial empty chief filled with fictitious ideas of his vast consequence."[223] The *Expose of Facts*, and responses to it such as that in the *National Advocate*, expressed the conviction that an American army ought to be kinder, gentler,

[223] "West Point," *National Advocate* (New York, NY), 18 January 1820.

and more egalitarian (if slightly paternalistic) in its rule. Supporters of Thayer, however, showed little regard for such fancies. As the cadets and their allies framed it, the crux of the issue in 1819 was whether a modern army could be fashioned to cohere with an emerging democratic political order, or whether the democratic order would be forced to accommodate a modern army.

The final burden of resolving these issues fell to Congress, where a complaint from the five cadets came before the House of Representatives on December 27, 1819. This appeal proved to be futile. The House Committee on Military Affairs, which took the complaint under deliberation, followed Calhoun in censuring Bliss's conduct but affirmed "that *obedience and subordination are the essential principles of the army*, which is not the place for the exercise of liberty." Like the Secretary of War, the committee insisted that 'the redress of military grievances must never be extorted or obtained by *combinations*, which are alike mutinous.'"[224] The cadets' question of whether citizens shed their customary liberties and privileges in military service – essentially a question of whether the military would be distinct from or integrated with civil society – had received an unequivocal answer. National lawmakers had accepted the principles of an antidemocratic military profession.

With the issue settled in Sylvanus Thayer's favor, his administration at West Point enjoyed a decade of calm during which he solidified his control. The Boards of Visitors that attended cadet examinations each spring routinely expressed great satisfaction with how Thayer's reforms had "raised the institution to a higher degree of

[224] "Complaints Against the Military Academy at West Point," *American State Papers* Class V (Military Affairs) (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-61) (hereafter *ASP:MA*), II: 139. Emphasis original.

excellence than could have been expected from the state in which he found it."[225] One member of the Board rhapsodized on the power of the Academy to "destroy the sectional feelings and local jealousies, that at present disgrace every part of our country," by creating firm bonds of friendship and national loyalty among its graduates.[226] Though the names of Loring, Fairfax, Vining, Holmes, and Ragland survived in the local folklore that circulated among the cadets, the students almost unanimously afforded Thayer their unalloyed appreciation.[227] Thomas Jefferson Cram, a cadet from 1822-1826 and later an instructor at the Academy, wrote in his memoirs that, when he entered the Academy in 1822, "the universal opinion of those cadets who…had been long enough in the academy to properly judge, was, that Col. Thayer conducted the institution with great efficiency and to the general satisfaction of all the well disposed cadets, and to the admiration of the public generally, also to the great advantage of the army and with high satisfaction to the

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[225] *Annual Report of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy Made to Congress and the Secretary of War For the Year 1821*, 27, available online through USMA Archives and Special Collections at http://www.library.usma.edu/index.cfm?TabID=6&LinkCategoryID=49#58. Last accessed 25 March 2012.

[226] *Annual Report of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy Made to Congress and the Secretary of War, For the Year 1823*, 88, available online through USMA Archives and Special Collections at http://www.library.usma.edu/index.cfm?TabID=6&LinkCategoryID=49#58. Last accessed 25 March 2012.

[227] For evidence of cadets circulating stories about the 1819 mutinies, see Thomas Jefferson Cram, "Extracts from 'Recollections jotted down during half a century's active service – four years as a Cadet – forty-six years as an Officer in the United States Army' By T.J. Cram, Col. of Engineers, Bv't Major General, U.S. Army," 1-3, Thomas Jefferson Cram Papers, US Military Academy Archives and Special Collections, as well as John H.B. Latrobe, *Reminiscences of West Point From September, 1818, to March, 1882, by John H.B. Latrobe, a Member of the Class of 1822* (East Saginaw, MI: Evening News Printers and Binders, 1887), 10-12.

authorities in Washington."[228] Cram's memoir reveals a personal regard for Thayer not limited to an appreciation for his reforms. Cadets were also drawn to the superintendent's "kindly disposition," his "high official dignity," his patience, judgment and paternal care in all instances, his intellectual acuity and gentlemanly deportment, his mixture of military dignity and personal warmth, his neatness of appearance, even his voice, which was "exceedingly modest and pleasant to the ear of the listener." This praise extended all the way to the "smallness and elegance of shape" of Thayer's feet, "indicating pure descent from the true New England Brahmin stock."[229]

By a similar token, the Academy's stern discipline ceased to be a source of contention among the cadets. John Bliss's successor as commandant, Major William Worth, differed from his predecessor in almost every way. Cadets had little difficulty in obeying his commands because they found Worth "remarkably witty, handsome, sparkling and brave." Under the joint care of these men, cadets willingly embraced "the true military spirit, and etiquette that should obtain among military gentlemen."[230] Visitors amazed at the "spectacle" of "the Corps of interesting youths, assembled from every State in the Union, submitting with cheerful and manly deportment to the strict discipline, and with the most lively emulation, preparing themselves to become the accomplished defenders of the Republic."[231] There were no major cadet mutinies after

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[228] Cram, *Recollections*, 4-5.
[229] Ibid., 7-8, 18-19, 22.
[230] Ibid., 6
[231] "Honourable William Darlington's Report as One of the Board of Visitors at West Point," *Annual Report of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy Made to Congress and the Secretary of War, For the Year 1823*, 93, available online through USMA Archives and Special Collections at

1820. Subordination to power became accepted at the Academy as a cardinal martial virtue.

The power structure at Thayer's West Point rested on multiple foundations. On one level, it depended upon the personal charisma of West Point's commanders. It received further legitimacy from the qualities of gentility, masculine sexuality, and racial purity that cadets like Cram ascribed to Thayer and that intersected to construct Thayer as an ideal political leader and military hero. On another level, military subordination became acceptable in the 1820s because other political concerns – like the stability of the union, which the parading cadets visually promised – trumped other political questions regarding liberties and domination. In the 1830s and 1840s, West Point's perceived role in economic prosperity and the global projection of American power finally put the Academy on its firmest foundation and ensured that the Academy could weather any political storm.

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Political opposition to the Academy, dormant for much of the 1820s, re-emerged in 1830. Early that year, Alden Partridge returned to the public stage with an anonymous pamphlet titled *The Military Academy at West Point, Unmasked: or, Corruption and Military Despotism Exposed*. The pamphlet provided a compendium of infractions, corrupt dealings, and abuses of authority that Partridge believed occurred at the Academy under Thayer's watch. Divided into three sections – one addressed to Congress, one to the President, and one to the American people – *West Point, Unmasked*, connected all

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http://www.library.usma.edu/index.cfm?TabID=6&LinkCategoryID=49#58. Last accessed 25 March 2012.

these pieces of evidence to an overarching argument about what Partridge perceived was the Military Academy's role in the degradation of American democratic culture. Positioning himself as the ultimate defender of "our (at present) free and happy republic," Partridge revived some of the questions first raised by the mutinous cadets in 1818, but also issued a broader critique of the Academy's management that set the tone for opposition to the school throughout the 1830s.[232]

Beginning with the incendiary assertion that "there is not on the whole globe an establishment more monarchial, corrupt, and corrupting" than West Point, Partridge made his chief focus the Academy's "direct tendency to introduce and build up a privileged order of the very worst class – a military aristocracy – in the United States."[233] Partridge did not level the charge of military aristocracy lightly. He in fact devoted a great deal of attention to defining this concept and understanding the mechanisms of its pernicious growth. In the first section of the pamphlet, addressed to Congress, Partridge railed against the system by which officer positions in the U.S. Army had become monopolized by West Point graduates. This practice constituted a military aristocracy not only in its support for a "favored few who have been educated at this national *charity* school, at the public expence," but because it fundamentally violated what Partridge understood to be the foundational principle of American government: "that *offices of honor, trust and emolument, shall be equally opened to all*."[234] Aristocracy, therefore, did not mean privilege alone, but rather the monopolization of privilege. Democracy, concurrently, did

[232] Americanus, *The Military Academy at West Point, Unmasked: or, Corruption and Military Despotism Exposed* (Washington: J. Eliot, 1830), 3.
[233] *West Point, Unmasked*, 3.
[234] Ibid., 4, emphasis original.

not mean that privilege was eradicated, but only that it could be shared more widely among all eligible for such privilege (in the case of officership, white male citizens).

Partridge made the brutality of cadet discipline the second key element of his critique. In the section addressed to "the people of the United States," Partridge resurrected the case of the mutinous cadets of 1818 to demonstrate how the "whole system of discipline and government" at the Academy was "totally abhorrent to the ingenuous and honourable feelings of the American youth."[235] He even republished the original petition of the cadets as an appendix, clearly hoping to keep their original arguments salient in the public discussion. While this section was no doubt calculated to incite horror among popular readers, Partridge's appeal to Congress delved much more deeply into the issue of authoritarian discipline at West Point. Without mentioning the five cadets by name, Partridge referred nonetheless to one of the Academy's regulations, first promulgated in 1821, warning that "all publications relative to the military academy, or to transactions at the military academy, are strictly prohibited," and providing for the dismissal of any cadet or staff member "at all concerned in writing or publishing any article of such character, in any newspaper or pamphlet, or in writing or publishing any handbill."[236] This regulation was clearly a response to the 1818 cadet mutiny. "What a commentary on our boasted freedom of speech," Partridge proclaimed. "Why declaim against…the censorship of the press in despotic governments, while such an article as the

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[235] Ibid., 23.

[236] *General Regulations For the Army; or, Military Institutes* (Philadelphia: M. Carey and Sons, 1821). 344; Though Partridge singled out this regulation, another regulation enacted in 1821 prohibited "all combinations, under any pretext whatever," and an 1825 regulation prohibited cadets from receiving newspapers without the permission of the superintendent. *General Regulations For the Army; or, Military Institutes*. (Washington: Davis & Forge, 1825), 388.

foregoing, ten-fold more tyrannical than all of these, is suffered to disgrace the pages of that code, established for the government of our national institution?"[237] Partridge believed that West Point's systematic violation of individual rights was possibly more pernicious than its aristocratic influence on the military establishment.

Partridge additionally raised the fearful specter of martial law, which had also been at stake in the cadet mutinies of 1818. The subjugation of cadets constituted a threat to the liberties of all Americans. The use of military tribunals and illegal "courts of inquiry" to punish students could only have a corrupting influence on them and a damaging future effect on the nation. "What… are we to expect from a corps of *martial* youths, who witness, almost daily, the violation of the laws of their country?" Partridge asked, implying that the net result of the Academy's disciplinary regulations could only be more mutiny, turmoil, or worse.[238] As for why Americans tolerated West Point and its abuses, Partridge offered more biting commentary. "Parents can there get their sons educated at the *public* expense," he explained, "and to accomplish that object, will allow them to be subjected to degradation."[239]

Thayer's military academy, Partridge made clear, was where all the nation's high-minded ideals were either forgotten or altogether disregarded. His argument aimed to hit the nation where it could hurt most, by denying legitimacy to any self-aggrandizing claims of American exceptionalism so long as citizens allowed West Point to exist. In this final estimation, West Point was only the most visible element of deeper problems endemic to American democracy, including the growth of state power, the decline of

[237] Americanus, *West Point, Unmasked*, 8.
[238] Ibid., 9.
[239] Ibid., 8.

active citizenship, opportunistic disregard of antidemocratic abuses, and an overall weakening of the manly virtue that, in Partridge's eyes, was needed to sustain the republic.[240] Ultimately, *West Point, Unmasked*, combined its critique of aristocratic privilege and degrading discipline to offer American citizens and political leaders a dystopian vision of its future, where "military *dandies*" educated at West Point "sit high in *authority*, and exercise *command*, while you and your sons, who pay $200,000 annually for their education, must approach them cap in hand, and move at their nod," and where once-proud white male citizens had given up or lost everything and become "the *drudges*, yea, the mere *pack-horses* of military service."[241] The U.S. Military Academy, in other words, was not merely a single institution where certain corrupt practices occurred; it instead permeated and degraded the entire American social structure. Partridge likened it to a "yoke…firmly fixed on your necks": the nation could only save itself by throwing it off.[242]

Thayer and the War Department underestimated Partridge's polemic when it first began to circulate among members of Congress. Charles Gratiot (Joseph Swift's successor as Chief of Engineers) wrote Thayer in February 1830 that in Washington the pamphlet was "spoken of by none but such as entertain a lively interest in all matters which concern you." Adding that "the motive of the writer seems to be well understood by the Community at large, in or out of Congress," he advised Thayer "that the allegations set forth in the Pamphlet are not worthy your notice and that they should pass

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[240] Partridge's own ideas of manliness, virtue, and liberty receive fuller explication in chapter four.
[241] Americanus, *West Point, Unmasked*, 20.
[242] Ibid., 20.

by unregarded." Just in case, however, Gratiot began collecting evidence for a campaign to taint Partridge by exposing his "interested motives."[243] Joseph Vance refused to take the pamphlet seriously and reacted with extreme condescension, sending Thayer a copy "for your amusement," assuring him "it will [not] do you nor the institution harm."[244] Joseph Swift called the pamphlet "one of those mischievous slanders that are calculated to seize upon the minds of weak & new members" of Congress. Swift informed Thayer that "no active effect has yet been produced," and that instead the President and Secretary of War had both inquired into the issue and come away with a "just conclusion… so respectful to you & so contemptuous of Partridge."[245]

Contrary to the complacent assumptions of the friends of the Military Academy, Partridge's pamphlet did make an impact in Congress, and initiated almost a decade of continuous debate on the legality, legitimacy, and desirability of the Military Academy. For roughly the next decade, abolition of West Point was an almost perennial issue on the Congressional agenda. Congressional opponents, however, abandoned the questions of subordination, authority, and liberty that were central in the cadet protest and in Partridge's pamphlet.[246] The Congressional movement to abolish West Point instead amounted to a fairly limited critique of federal power, patronage, and expenditures of

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[243] Charles Gratiot to Sylvanus Thayer, 11 February 1830, WPTP V.
[244] Joseph Vance to Sylvanus Thayer, Washington, 8 February 1830, Ibid.
[245] Joseph Swift to Sylvanus Thayer, Washington, 6 March 1830, Joseph G. Swift Papers, Box 5, US Military Academy Archives and Special Collections.
[246] In fact, an 1837 report that advocated the Academy's abolition only addressed the Academy's system of military discipline to point out how ineffective it was. The report faulted the "spirit of arrogance and insubordination which is engendered and prevails" at West Point, despite its rigid system of authority, "unlike everything to be found elsewhere in our land." "History of the Origin of the Military Academy," *ASP:MA*, VII 12-3.

public money. In pushing aside Partridge's concerns with martial discipline and authoritarian rule at the Academy, West Point's opponents in Congress also abandoned the notion that West Point stood to corrupt the entire political and social order. Without this larger narrative of power and liberty, Congressional opposition to West Point never resonated widely in public political discourse.

On 25 February 1830, David Crockett of Tennessee introduced a series of resolutions that called for the abolition of the Academy. Though it is not certain that Crockett read *West Point, Unmasked*, his main arguments significantly overlapped with Partridge's, and he introduced his resolutions only a few weeks after Partridge's pamphlet is known to have circulated in Washington. The parallels should not obscure the large differences, however. Crockett rooted his argument more squarely within a critique of class privilege than did Partridge. "If the bounty of the Government is to be at all bestowed," Crockett wrote in his resolutions, "the destitute poor, and not the rich and influential, are the objects who most claim it." West Point violated this principle of liberal government "in as much as those who are educated there receive their instruction at the public expense, and are generally the sons of the rich and influential, who are able to educate their own children."[247] Like Partridge, Crockett made much of the way West Point graduates monopolized officer positions within the Army, which denied further privileges to poor and working men and diluted the power of the armed forces. In making this claim Crockett deployed his own mythology as a masculine frontier hero, appealing to the "thousands of poor men who had also gone out to fight their country's

[247] Remarks of David Crockett of Tennessee, 25 February 1830, *Register of Debates in Congress* 21st Congress, 1st Session, VI: 583.

battles," men he had known in the Tennessee militia. He took their valor as proof that "a man could fight the battles of his country, and lead his country's armies, without being educated at West Point." By contrast, Crockett claimed that West Point officers "were too delicate, and could not rough it in the army like men differently raised."[248] Thus, Crockett's critique of West Point was but one part of a broader gender politics of (manly) amateurism versus (unmanly) expertise, and a class politics of poor versus rich, within the military.

Other adversaries of West Point who emphasized issues of class privilege connected their attacks to the Jacksonian agenda of minimizing state power and destroying "monster institutions." They spoke of "restoring the government and constitution to their original republican simplicity, and in hedging in all attempts and practices which go beyond the safe and clear warrant of the Federal compact."[249] Successful actions against the Bank of the United States bolstered their claims in this regard. Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire compared the campaign against West Point to the campaign against the Bank, as both originated in the "pure and patriotic portion of your community; the staid, industrious, intelligent, farmers and mechanics."[250] Opponents likewise continued to complain that West Point monopolized officer positions and denied enlisted soldiers the chance to rise through the ranks by merit, accompanying this argument with more confident assertions that "the militia of the country is its best

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[248] Ibid.
[249] David Dickinson, *West Point Academy: Speech of the Hon. David Dickinson (of Tennessee) in Opposition to the Military Academy, Delivered in the House of Representatives, on Saturday, June 14th, 1834* (Washington, D.C., Printed by J. B. Carlisle, 1834), 1.
[250] Remarks of Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, 30 June 1836, *Register of Debates in Congress*, 24th Congress, 1st Session, XII: 4570

and noblest and most trust-worthy defence in time of war," and that "great emergencies will always call forth the latent talents and energies of a country."[251]

An 1837 Congressional report that advocated the abolition of the Academy combined all these thoughts and sentiments into one grand statement against nationally supported education as conducive only to aristocracy and effeminacy. The report offered data to demonstrate that, year after year, more and more cadets resigned their commissions immediately upon graduation and thus provided no service to the country. It claimed that these cadets were merely idle sons of wealthy men, looking to benefit from government patronage. Those cadets who did retain their commissions, the report charged, were ineffectual military commanders, possessed only of "artificial qualifications" that "will not win the confidence of American soldiers."[252] The Academy only benefited the nation as a "glittering array in time of peace," producing graduates fit only for "professorships in other literary seminaries, for novelists and magazine writers, and otherwise for fashionable life."[253] It was, on the whole, "a useless waste of the public money, so far as the substantial interests of the nation and people, as a government, are concerned."[254]

This report was the culmination of all anti-West Point argument in the 1830s, but it also revealed how much that argument had deviated from Partridge's original charge. In this report, West Point's greatest crimes were waste, inutility, and frivolity, but

[251] Dickinson, *West Point Academy*, 7.
[252] "History of the Origin of the Military Academy," *ASP:MA*, VII: 14
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid, 15.

nothing approaching despotism. Though the report called for the Academy's abolition, the problems it outlined could easily be redressed through a few simple reforms.

In response, friends of the Military Academy defended the school by articulating a vision of national liberty and power that absolutely depended upon a federally supported military academy. None other than Richard M. Johnson, reputed killer of Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames, became one of the Academy's most ardent defenders. In 1834, Johnson penned a report outlining the Academy's value and necessity to republican government and national union. Referencing "the new governments which have sprung up in this hemisphere" since the final collapse of the Spanish empire, Johnson stressed West Point's role in allowing the United States to remain globally competitive. This argument at its core defied the pervasive Jacksonian myth of the virtues of frontiersmen and citizen-soldiers, as Johnson decried the common misperception "that the emergencies of war can be always met by brave men, although undisciplined."[255] In a hostile continent, across which the nation was rapidly and aggressively expanding, Johnson remarked "it would be legislative cruelty to break up an institution in which officers can be formed who will guide triumphantly our brave citizens to combat upon equal terms with the well-trained troops of a foreign power."[256]

Following Johnson, Representative Aaron Ward from New York articulated a more thorough vision of the American military's place in the social, political, and

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[255] "Statement of the History and Importance of the Military Academy at West Point, New York, and Reasons Why It Should Not be Abolished," May 17, 1834, *ASP:MA*, V: 353

[256] Ibid., 354

international order. Citing the sizes of the English, French, Austrian, Prussian, and Russian militaries, he asserted the importance of the United States as "the only legitimate free Government on the face of the earth," maintaining "at least the skeleton of an army, in order to preserve unimpaired, from foreign aggression or intestine commotion, the rights and privileges bequeathed to us by our patriotic sires."[257] That European monarchs hated American freedom and might, at any moment, launch an attack against it had been a widely circulating idea since the end of the War of 1812. Ward deployed it here only to provide the foundation for a larger point that war was an integral part of modern discourse among nations. "Commerce makes neighbors of every nation of the civilized world, and makes them rivals, too," he claimed. "It brings their interests into collision, and rival interests make rival nations."[258] Therefore a mature professional army was the nation's surest guarantee of a secure presence and serious power on the world stage.

Supporters of West Point responded to charges of entrenched class privilege and military aristocracy with a competing definition of citizenship, service, and liberty. Johnson's report argued that, through "a judicious combination of military and paternal rule," the Academy reconstructed its lowly cadets into virtuous republican citizens, exhibiting "a feeling of self-reliance and independence destructive of false pride and of all exclusive or aristocratic pretensions."[259] These model citizens then dispersed widely across the nation "to superintend the construction of those chains of internal improvement which are to be the eternal bonds of our national Union," works that were "enduring

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[257] Remarks of Aaron Ward of New York, 14 June 1834, *Register of Debates in Congress*, 23rd Congress, 1st Session, X: 4485
[258] Ibid., 4489
[259] "Statement of the History and Importance of the Military Academy at West Point, New York," *ASP:MA*, V: 351.

memorials of the usefulness of the Military Academy."[260] Edward Mansfield, in an 1847 address at West Point, likewise boasted that its graduates have in "various forms…mingled with the people, have diffused the knowledge they have gained, and exercised an influence over the public mind far greater than that which is simply proportioned to their numbers or their stations. With few and distant exceptions, it cannot be fairly charged upon them that they have hidden their talents in napkin, or that they have ceased to exert them for the best and noblest interests of their country."[261] These defenses advanced a vision of a stable union, knit together by the bonds of commerce, sustained in its energies by a free and enlightened citizenry, all of them chiefly the product of the professional military establishment born at West Point.

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Ultimately, these official defenses of the Academy not only saved the Academy from abolition but also redefined the Academy's role in national political, economic, and cultural improvement. The extent to which these arguments shaped popular understandings of West Point, more than any of the attacks from Partridge, Crockett, or others, is suggested by representations of West Point in popular literature. At the same time that members of Congress debated the Academy's future, the place and school assumed a growing presence in the awareness of the travelers, tourists, and traders who, in the 1830s and 1840s, made New York's Hudson River into one of the nation's primary economic and cultural arteries. The boom in steamboat travel up the Hudson River turned

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[260] Ibid., 354-5.

[261] Edward D. Mansfield, *The Utility and Services of the United States Military Academy. With Notices of Some of its Graduates Fallen in Mexico. An Address, Delivered June 18, 1847, at West Point* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co, 1847), 15-16.

what had once been a dark and isolated military outpost into the cornerstone of a vibrant commercial region. Guidebooks and travelogues about the Hudson River Valley proliferated, "intended to supply a deficiency which has hitherto existed" in public knowledge of the Academy, and to facilitate potential travelers in gaining an in-depth knowledge of the place.[262] By making West Point a knowable place, open to public experience, these travel guides argued for its harmonious integration into the mainstream of American culture and for its importance in national progress.

Hudson River guidebooks published after 1820 all had the same objectives of describing the key scenes and landmarks and offering colorful anecdotes about selected locations along the Hudson River, though they varied in style and content. Some, like *The Traveller's Guide Through the State of New-York, Canada, &c* (1836) and *The Hudson River Guide* (1835), were small pocket-sized volumes that, replete with maps and charts of distances between cities by boat and rail, were clearly meant to be carried along during travel. On the other end of the spectrum, William Wall's *Hudson River Portfolio*, from 1825, offered twenty full-page views of scenes along the Hudson River, depicting natural settings as well as scenes of town life and local economic activity at places like Newburgh and Fishkill. These variations in style and content situated West Point and the Military Academy within different ways of seeing and knowing; depending on the text, West Point emerged as a point of commercial interaction, an object of touristic consumption, or a part of a natural and national aesthetic of the nation's sublime beauty.

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[262] *A Guide Book to West Point and Vicinity; Containing Descriptive, Historical, and Statistical Sketches of the United States Military Academy, and of Other Objects Of Interest* (New York: J.H. Colton. 1844), iii.

The *Hudson River Portfolio* established a pattern for interpretation of the area that would appear in many later guides, invoking both the natural beauty of the place and its historical importance as a crucial site in the nation's revolutionary struggle. The place was not only remarkable for its "panorama of mountains," healthy air, and "unbroken calm which perpetually reigns," but also for nearby landmarks like the monument to Polish revolutionary Tadeusz Kosciuszko and the ruins of old Fort Putnam, so that "every spot around the military seminary serves to recall glorious names, and deeds of renowned enterprise."[263] *The Hudson River Guide* of 1835 likewise described how at West Point "every object which meets the view, is not only grand, and connected with stirring events which are recorded in history," but also "doubly interesting," because "located at this place is the United States Military Academy, now in successful operation, which was established in 1802."[264] In this case, the guidebook situated the Academy as an integral part of the natural beauty and historical significance of the Point. *The Picturesque Beauties of the Hudson River and Its Vicinity*, published in the same year as *The Hudson River Guide*, went even further in articulating the Academy's vital contribution to the surrounding beauty and serenity of West Point. "The scenery at West Point is picturesque, the air is fresh, and the accommodations for the traveller, of the highest order," the guide explained, adding that "the officers are gentlemanly and social, and the

[263] William Guy Wall, *Wall's Hudson River Portfolio* (New York: Megarey, 1821-25), Plate No. XVI

[264] *The Hudson River Guide; Containing a Description of all the Landings and Principal Places on the Hudson River, as Far as Navigable; Stage, Canal, and Railroad Routes. Accompanied by a Correct Map.* (New York: J. Disturnell, 1835), 5.

cadets, as far as strict military discipline will allow, attentive to their friends."[265] The 1844 *Guide Book to West Point and Vicinity* likewise made a connection between the beauty of the place and its martial character. "In landing at West Point the first thing attracting attention is the perfect order and regularity that prevail," the guide explains, and "there is no tumult, no boisterous shout, and no annoying crowd. All is quiet and decorum."[266] Thus, the book specifically legitimized the previously controversial martial austerity and discipline at the Academy by establishing it as the basis for the region's natural charms.

In addition to advancing claims on the beauty of West Point and the Academy, guidebooks and travelogues also situated the Academy within the broader context of the Hudson River valley's expanding economy and culture. The 1844 *Guide Book to West Point and Vicinity*, before addressing the specific features of the spot, presented readers with a panoramic view, within which "the river forms, apparently, a beautiful lake, at the northern extremity of which, some eight miles distant, stands the goodly town of Newburgh. The whole distance is enlivened and beautified with the sails of numerous vessels, while on either side are steep and lofty hills, forming the doorposts, as it were, of this broad avenue."[267] One guidebook went so far as to present the Academy not only as a participant in, but an important foundation of, American commercial expansion. Quoting directly from a report of the Board of Visitors, the *Traveller's Guide Through the State of*

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[265] Samuel L. Knapp, *The Picturesque Beauties of the Hudson River and Its Vicinity; Illustrated in a Series of Views, From Original Drawings, Taken Expressly for This Work, and Engraved on Steel by Distinguished Artists. With Historical and Descriptive Illustrations* (New York: J. Disturnell, 1835), 8.
[266] *Guide Book to West Point and Vicinity*, 7.
[267] Ibid., 8-9.

*New-York* pointed out the value of the sciences taught at the Academy "when applied to the prosecution of the various improvements which are so rapidly developing and enlarging the resources of our country."[268] In this description, the Academy appeared not at all isolated from the growing city of Newburgh, but bound naturally and effortlessly to it by the Hudson River, which, adorned with its fleet of merchant ships presented a luxurious avenue joining the school and the town, its bustle of commerce seemingly dwarfing the martial elements of the place.

The *Traveller's Guide*'s reliance on a report of the Board of Visitors in its description of West Point was neither ideologically neutral nor atypical of these guidebooks. Guides and travelogues occasionally reprinted the writings or reports of West Point's administrators and official supporters and thereby provided the friends of West Point a means of large-scale distribution that the Academy's enemies often lacked. William Wall's *Hudson River Portfolio* accompanied its description of the physical and historical features of the place with a summary of the 1825 report of the Board of Visitors. Thus, vindications of the school's "strict discipline" through which "so much are the morals of the Cadets guarded," and the Academy's "excellency as a school for the precise sciences and those of the arts" accompanied celebrations of the area's sublime character.[269] In some cases, guidebooks even supplemented their travel descriptions with short histories of the Academy and primers on the debates in Congress, with decidedly pro-Academy slants. Freeman Hunt, in his *Letters About the Hudson River and Its*

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[268] *The Traveller's Guide Through the State of New-York, Canada, &c. Embracing a General Description of the City of New-York; the Hudson River Guide, and the Fashionable Tour to the Springs and Niagara Falls; with Steam-Boat, Rail-Road, and Stage Routes. Accompanied by Correct Maps* (New York: J. Disturnell, 1836), 28.
[269] Wall, *Hudson River Portfolio*, Plate XVI.

*Vicinity*, acknowledged his reliance upon "the facts, and occasionally the language," from a pro-West Point pamphlet by graduate Lt. Roswell Park.[270]

Some guidebooks did more than describe the picturesque or sublime qualities of West Point, and offered descriptions of the school that provided accessible accounts of the school's internal operations and functions. These efforts sometimes became outright editorials that extolled the virtues of the military academy. Emphasizing, like most other guide books, West Point's historical importance, *The Picturesque Beauties of the Hudson River* explained that "it is memorable for being the military residence of Kosciuszko, whose fame has since been so widely extended; memorable also, for being the birth place of Arnold's treason; and now, for being the site of a military school, whose scholars do honor to the genius of our country, and which as yet flourishes, as the pride of the nation, being the only scientific institution, we, as a people possess."[271] Wall's *Portfolio* suggested that an ideological support of the Academy was in fact a necessary component of the proper aesthetic experience of the Point. "There is scarcely a traveller who has visited the Highlands," according to the *Portfolio*, "who has not concentrated his attention, at least for a few minutes, on the situation and character of this nursery of military talent, this school of tactics, and prolific fountain of future glory and security."[272]

In these representations of the Academy, discourses of revolutionary heroism and sublime natural beauty combined auspiciously to grant West Point the legitimacy that

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[270] A Citizen of New York [Freeman Hunt], *Letters About the Hudson River and Its Vicinity. Written in 1835 & 1836* (New York: Freeman Hunt & Co. 1836), 165.
[271] Knapp, *Picturesque Beauties*, 7.
[272] Wall, *Hudson River Portfolio*, Plate No. XVI.

policy makers tried to deny it. The Military Academy thrived on a secure foundation as an object of tourist curiosity, naturalist wonder, and enthusiasm for the commercial boom of one of the nation's most vibrant river regions. In the debates surrounding the cadet mutiny of 1818-1820, commentators had discussed whether the military and civilian spheres could or should merge. Hudson River guidebooks argued for the two remaining separate but nonetheless harmoniously aligned. The guidebooks thus occupied a space somewhere between the arguments made by Thayer and by the mutinous cadets in 1818. They implicitly rejected Thayer's assumption that the Academy should remain isolated from the norms and principles of civil society but preserved that ideal when they constructed the Academy as a distinct, "hallowed" place, still untouched by the surrounding culture in the most important ways. The school's austerity and rigid military discipline – crucial to its charms, in these guides – survived. By incorporating West Point into the region's natural beauties and sacred revolutionary history, the guidebooks also placed the Academy beyond criticism and beyond reform, even as they made it a much less inscrutable place in the public imagination.

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Support for West Point was remarkably diffuse. Throughout the antebellum period, West Point demonstrated an ability to serve different, perhaps even contradictory, functions in accordance with varying ideas of democratic culture and national strength. The Military Academy could be made to fit into many different narratives of American destiny, imparting to it great versatility as a political and cultural object. Nonetheless, there was one common thread among all supporters of West Point, from Monroe to Thayer to Congressional supporters and on to the tourists and travelers who wrote and

read the Hudson guide books: each developed an understanding of the Academy as a necessary part of some larger destiny. West Point's opponents, by contrast, failed in this period to connect their views to similarly large visions. Only the cadets themselves and later Alden Partridge approached this goal as they re-defined the military as an authoritarian system, the existence of which put the lie to the nation's vaunted ideals of freedom and democracy. In refusing to address these issues, however, opponents in Congress missed an opportunity to place their opposition to West Point within a compelling narrative about power and liberty, and thus failed to construct an argument that might have resonated with a broader public. By these means, political and perhaps popular attitudes about the professional military shifted from hostility to acceptance and even reverence.

4.

# The Way of Improvement Leads to War: Democracy, Economy, and Military Education, 1820-1845

The Connecticut River, like the Hudson, was one of the early republic's chief economic and cultural arteries. Flowing south from northern New Hampshire, it winds along the eastern Vermont border, passes through Springfield, Massachusetts and Hartford, Connecticut, and empties into Long Island Sound. Throughout the eighteenth century, artisans and craftsmen flourished in the river's valley. Yet the river's munificence was not evenly distributed. A Connecticut pedestrian following the river northward noted how, near Windsor, Vermont, the river became "very much broken, by rocks and descents," and "in two or three places is compressed to the breadth of about fifteen feet, and rushes down a very steep but short descent, with great fury, and much force." "As I stood upon the bridge," this observer wrote, "I could scarcely persuade myself that I was looking at the river, which at Hartford, rolls along with such majesty, and stillness."[273] While denizens of the river's southern end, in Massachusetts or Connecticut, enjoyed the tranquility and ease with which the river connected their towns and drove their industries, Yankees further north struggled to scratch out an existence on the river's more unforgiving banks.[274]

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[273] Anonymous diary, 28 September 1822, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT.
[274] For an overview of Vermont's environment and economy, see Christopher McGrory Klyza and Stephen C. Trombulak, *The Story of Vermont: A Natural and Cultural History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) 63-86. The dearth of natural resources and opportunities for profitable exploitation of the land resulted in a significant phenomenon of treasure hunting and reliance on occult means to find wealth in the land where none existed. See Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy:

Alden Partridge had grown up in this turbulent northern corner of New England, and to this place he returned after he was ordered to leave West Point. Once home, he looked for sustenance and, perhaps, regeneration. Back in the country his family first settled in 1768, Partridge climbed Moose Hillock, where his view was, he noted, "one of the finest I ever saw," and spent two weeks walking an estimated 140 miles throughout the region.[275] After reconnecting with the land, he became committed to its future improvement, and for much of the rest of his life he struggled to bring what little prosperity the northern Connecticut River could give to his hometown of Norwich, Vermont. His was the first signature, for example, on an 1824 petition to the Vermont state legislature requesting incorporation of a Connecticut River canal company in Norwich, to redress the "great obstructions, expence, and uncertainty attend[ing] the boat navigation of Connecticut river" that had caused local citizens to "almost wholly [abandon] the river" at great cost to themselves and the town.[276] Ultimately, however, there was little that Partridge could do to support agriculture and commerce in Norwich. He was neither a farmer nor a merchant, but a soldier. His ambitions for Norwich very quickly turned to the military.

In September 1820, Alden Partridge opened the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy in Norwich. The academy became a vital part of the town over the next forty years, with the exception of a brief relocation of the institution to

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Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780-1830," *American Quarterly* 38, no.1 (Spring 1986), 6-34.

[275] Alden Partridge to Lieut. John Wright, Norwich, 16 August 1817, Box 4, Alden Partridge Papers, Norwich University Special Collections, Northfield, VT (hereafter AP-NUSC).

[276] Alden Partridge et al., Petition 18 October 1824, *Vermont State Papers* (hereafter MsVtSP), Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, 57: 232.

Middletown, Connecticut, between 1825 and 1828. While Partridge remained rooted in Norwich, his ambitions grew on a national and sometimes international scale. Before his death in 1854, he created almost two dozen other military schools throughout the nation formed along the model of the Norwich academy. In 1834 the Vermont legislature incorporated the original academy as Norwich University, which still operates as a military school.[277] Partridge hoped this network of academies would enable more young men across the nation to cultivate advanced knowledge of military science and better fulfill their civic obligations to serve in the militia, just as policy-makers like Henry Knox and William Henry Harrison had proposed but failed to put into practice.

His efforts to spread these academies, and his political ideals, across the nation represented an attempt to implement martial democracy. Like the U.S. Military Academy, Partridge's academies were most successful when they were perceived as making a vital contribution to national economic progress. Unlike the U.S. Military Academy, Partridge's schools encountered opposition that more effectively limited their growth and influence. Popular reactions to his ideals of military education reveal the contingent and incomplete processes by which military institutions and martial values permeated public life and culture in the antebellum period. Alden Partridge garnered a great deal of national attention from his educational efforts, but, like his predecessors, he failed to realize his largest goals. Nonetheless, Partridge failed in interesting and instructive ways that offer a clearer picture of the decline of the citizen-soldier ideal in the antebellum period.

[277] However, Norwich University moved a final time to Northfield, Vermont, following a fire that destroyed its Norwich campus in 1867.

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Like many reformers in the early republic, Alden Partridge believed education was "one of the most important subjects which can occupy the attention of an enlightened and free people," since it determined the values of the rising generation upon whom "the future destinies of our mighty republic" depends.[278] Partridge, though, viewed all previously established educational systems as ineffectual and effeminate. In a proper educational institution, he argued, the "organization and discipline should be strictly military."[279] Partridge's curriculum combined a wide range of topics in advanced mathematics, applied sciences (including surveying and engineering), politics, law, and modern languages with a program of military education that included parade formation, fortification, gunnery, and tactics.[280] The military component remained the cornerstone of the Partridge's educational system, as he argued it would achieve three intertwined goals: the pursuit of useful knowledge, the cultivation of martial manhood, and ultimately the perfection of American democracy.

Partridge's ideas of "usefulness" were indelibly linked to the body, physicality, and conceptions of manliness and martial prowess; military education therefore offered the most "useful" knowledge because of its emphasis on physical education and bodily improvement. This claim for the usefulness of military education stemmed partly from

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[278] Alden Partridge, *Capt. Partridge's Lecture on Education* ([Middletown: 1828]), 1. All citations to the Lecture are from an edition held at the Library Company in Philadelphia. The Library Company dates the pamphlet to 1828 although evidence suggests its publication was as early as 1820.

[279] Ibid., 5.

[280] For a comprehensive list of classes and subjects taught at the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy, see *Catalogue of the officers and Cadets: Together With the Prospectus and Internal Regulations of the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy, at Middletown, Connecticut* (Middletown: Starr & Niles, 1826), 16-7.

Partridge's linking of physiological and cognitive development. He argued that there was a "very intimate…connection between the mind and body, that when the latter becomes weak and languid, the former, as if linked by an uncontrollable sympathy, has ever been found to shrink into effeminacy, and not unfrequently into listless degeneracy."[281] The legitimacy of military education therefore rested on the presumption that "a strong and robust body, and an equally vigorous and powerful mind, are not only consistent, but would seem to be necessarily combined, to ensure a perfect development of the powers and capabilities of man."[282] Reinforcing this connection between physical and intellectual powers, Partridge boasted that students would leave his academy with "a head to conceive and an arm to execute."[283] That all previous systems of education in America lacked any element of physical training contributed to their public inutility, as "so many of our promising youths lose their health by the time they are prepared to enter on the grand theatre of active and useful life, and either prematurely die, or linger out a comparatively useless and miserable existence."[284]

Useful education, however, was not an end in itself. It was only a means to the proper cultivation of manhood, which was itself a means to the greater ends of active citizenship and a strong democracy. Partridge explained that students put under military discipline avoided the dissipated and corrupt habits believed to be common at other seminaries, and, "impressed with the true principles and feelings of a soldier," they

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[281] Alden Partridge, *Journal of a Tour, of a Detachment of Cadets, From the A.L.S.& M. Academy, Middletown, to the City of Washington, in December, 1826* (Middletown: W.D. Starr, 1827), iii.
[282] Ibid., iv.
[283] Partridge, *Lecture on Education*, 12.
[284] Ibid., 2.

became "subordinate, honorable, and manly."[285] Partridge, like other proponents of the militia, believed that a man trained as a soldier constituted a higher order of citizen. The student's habits of subordination ensured that he would "be equally observant of the laws of his country, as of the academic regulations under which he has lived; and…become the more estimable citizen in consequence thereof."[286] Partridge's emphasis on military organization and discipline was rooted in a distinctly martial understanding of freedom and civic duty. The aim of education, in his vision, was to create "future guardians and protectors of the inestimable rights and privileges transmitted to us by the heroes and patriots of the revolution."[287] Proper education enabled students to cultivate enlightenment and reason, but also prepared them for the more active duties of militant protection of American liberties by which they maintained continuity between themselves and the nation's insurgent revolutionary origins. Partridge ultimately linked his plan of educational reform to a broader scheme of reorganizing and reforming the nation's defense system. "If we intend to avoid a standing army, (that bane of a republic, and engine of oppression in the hands of despots,) our militia must be patronized and improved, and military information must be disseminated amongst the great mass of the people," he wrote.[288]

Other educators and political leaders disagreed as to whether Partridge's system was truly useful or truly democratic. Henry Clay expressed his belief that "tactics and military science considered as parts of a system of education, deserve much

[285] Ibid., 5.
[286] Ibid., 6.
[287] Ibid., 1.
[288] Ibid., 6.

consideration; and I think that it is well worth serious enquiry whether they might not be advantageously introduced into all of our Colleges."[289] New Hampshire governor Levi Woodbury applauded the system's attention to physical exercise as its most publicly useful feature. Partridge's military drills, he proclaimed, allowed "a species of exercise admirably adapted to… invigorating the mind with the body" and brought about "that enviable state for the scholar of *sana mens in corpore sana* [a sound mind in a sound body]."[290] Former Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, however, wrote Partridge to express his dislike for the emphasis on military science, engineering, and mathematics. In the United States, he said, "it is *literature* & the sciences, other than the exact, which are the most important" and in which "our seminaries are deficient."[291] Dearborn attempted to impress Partridge with the utmost importance of "*literature writing & speaking well*" as the foremost goals of practical education.[292] Josiah Quincy, a Massachusetts Federalist who later served as president of Harvard University, spoke most vociferously against Partridge's scheme. Military education produced nothing but military power. While this was perhaps a suitable pursuit in Europe, where military power brought political power, he stated bluntly that he did "not consider the conquest of either Canada or Mexico, as amongst the legitimate objects of a general American education."[293]

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[289] Henry Clay to Alden Partridge, Washington, 20 January 1824, Box 5, AP-NUSC.
[290] Levi Woodbury to Alden Partridge, Portsmouth, 5 April 1824, Box 5, AP-NUSC.
[291] Henry Dearborn to Alden Partridge, Brinley Place, 3 February 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC; these "sciences, other than the exact" would encompass philosophy or history, as opposed to the "exact sciences" of physics or chemistry.
[292] Henry Dearborn to Alden Partridge, Brinley Place, 11 February 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.
[293] Josiah Quincy to Alden Partridge, Boston, 15 March 1823, Box 5, AP-NUSC.

There was even more disagreement on the democratic character of military education. Those who accepted Partridge's claims to democratic perfection also shared his militarized understanding of American government and liberty. Henry Dearborn, for as much as he doubted the utility of military science, nonetheless celebrated Partridge's ideas of the value of military education to the continuation of republican government. "The system of education you have adopted is in harmonious accordance with our republican form of government, under which *All are governed by All*, and *All defend All*," Dearborn later admitted, adding that American liberties "were valiantly secured by the sword & by that only are they to be maintained."[294] Levi Woodbury thought that military discipline contained the essence of democratic society because it applied to all students equally, and "neither wealth nor rank can buy an exemption from obedience & study." He commended Partridge's system of military education for its "unspeakable importance in our free government."[295] Partridge's emphasis on subordination as a democratic virtue met with some resistance, however. Though Josiah Quincy accepted that "the best lessons, by which man can be taught to command, is to learn obedience, in his early years," this lesson could not be applied systematically on a national level without turning back the progress of the Revolution. "The tendency of our institutions & habits, ever since the revolution has been to introduce great levity into the system of management of youth," he explained to Partridge. "Instead of that austerity which ancient manners

[294] Henry Dearborn to Alden Partridge, Brinley Place, 10 September 1827, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[295] Levi Woodbury to Partridge, Portsmouth, N.H., 5 April 1824, Box 5, AP-NUSC.

established between the relations of parent and child, great urbanity and almost equality of treatment has been substituted."[296]

These divergent responses to Partridge's military system of education played out in multiple communities – north and south, urban and rural – as he built his network of academies in the 1820s and 1830s, beginning in Norwich. The popular legitimacy of not only military education but of the ideal of a martial democracy itself depended on how citizens and communities resolved these issues in practice.

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The citizens of Norwich were no strangers to institutions of higher learning. In 1769, within a year of the town's first settlement, Eleazar Wheelock established Dartmouth College immediately across the river, in Hanover, New Hampshire. Thirty-four Norwich residents contributed a total of thirty-five pounds and six hundred acres to Wheelock's enterprise, and the whole town profited as British capital flowed into the region to pay for the labor and material extracted from the town in building the school.[297] Norwich's economic and cultural development thereby became intimately connected with the college. A local history of Norwich notes that the town and the college "during the days of their infancy and weakness had learned to be mutually helpful."[298] Partridge hoped to embed his school within an established historical trajectory in early national New England, in which towns and schools matured together, and towns adopted local

[296] Josiah Quincy to Alden Partridge, Boston, 15 March 1823, Box 5, AP-NUSC.
[297] M.E. Goddard and Henry V. Partridge, *A History of Norwich Vermont (Published by Authority of the Town)* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth Press, 1905), 35-38. Henry V. Partridge was Alden Partridge's son.
[298] Ibid., 53.

cultures that, through the supporting academic institutions, tied the town and its residents to national and international visions of liberalization, modernization, and improvement.[299]

The proposed military academy thus found support among the citizens and civic leaders of Norwich, who understood the establishment of such an academy to be a vital component of the town's cultural and economic improvement. Alden Partridge's brother, Cyrus, began soliciting the leaders and prominent elites of the town for investments three years before the school actually opened. After one month, Cyrus reported that he had already secured at least $7,000 and a grant of one thousand acres of land from Israel Newton.[300] Enthusiasm ran high for the school. Cyrus reported that Pierce Burton, who alone had promised $2800 for the academy, was "so annimated he cant stand still while talking about" the school, while Elihu Emerson was "verry anxious" and promised "every thing he can do to put the Academy in operation shall be done at all events."[301] Alden Partridge's friend from West Point, Lieutenant John Wright, came to Norwich and likewise found the townspeople "anxiously inclined and ambitiously engaged in the establishment of a Mily Acady." By the end of September, Wright had begun considering sites on which to build the school.[302]

A profile of the elite local network that provided the initial capital and energy to establish the academy reveals that the majority of those who offered their support,

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[299] On the complex and sometimes contentious relationships between academies and New England towns, see Jason Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 103-125

[300] Cyrus Partridge to Alden Partridge, Norwich, 24 September 1817, Box 4, AP-NUSC.

[301] Cyrus Partridge to Alden Partridge, Norwich, 24 September 1817, Box 4, AP-NUSC.

[302] John Wright to Alden Partridge, Norwich, 27 September 1817, Box 4, AP-NUSC.

including the Partridges themselves, were from well-established families in Norwich. Of the eight contributors named by Cyrus Partridge, three of them – Pierce Burton, a Major Hatch, and Cyrus Partridge himself – descended from one of the forty founding families that had settled in Norwich.[303] The Burton, Hatch, and Partridge families had also been among the Norwich residents who, in 1770, contributed subscriptions to the foundation of Dartmouth College.[304] Many of the individual subscribers were also visible political leaders in the town. Around the time of the Academy's establishment, Pierce Burton also served as Justice of the Peace from Norwich. The subscriber whom Cyrus identified as "Esqr. Loveland" was likely Aaron Loveland, Windsor County's representative in the Vermont General Assembly from 1820 to 1822.[305] Thomas Emerson served in the same position between 1824 and 1828. Cyrus Partridge's designation of Hatch as "Major" Hatch suggests he may have had a commission in the state militia.

Available information on the professions of the main contributors indicates that they were involved to varying degrees in the industrial and commercial development of the region. The Hatch and Burton families had both established gristmills upon settling the area, Burton in 1766 and Hatch in 1770. Elihu Emerson was the town's first blacksmith, while Joseph Emerson manufactured wool hats and also kept a shop. Pierce Burton, by 1830, was a notable potash manufacturer. Six names – Joseph Emerson,

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[303] Goddard and Partridge, *History of Norwich, Vermont*, 39-40.
[304] Ibid., 54-5.
[305] Aaron Loveland later served as a trustee of Norwich University after its incorporation. See list of trustees dated August 17, 1843 in Board of Trustees Records, Box 1, Records of the Trustees of Norwich University from Dec. 3 1834 to Aug. 15 1861, Norwich University Special Collections.

Aaron Loveland, John Hatch, Elihu Emerson, Cyrus Partridge, and John Wright – also appear on Alden Partridge's 1824 memorial to the state legislature seeking incorporation of a Connecticut River canal company.[306] Similarly, Joseph Emerson, Cyrus Partridge, John Wright, and a Horace Hatch all signed an 1833 petition for the incorporation of a cotton and wool manufacturing company.[307] Participation in these ventures signified their commitment to the commercial improvement to the town as well as the economic and political means to effect such improvement.

Partridge hoped to situate his academy and cadets at the center of public life. Cadet parades and commencement exercises, for example, integrated school functions with public festive culture. Partridge also led his cadets on pedestrian excursions through neighboring towns. These tours fulfilled multiple purposes. They were a necessary part of Partridge's physical education curriculum. In addition, such excursions provided opportunities for lessons in cartography, surveying, and measurement that contributed to the scientific and engineering curriculum. After a tour, Partridge typically published a journal recounting the lessons and experiments the cadets underwent during the course of the tour and narrating the means by which the tour strengthened relationships with nearby towns. These published journals could then become important promotional materials for the school, giving outside observers (and prospective consumers) a view of the

[306] Alden Partridge et al., Petition 18 October 1824, MsVtSP 57: 232
[307] E.B. Williston et al., "Petition of E.B. Williston and others praying that an act may be passed incorporating a woollen manufacturing company," MsVtSP 63: 168.

accomplishments of the cadets, demonstrating their integration into local social life, and presenting a case for the school's public legitimacy.[308]

Those who came into contact with the academy reacted with curiosity, admiration, contempt, or some mixture of the three. The arrival of a touring corps of cadets offered a spectacle for locals, but the tours also provided surrounding towns and communities the opportunity to ceremonially affirm the civic and cultural bonds between the school and its superintendent to local communities. One cadet named Riley Adams recounted how, in an excursion through New Hampshire, "the countrymen flocked" into the town of Littleton to greet the cadets and to "express feelings of friendship to the whole of Capt. P's corps." Without sufficient accommodations in town for guests, the people of Littleton, Adams wrote, "conducted us to their abodes without hesitation; and seemed to take delight in preparing our lodgings."[309] In Montpelier, a committee of citizens offered to "accommodate members of the Institution with refreshment and lodging in various respectable families."[310] Through the school, Partridge became recognized as an important figure with a central role in the region's future cultural development. Zadock Thompson, who compiled a gazetteer and atlas of the state of Vermont, turned to Partridge to write the entry on Norwich and asked specifically for a

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[308] See, for example, *A Journal of an Excursion Made by the Corps of Cadets, of the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy, Under Capt. Alden Partridge, June 1822* (Concord: Hill and Moore, 1822); Alden Partridge, *Journal of a Tour, of a Detachment of Cadets, From the A.L.S.& M. Academy, Middletown, to the City of Washington, in December, 1826* (Middletown, Conn.: W.D. Starr, 1827).
[309] "Journal of Riley M. Adams," 1 October 1824, repr. in *The Vineland Historical Magazine* IV: 2 (April 1919), 36.
[310] Joseph Howes et al. to Alden Partridge, Montpelier, 17 October 1821, Box 4, AP-NUSC.

history of the Academy.[311] A local musician who published a collection of church music sent a copy of the collection to Partridge, with hopes that "as the founder of an Institution in our State which is second to none in usefullness" he would be in a privileged position to review the work and distribute it among "the Musical & Literary Publick in the vicinity of your Institution."[312] A man hoping to establish himself as a printer and bookseller turned to Partridge for his opinion on the success of such an establishment in Norwich.[313] Partridge's simple public relations efforts offered a venue through which local civic and martial cultures merged and supported each other.

Any other newly established academy may have received similar responses anywhere in the nation. The military nature of Partridge's academy, however, brought special advantages. Partridge instructed the cadets in field operations and military drill. Supplying the cadets with arms and ammunition for these exercises connected Norwich to weapons manufacturers in southern New England and also brought federal attention to the town. Partridge originally planned for a Norwich merchant named Lyman (possibly Elias Lyman, who later represented Norwich in the Vermont General Assembly from 1830-1833) to broker a deal with weapons manufacturer Eli Whitney in New Haven.[314] In March 1820, a clerk at the U.S. Armory in Springfield, Massachusetts named Ethan A. Clary offered to "furnish any number from 50 to 200 of the Arms manufactured at this place and…at a fair price," assuring Partridge further that "they will be of a good quality

[311] Zadock Thompson to Alden Partridge, Woodstock, 22 January 1824, Box 5, AP-NUSC.
[312] Colton Warren to Alden Partridge, Rutland, Vermont, 1 January 1823, Box 5, AP-NUSC.
[313] George M. Young to Alden Partridge, Exeter, 29 August 1822, Box 5, AP-NUSC.
[314] Alden Partridge to John Wright, New York, 28 September 1817, Box 4, AP-NUSC.

and in good order."[315] Partridge did apparently develop a business relationship with Clary and the Springfield Armory. In an 1822 letter, Clary mentioned having visited Norwich and again offered Partridge a favorable deal on French carbines fitted with bayonets, which Clary advertised as "exactly the kind most suitable for the youth under your care." He offered them at a price of $4.50 to $5.00 each, with a generous extension of credit.[316] This arrangement received Congressional approbation. In 1824, James Hamilton of South Carolina praised the Academy as "a powerful auxiliary to that at West Point" in a speech recommending a grant of ammunition to the school.[317] Hamilton speculated that the Norwich academy could be a "fountain head of schools founded on a military basis" that could supply training to officers of the army and navy along with practical instruction to the officers of the militia, at little expense to the federal government.[318] As the first school of its kind, Partridge's academy had the potential to make Norwich the center of a new national military organization.

Yet the military nature of the school also invited public suspicion from which other academies would have been exempt. Military discipline struck some observers as unsavory. A Connecticut traveler in Norwich found it remarkable that "no waiters are allowed of any kind," and that the cadets "perform every manual office for themselves" lest they be "put under arrest in the guard house." Observing that "the Capt. is very strict about their going out, and every little thing," the traveler concluded, "I had rather

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[315] E.A. Clary to Alden Partridge, Springfield, Massachusetts, 11 March 1820, Box 4, AP-NUSC.
[316] E.A. Clary to Alden Partridge, Springfield, Massachusetts, 6 August 1822, Box 5, AP-NUSC.
[317] Remarks of James Hamilton, 24th December 1823, *Annals of Congress* 18th Congress, 1st Session, I: 878.
[318] Remarks of James Hamilton, 3 March 1824, Ibid., II: 1735.

perform all the duties of Yale three times over, each day, than be so bambozled and fettered, and treated like a deserted soldier, as the Cadets are."[319] Though perfectly in line with Partridge's pedagogy, this form of cadet life hardly struck the outside observer as an ennobled form of democratic citizenship. Concern over the school's harsh disciplinary regimen at one point gave rise to rumors that one cadet had attempted to murder Alden Partridge in reaction to a severe punishment.[320] This rumor forced Partridge to issue a response in the newspaper that he "never in any instance resorts to corporeal punishment; his government is such as to secure the affection as well as fear of all his students."[321] While this statement may have alleviated public concern, Partridge's assertion that he ruled partly through fear must have undercut his democratic pretenses.

The potential for violence latent within the academy became more controversial than the use of military discipline. Despite Partridge's boasts that military discipline would remedy the riotous disposition common among students at other academies and colleges, the school exhibited its share of violent and brutal behavior in its daily operations, sometimes seemingly with Partridge's knowledge or even encouragement. Riley Adams, a cadet who kept a diary during the fall of 1824, described a "war" that emerged between the Southern and Northern cadets between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Adams, on the Northern side, "expected the Southerners would break into our room in the night to fight." He and his roommates "armed ourselves with bayonets and clubs, being determined to run the first one through that entered the room." The cadets

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[319] Anonymous diary, 29 September 1822, Connecticut Historical Society.
[320] "Capt. Partridge's Life Attempted!" *American Repertory* (Burlington, VT), 23 November 1821.
[321] "Captain Partridge and His Students," *(Concord) New-Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 10 December 1821, Box 13, AP-NUSC.

found warrant for such behavior in the teachings of Partridge himself. Adams explained that "the Capt. had previously said before the whole of the Cadets 'that if any person or persons broke into anothers room, those belonging to the room were at liberty to stick them with any weapon, or at least to mark them so they would be known the next day.'"[322] On another day, according to Adams, "the Northerners again prepared for a fight in the night, remembering the words of the Capt., 'That if any party wished to be in peace to be ready for war.'"[323] This violence was not an aberration but a natural outgrowth of a curriculum that taught young men to prepare for and even glory in warfare.

The severity and violence that seemed inherent within the Academy limited the ability of others to accept it as a cornerstone of a new political order. No less than President John Quincy Adams weighed in on this matter when Partridge led his cadets on an excursion to Washington, D.C., where they paraded before Adams at the White House. Adams privately confessed an antipathy toward Partridge, rooted in much the same doubtful sentiments about a military academy that Josiah Quincy and some other New Englanders had already voiced. The school's three hundred cadets, Adams complained, had been "withdrawn from colleges and universities, to be drilled into soldiers, marched about the country laying the people under contributions of hospitality, and getting puffed by newspapers into fashion and popularity."[324] Stating that he "felt no inclination to

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[322] "Journal of Riley M. Adams," Thursday, December 2, repr. *The Vineland Historical Magazine* V:4 (October 1920), 156.
[323] Ibid., 157. "In time of peace, prepare for war" was indeed one of Partridge's primary tenets.
[324] Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848* (New York: AMS Press, repr. 1970), 214.

extol the system of military education," Adams held military education to be a corruption of the nation's youth, diverting them from more edifying, purifying, and truly intellectual pursuits. A day later, Adams's attendance at the commencement ceremonies of Columbia College reinforced this belief. This commencement, he wrote, "naturally contrasted with the exhibition yesterday of Captain Partridge's cadets. That was a show of bodily exercise, and this of the cultivation of the mind. My predilections continue strong in favor of the college."[325] To Adams, the military could never provide a suitable basis for national improvement or for democracy. Its promises were superficial, as it would always be base and vulgar, with no noble aspiration beyond the show of strength and the exercise of power.

Besides provoking the president's wrath, Partridge's 1826 excursion to the capital more significantly revealed that his ambitions were beginning to outgrow the town of Norwich. Though ostensibly instructive for the cadets, the excursion was undoubtedly an attempt to lobby the federal government for support. A comment by Partridge's associate in Baltimore, James Smith, reveals that the excursion may have been a common political tool of Partridge's. In encouraging Partridge to establish a new school at Baltimore, he emphasized its "Proximity to the Seat of the general Government" which "will afford you the best opportunity you could wish for by an occasional march there with your Pupils to give the public the information they yet want in regard to this plan of education."[326] In the 1826 excursion, Partridge announced his ambitions to connect his educational program to national political and cultural reform.

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[325] Ibid., 214-5. Partridge's journal of the Washington tour reveals that his cadets likewise attended Columbia College's commencement exercises.
[326] James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 20 March 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.

The ways in which the nation's political leaders met Partridge in the winter of 1826 indicated the fault lines that would divide national public opinion on Partridge and his system as he disseminated military education throughout the nation in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Adams was the only real critic in the capital, and other prominent national figures received Partridge with much the same ceremonial affectation as the villagers of Vermont and New Hampshire. John C. Calhoun "expressed himself gratified in witnessing a corps of citizen-soldiers, in preparation for the varied duties of life."[327] Secretary of War James Barbour similarly commended the academy as a necessary step in the creation of a nation in which "every free citizen will *know* and *feel* that he is responsible for the safe preservation of his own and his country's liberties."[328] These comments demonstrate the extent of official support for Partridge's ideals of martial democracy and interest in his efforts to implement it.

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Whether Partridge's military academies were a valuable contribution to the growth of American democracy or a crude vulgarity that would prevent the nation from achieving its loftier ambitions was a question that many other citizens had to answer for themselves as Partridge attempted to spread his ideals nationally in the late 1820s and early 1830s. In these years, Partridge established new academies in towns and cities where at least some saw more than an empty promise in Partridge's system and latched onto military education as a possible source of improvement and prosperity. Other communities expressed interest in a military academy without actually establishing one

[327] Partridge, *Journal of a Tour, of a Detachment of Cadets*, 78.
[328] Ibid., 77.

of their own. With this national attention, Partridge and his associates talked of reinventing American intellectual life, hoping that his military academies might "become in Education what the 'American System' is becoming in commerce & manufactures."[329] They believed they might even help Americans overcome "their Scruples as to the *Military*."[330] Partridge's successes and setbacks in other regions and other communities illustrate the conflict that surrounded his attempts to turn citizens into soldiers and nationally implement his principles of martial democracy.

In 1825, Partridge relocated his academy from Norwich to Middletown, Connecticut, a move calculated to bring greater attention to his system and build a national reputation for him as a military leader and political reformer. Norwich, one correspondent wrote to Partridge, damaged "the respectability of your institution" due to its "remoteness from all objects & from all associations connected with the profession" for which the cadets were studying.[331] Unlike Norwich, Middletown stood at the center of a commercially and culturally thriving region. Prominent citizens of the town welcomed him there. In an April 1825 petition to the state Assembly seeking incorporation for the academy, Samuel D. Hubbard, Thomas Mather, Johnathan Lawrence Lewis, John Alsop, John Hinsdale, Elijah Hubbard, and George W. Stanley explained that twenty-three thousand dollars had been raised from the citizens of Middletown and they had already purchased land and begun construction on the

[329] John Holbrook to Alden Partridge, 7 July 1828, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[330] John Holbrook to Alden Partridge, Georgetown, 20 June 1828, Box 7, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.
[331] Timothy Fuller to Alden Partridge, Washington, 7 February 1823, Box 7, AP-NUSC.

academy.[332] Partridge depended especially on the mobilization of a distinct set of industrial and martial interests. The trustees of an academy in Middletown included local arms manufacturer Nathan Starr.[333] The Starr family remained important contacts for Partridge, especially as he sought additional funding and support for his various endeavors in the 1840s.[334] Other prominent investors in the Middletown academy included arms manufacturer Simeon North, who contributed four hundred twenty dollars, and a Thomas McDonough (quite possibly the naval hero of the War of 1812) who contributed two hundred dollars.[335]

A similar mix of interests backed Partridge's efforts to establish academies in other cities. New Haven weapons manufacturer Eli Whitney was among the trustees of an academy in that city that took its inspiration from Partridge, although Partridge himself was not directly involved in its management.[336] In Baltimore, Partridge's agent James Smith appealed to a group of local investors who had recently formed a company to build a railroad from Baltimore to the Ohio River, as well as "several gentlemen of influence & wealth in the neighborhood of the [federal] arsenal who are disposed…to

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[332] Petition of Thomas Mather, John Hinsdale, John L. Lewis, Elijah Hubbard, John Alsop, Sauel D. Hubbard, & George W. Stanley, Record Group 2 (General Assembly Papers), Box 6, Folder 10, Document 1, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT.
[333] Starr was not an original trustee named by the Connecticut legislature, but his name appears among the trustees on a 12 June 1828 broadside, Schools Collection, Middlesex County Historical Society, Middletown, CT.
[334] Frank F. Starr Collection, Starr Family Papers, Middlesex County Historical Society, Middletown, CT contains about 20 letters total, primarily dated between 1845 and 1853, between Partridge and E.W.N. Starr.
[335] List of Notes and Subscriptions Recd. by the Commt. for Building the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy at Middletown Connecticut, September 1824, Schools Collection, Middlesex County Historical Society.
[336] Resolution in Response to the Petition of the Citizens of New Haven, Record Group 2, Box 4, Folder 5, Document 22A, Connecticut State Library.

lend their aid."[337] Smith had himself been involved in the railroad company, and planned to organize the military academy similarly "in the way of a joint Company."[338]

In urban areas especially, Partridge found a base of support in local military leaders who were particularly interested in Partridge's plans to offer instruction to militia companies through the academies. The railroad investors in Baltimore received an extra boost with an endorsement from John Shaw Smith, the commander of the local militia, who promised to send his sons to the academy, and lauded military education as "the happiest improvement of modern times," as it "introduces into the Schools a decorum & order, which under the old System, it is so difficult to maintain."[339] James Smith particularly welcomed this support, as it helped the enterprise receive greater attention and support from the state legislature.[340] John Shaw Smith's endorsement made James Smith believe he could garner even more prestigious political endorsements, and he advocated soliciting noted Maryland patriot Charles Carroll for support.[341]

In New York City, the establishment of the Harlem Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy relied extensively on the exertions of a city militia company, the Tompkins Blues. In fact, the commander of the Blues, William Tompkins, first created the company upon seeing Partridge's cadets march through New York City, when he was impressed by "the immense contrast in the appearance, between your corps of cadets and

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[337] James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 17 March 1827 and 9 February 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.
[338] James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 5 January 1828, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[339] John Shaw Smith to Samuel Ewing, John M. Wyse, Charles Byron, Robert Riddell, and James Smith, Montebello, 12 May 1827, copied in James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 21 June 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.
[340] James Smith to Alden Partridge, 8 April 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.
[341] James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 21 June 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.

our city troops, [and] their infinite superiority in point of discipline."[342] One member of the Blues, Noel Blanche, became one of the most prominent promoters of the school in New York, working primarily to obtain subscribers and investors in the plan as well as assisting in the process of receiving incorporation from the state legislature.[343] The diversity of local leaders and factions who worked to establish a military academy testifies to the ways that these institutions merged martial, economic, and civic ambitions.

These interests all understood military education as particularly valuable in their communities, although for reasons that were widely divergent. Indeed, the power of Partridge's system of military education may have been its ability to satisfy such a wide range of interests simultaneously. Interested parties in different communities expressed their appreciation for the academy's "great public utility" as a school where "many things are taught, different from our collegiate course of studies, and all calculated to quallify and prepair young gentlemen, for the useful and active employments of life." These local boosters and developers turned to a military academy because a more traditional system of education would not meet their needs. Other schools only prepared young men "for some one of the three learned professions," whereas a military academy's emphasis on discipline and drill guaranteed "that the health of the Students will be promoted, due subordination maintained, and thus, the students will always be prepaired for a more vigorous application to their books."[344]

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[342] William Tompkins to Alden Partridge, New York, 28 November 1826, Box 6, AP-NUSC.
[343] Noel Blanche to Alden Partridge, New York, 2 September 1828, 21 December 1828, and from Albany, 11 January 1829, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[344] "William H. Jones and others Memorial, May 1824," Record Group 2, Box 4, Folder 5, Document 21A, 1-2, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT.

Some thought that military education, being superior to all other forms of education, would also more effectively make their communities into intellectual and cultural centers of their regions. Reverend G.T. Chapman of Lexington, Kentucky, solicited Partridge's aid in incorporating a military program into Transylvania University, in the belief that a military program at the school could cause student enrollments to rise as high as four hundred. Chapman dreamed that, with Partridge's influence, Lexington might become the "great & flourishing literary imporium" of the Mississippi River valley.[345] Others latched onto military education as the cornerstone of the nation's global power. One supporter of Jefferson College in Natchez, Mississippi, which Partridge's former cadet John Holbrook had converted to a military curriculum, reportedly justified the school to the Mississippi legislature with an appeal to the necessity of universal military training. "The contest which commenced in Europe with the first French revolution is not terminated," he said. "Let America be prepared for the *dreadful struggle* that will soon ensue in the old world. Not by mercenary standing armies, but by presenting an impregnable rampart of two millions of freemen, armed, equipped and sufficiently instructed in military tactics as to be enabled to discharge efficiently their duties as soldiers. Do this, and our liberties are safe, though a world should rise in arms against us."[346]

Some supporters perceived the orderly behavior that the academies inculcated in local youth as the most immediate advantage of the academy. A Middletown newspaper praised the military academy's "decided advantage over all other Colleges" in that "the

[345] G.T. Chapman to Alden Partridge, 5 April 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.
[346] "A friend of useful education," "To the editor of the Enquirer," *Vermont Enquirer* (Norwich), 10 March 1831. Box 14, AP-NUSC.

police is…more rigid – there is better order, and the exercise is conducive to health…In short, the whole system is complete, and only requires to be seen to be admired."[347] In Oxford, North Carolina, a local Board of Visitors at the recently opened academy remarked on "the general demeanor of the Cadets, as marked by a rigid observance of order and regularity, almost without a parallel in Academical Institutions." The Board of Visitors noted that the military academy brought a peaceful stability to the community, as the students lived harmoniously amongst themselves and the rest of the town and brought no "dissipation or any other species of immorality."[348] These particular conceptions of the academy's social value were firmly rooted in the academy's military character.

More often, however, local proponents of military education believed that the primary advantage of the school was the economic prosperity it would bring. Petitioners in New Haven, Connecticut, for instance, believed that a military academy was uniquely capable of preparing the citizens of this burgeoning industrial center for profitable engagement in an international economy. The curriculum's abandonment of the classics and emphasis on Spanish and French language instruction appealed to them as means to "educate the rising generations to transact business easily and safely, with our neighbours in the independent States of South America and of Mexico."[349] The Connecticut General

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[347] "Military Academy at Norwich. Extract of a Letter to the Editor, from a gentleman, dated Hartford, Aug. 21st, 1824." *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), 1 September 1824.

[348] Wm. Robards, Jos. H. Bryan, Wm. V. Taylor, Wm. M. Sneed, Jas. Young, R. B. Gilliam, "North Carolina Literary, Scientific, & Military Institution, Visitors' Report," Pamphlets Collection, Vermont Historical Society, Barre VT.

[349] "William H. Jones and others Memorial, May 1824," Record Group 2, Box 4, Folder 5, Document 21A, 1-2, Connecticut State Library.

Assembly, in granting incorporation to the New Haven academy, referred to "the great advantages which would accrue to this State, as well as to the interest of literature and the military art" in justification.[350]

These economic ambitions did not necessarily depend upon a military academy above all other possible options, although in some cases proponents explicitly connected their prospects for growth to militaristic trends. The town of Sackets Harbor, New York, on Lake Ontario, provides an interesting case in point. Sackets Harbor was a small and struggling border town that was already scarred by war, having been a center of major combat during the War of 1812. Since the war, the U.S. military had maintained a garrison at this key strategic point but began withdrawing in 1827. Some citizens then turned to Partridge and encouraged him to convert the vacated cantonment and barracks into an academy. Extolling the merits of the location, Jacob W. Brewster mentioned its healthfulness, low cost of living, and proximity to Canada, where Brewster suspected there were many more who might send their sons to Partridge for an education. The region's wartime past additionally ensured that "the taste & professions of the people in this part of the country" would be "more inclined to favour such & just an institution as yours." "This western country I have not a doubt would furnish you a school, a more numerous school than any you have ever had," he crowed. Brewster also knew, however, that a military academy would be equally advantageous to the town. Indeed, a military presence was necessary to keep the town afloat. "Sackets harbour, the Town is relatively poor," he explained, and "what there is of it was built by the war & withdrawing the

[350] Resolution in Response to the Petition of the Citizens of New Haven, Record Group 2, Box 4, Folder 5, Document 22A, Connecticut State Library.

troops from here cut of[f] a considerable sourse of mercantile profit & left many poor." Though he was optimistic that agriculture and the wool industry could sustain the town, he also clearly understood the immense economic benefits of the military's presence. With that presence dwindling, he naturally looked to Partridge as its best replacement.[351]

Partridge, alas, did not go to Sackets Harbor, but did send a former pupil to Buffalo, New York, to build a new academy there. Citizens of Buffalo likewise saw a military academy as uniquely advantageous. Previously, a newspaper editor, state senator, and state assemblyman from Buffalo had written to Partridge regarding how a military academy might "bestow its benefits upon the rising population around us."[352] The citizens of Buffalo tried first with a high school, but with "abortive result…conclusive *against* the system."[353] As they asked Partridge to "secure to their children the blessing which they are well aware must flow from your valuable plan of Education," these boosters envisioned the school and its military curriculum as an integral component of the city's ongoing (and hopefully continuing) economic boom.[354]

Opinion in western New York was not unanimous on the economic benefits of a military academy, however. Some critics of a proposed academy in Rochester charged

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[351] Jacob W. Brewster to Alden Partridge, Sackets Harbor, 17 December 1827, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[352] R.W. Haskins, Sam D. Willison, and David Burke to Alden Partridge, Albany, 15 October 1827, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[353] R.W. Haskins to Alden Partridge, Buffalo, 19 May 1829, Box 7, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.
[354] R.W. Haskins, M.A. Audrey, and R.B. Heacock to Alden Partridge, Buffalo, 30 November 1827, Box 7, AP-NUSC. These letters from 1827 informed Partridge of their interest in a military academy; however, the citizens of Buffalo voted to instead establish a high school. The failure of this high school by 1829 allowed Haskins to petition again for a military academy.

that military education was frivolous and provided no sure means of local improvement, economic or otherwise. One newspaper bemoaned "the extension of the *mania*, so we must call it, for military schools." "We are well-wishers, most certainly, to the prosperity of Rochester," this editorial concluded, "but we a good deal doubt whether it would be advanced by turning their youth into make-believe soldiers, and inspiring them with the notion that bullet buttons and a bayonet, can usefully supply the place of sound learning, or turning their young heads with the pretension, pomp, and parade of arms, instead of filling them with lessons of wisdom, and precepts of humility."[355] Competing visions of progress and improvement that saw no benefits from military instruction presented the largest obstacle to Partridge's national ambitions.

As skepticism and doubt regarding the ultimate value of military education became more prevalent, Partridge found his schools failing in some locations. The experiences of Partridge's former cadet, Daniel Bingham, in Oxford, North Carolina, illustrate how quickly fortunes could be reversed. Upon arriving in Oxford, Bingham met with such local enthusiasm that he anticipated an initial enrollment of one hundred cadets, though he warned Partridge that "one or two" men of prominence were "rather prejudiced" against the project.[356] At the beginning of 1830, Bingham was shocked to find that only thirty-one students had arrived at the academy. This low enrollment was seemingly due to the fact that some men who planned to send their sons had changed their minds. "I am induced to think there is a regularly formed opposition against us; I

[355] "Military Schools," *New York American*, 25 September 1827; copy in Box 14, AP-NUSC.
[356] D.H. Bingham to Alden Partridge, Oxford, 5 October 1829, Box 7, AP-NUSC.

am told that there are some in this place, who make it a point to speak against the school on every occasion," Bingham confessed with dismay.

Yet the shift in popular attitudes toward the school was easy enough to track. Bingham reported that public complaints about Partridge's past court-martial and discharge had recently arisen. More devastatingly, he said, "a paragraph has been going the rounds in the newspapers headed 'Quackery,' emanating from Andover Mass, which has been seized upon."[357] Three months later, Bingham encountered more widespread and virulent opposition, and reported to Partridge on "most ungenerous and detestably mean attacks" upon the institution from the town of Hillsboro.[358] By spring 1831, Bingham's school had failed. He left Oxford "completely prostrated" fiscally and lamenting that "such fine prospects" could collapse so quickly. The root of his failure, in his estimation, was "a certain class in this community who have left no means untried to tramel our operations." This class was the clergy. "So strong is the opposition of the Presbyterians and so active and well timed are they in their operations," he wrote, that he despaired of ever achieving success in North Carolina.[359] Other friends of Partridge who attempted to establish a school in Fayetteville, North Carolina, confirmed Bingham's suspicions of religious opposition, writing of "the *prejudices* of the '*clergy* and *others* under the influence of religious bigotry.'"[360]

The roots of clerical opposition were complex. Clergy had their own economic and political aspirations that placed them at odds with Partridge. In Baltimore, James

[357] D.H. Bingham to Alden Partridge, Oxford, 29 January 1830, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[358] D.H. Bingham to Alden Partridge, Oxford, 17 March 1830, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[359] D.H. Bingham to Alden Partridge, Louisburg, 13 April 1831, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[360] Truman B. Ransom to Alden Partridge, Middletown, 15 March 1830, Box 7, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.

Smith informed Partridge that "the clergy…are too generally opposed to your Plan, *because it tends to take the Education of our youth out of their hands* – while it is very plain to be seen, they are striving to secure a monopoly of the whole of this most important business *to themselves*."[361] Speaking of his difficulties and low enrollments at an academy in New Jersey, Truman Ransom lamented that "the two academies in our immediate neighborhood will always enjoy a considerable part of the patronage in this vacinity because they are closely connected with the *reverend clergy* – the prevailing religion 'and the good old ways' which last notion, one half of the inhabitants are as firmly *tied*, as they could be pysically fastened to a ball and chain."[362] Partridge and his followers understood themselves to be engaged in a struggle between themselves and the church over the power to guide the future destinies of the nation.

More genuine moral concerns also played a significant role, however. James Smith in Baltimore wrote "there are many among us who have taken up erroneous notions about it & view your whole system as *military* & tending to war – others are impress'd with the idea that the whole scheme is to make money out of the School."[363] The Baltimore opposition, then, seemed to suspect Partridge of not only inciting violence but also seeking to profit from it. They suspected him, in short, of warmongering. Partridge's agent in New York City, Charles Henry Hall, strategically omitted the word "military" from the academy's name when he published notices in local newspapers and

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[361] James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 17 December 1828, Reel 2, Alden Partridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter APMSS-LoC); emphasis original.
[362] Truman B. Ransom to Alden Partridge, Orange, 14 June 1829, Box 7, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.
[363] James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 17 December 1828, Reel 2, AP-LOC; emphasis original.

petitioned for a charter from the state, listing it merely as "a 'Literary and scientific School' to be located at Harlem." Hall explained to Partridge, "it was thought advisable to leave out the term 'Military' owing to the prejudice established by a certain portion of the community touching it."[364] Hall urged Partridge to meet personally with a number of interested subscribers, "that suitable explanations may be made to do away the *terrible Bugbear of Military rule*."[365] Anti-war and anti-military ideas presented a significant problem for Partridge as they questioned not only the material value of his institutions but the propriety of his ideals as well.

Clerical opposition accounted for Partridge's biggest failure in 1828, when the citizens of Middletown withdrew their support and turned the campus and buildings over to an association of Methodists. This association established Wesleyan University on the site of what had once been the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy. The exact reasons for this removal after only three years are unclear, although Partridge's departure gave rise to acrimonious legal disputes between himself and the Trustees over control of the school's property, buildings, and equipment. Evidently, some of the original trustees simply lost interest in Partridge's system in favor of other systems. In 1828, Thomas Mather and Samuel Hubbard again petitioned the Connecticut legislature to establish a school in Middletown "conducted on what is usually termed the

[364] Charles Henry Hall to Alden Partridge, New York, 31 January 1828, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[365] Charles Henry Hall to Alden Partridge, New York, 26 March 1828, Box 7, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.

Lancasterian System of Education," this school to be named "The Middletown Monitorial School."[366]

Although it is likely that Mather and Hubbard were simply boosters of multiple forms of education in the town, this 1828 petition suggests that perhaps the local educational and political leaders of Middletown had lost confidence that Partridge's unique system of education would continue to drive economic and social improvement in Middletown and had begun to turn to consider alternatives. The Methodist transformation of the military academy into a sectarian seminary was particularly galling to Partridge and his associates. Truman Ransom complained that "the people of Middletown, after all their discussion upon the subject of "profit and loss," will doubtless find themselves in posession of a *negate* quantity in this same university – although this seems to be a gigantic effort of this 2d edition of Puritans."[367]

Clergy and religious organizations, much like John Quincy Adams, advanced a vision of democratic progress that was incompatible with Partridge's own ambitions for a martial democracy. As first president of Wesleyan University, Wilbur Fisk stood before the citizens of Middletown and explained these conflicting visions. Warning the people of Middletown to beware of false or misleading reformers (like, perhaps, Alden Partridge), he warned, "as antiquity is not always perfection, so innovation is not always

[366] Resolution of the General Assembly upon petition of Thomas Mather & Others of Middletown, 1828, Connecticut State Library, Record Group 2, Box 10, Folder 13, Document 44A.
[367] Truman Ransom to Alden Partridge, Orange, 9 August 1829, Box 7, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.

improvement."[368] Fisk grounded the new university in a vision of human relations and world affairs that was starkly at odds with Partridge's. Rather than emphasizing the need to prepare for war, Fisk spoke of "the common bond of interest, by which the different and distant nations are connected together," which promised to usher in a glorious new age in which "the improvements of one nation are becoming the property of all, and the strong national barriers that have so long retarded the progress of civilization and improvement are fast melting down."[369] The comparison of Fisk's principles to Partridge's suggests that much more was at stake than mere local political and economic interests in Partridge's removal from Middletown and the subsequent rise of the Methodists as the dominant educational interest in town. The transition replaced Partridge's martial vision of the political and moral destinies of the American people with another vision of global pacifism and harmony. Fisk seemingly suggested that American education must prepare the nation's citizens for a coming age of peace.

The choice between morality and prosperity was not so clear, though, and the people of Middletown experienced more ambivalence about whether to pin their hopes for the future on the red or the black. Returning to Middletown in 1830, Truman Ransom told Partridge that the people there were "[beginning] to entertain some *doubts* about the success of the *Methodists*, and their faces light into *smiles* when they tell of the *money* that used to be brought into town when *you* were here."[370] He was "convinced that if [the

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[368] Wilbur Fisk, *The Science of Education: An Inaugural Address Delivered at the Opening of the Wesleyan University , in Middletown, Connecticut, September 21, 1831* (New York: M'Elrath and Bangs, 1832), 3.
[369] Ibid., 5.
[370] Truman Ransom to Alden Partridge, Middletown, 2 March 1830, Reel 2, AP-LoC; emphasis original.

people of Middletown] thought you could be prevailed on to come *back*, they would gladly abandon the Methodists."[371] The people of Middletown were likely not alone in being stuck between two conflicting visions of national destiny.

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Alden Partridge's efforts to spread his educational system nationally in the late 1820s reveal that popular support for military institutions was a product of multiple moral, political, and economic decisions and depended upon a range of local contingencies. No clear regional patterns emerge. Though martial enthusiasm and support for military academies are often assumed to have been distinct characteristics of the Southern slaveholding class, Partridge's experiences complicate this picture.[372] The demands and interests of the slave society in fact had an ambivalent impact on Partridge's success. Fear of slave rebellion, for example, made it easier for Partridge to receive a loan of weapons from state governments, but also made locals wary of any uncontrolled or unregulated military power. In Fayetteville, North Carolina, Truman Ransom reported that "'*wonderful trouble'* has prevailed here among some weak headed men, and women, for fear of an insurrection of the blacks." As a result, a grant of arms from the state arsenal to Ransom's recently-established academy "came forward cloaked under a

[371] Truman Ransom to Alden Partridge, Middletown, 15 March 1830, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[372] On Southern militarism, see John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 129-170 on education and military academies especially; Michael C.C. Adams, *Our Masters the Rebels: A Speculation on Military Failure in the East, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 26-47; Jennifer R. Green, *Military Education and the Emerging Middle Class in the Old South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) considers military academies to be a distinctly Southern phenomenon, although she argues against Franklin that they "militarized" the region.

resolution to distribute arms to the *Patrol authorities* of the several *Towns* to guard against *insurrection* &c."[373]

On the other hand, a student company formed briefly under Partridge's guidance and instruction at the University of Virginia encountered resistance from school authorities for much the same reason. The students received a grant of arms from the state, and planned to stockpile their arms in a vacant room on campus. Upon petition for such privileges, however, the chairman of the faculty informed the cadets "that we could not be permitted to keep arms in any vacant room in a slave holding State," despite the company's plans to "procure the Janitor or some prudent man to keep arms in a room and secure them by lock & key."[374] The interests of a slave-holding elite did not fall decisively on Partridge's side at this time. If there was indeed a "militant South," it was not an inherent quality of slave society but rather a politically driven construction of the later antebellum period.[375]

Partridge's career in the South did, however, show some early hints that military education might become a more particular interest of Southerners in later years. Some of Partridge's correspondents urged that he would have more success in the South than in the North. John Holbrook, who had taken control of Mississippi's Jefferson College and turned it into a military school, warned Partridge that it was "becoming more and more

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[373] Truman B. Ransom to Alden Partridge, 8 January 1831, Box 7, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.
[374] Pearce L. Lewis, H. Boteler, and T. Morris to Alden Partridge, University of Virginia, 5 December 1835, Reel 2, AP-LOC.
[375] Stephanie McCurry suggests that militarism was not a natural outgrowth of Southern slaveholding culture but a particular discourse mobilized by a political elite to advance an antidemocratic secessionist agenda in the early 1860s. *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010),

unpopular for young men to go to the North for their Education." "I almost wish for your sake & that of the System you & your fine buildings were in a more Southern Latitude," he remarked.[376] Similarly, a former speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates commented that Baltimore would be "much more desirable than any other farther North or East for your chief School or Head Quarters," as "Southern boys would be better pleased if they came not far beyond the Limits of the Slave holding States to which they are naturally most attached."[377] As Partridge's experiences from New York to North Carolina reveal, however, southerners in the 1820s and early 1830s showed no preponderance of enthusiasm for Partridge's ideals, nor did northerners monopolize resistance to the principles of military education.

Defeated in Middletown, and his ambitions obstructed in other locales, Partridge returned once again to Norwich. In 1834, the Vermont legislature incorporated the academy as Norwich University. Yet when Alden Partridge re-established the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy, he did so with expanded principles and a clearer sense of purpose that took into account the opposition he had encountered across the nation from clergy and moral opponents to military education. In a synopsis advertising the new university, Partridge elaborated his goals and motivations much more strongly. The new synopsis, for one, bolstered Partridge's claims about the necessity of military instruction. In addition to emphasizing the constitutional imperative that the people themselves take responsibility for national defense, Partridge now emphasized "the due cultivation of the *military virtues*," which he deemed "the aegis of our civil and

[376] John Holbrook to Alden Partridge, Jefferson College, 13 February 1831, Box 7, AP-NUSC.
[377] James Smith to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 5 June 1827, Box 6, AP-NUSC.

political liberty."[378] The new synopsis outlined a more expanded curriculum that added to Partridge's earlier thoughts on the issue of useful education. This new curriculum included civil engineering, mathematics, and a program of "*Social Economy* and *Political Administration*," through which Partridge aimed to "instruct our youth in the science of government generally" so as to "prepare young men for the correct discharge of their public duties as legislators."[379]

Norwich University was a product of Partridge's martial ambitions merging with a range of local interests in intellectual improvement and economic growth. One prospective trustee wrote, "I am satisfied it is intended, that it shall be in *fact* as well as in *name* an institution which will admit & encourage the finest inquiry. I trust too that its course of instruction will be adapted to the existing wants of the community. We want an institution which will educate young men for country & mankind & shall not confine itself to the instruction required for the exercise of the professions only."[380] A petition from the citizens of Norwich to the Vermont Assembly in support of incorporation included one hundred twelve signatures.[381] A similar petition from the citizens of Strafford, Vermont, to the Vermont Assembly included sixty-five signatures, one of

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[378] "Norwich University," 3, Pamphlets collection, Vermont Historical Society; emphasis original.
[379] Ibid., 5; emphasis original.
[380] Samuel Allison to Alden Partridge, Northfield, Massachusetts, 12 August 1834, Box 8, AP-NUSC; emphasis original.
[381] Petition of John Wright and Others for the Incorporation of a Literary Institution at Norwich, 16 October 1834, MsVtSP 64:42; According to Goddard and Partridge, the total population of Norwich in 1830 was 2316, *History of Norwich Vermont*, 128.

which was Justin Morrill, future U.S. senator and architect of the 1862 act of Congress that created a system of land-grant colleges and universities across the nation.[382]

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Partridge's original efforts to implement a martial democracy and strengthen the nation through an educational system that sought to make every citizen a soldier thus became entangled with larger collective efforts for political, social, and economic change in the antebellum United States. After 1834, Partridge pursued other ambitions, including a political career, that distracted him from superintendence of the university, which he resigned in 1845. He began a political career in the Vermont Assembly, wrote extensively on military affairs, became a prominent advocate of militia reform, and proposed a plan to invade and annex Canada. As a military educator and public figure, Partridge was only one representative of a larger martial culture that sought to keep the ideal of the citizen-soldier alive in the antebellum period. His efforts at establishing military academies throughout the nation in the 1820s and 1830s were simply localized manifestations of broader trends and conflicts. The difficulties Partridge encountered must therefore be understood in the larger context of antebellum changes in political, cultural, and military affairs. His failures, indeed, may merely be indicative of larger antebellum trends in which more and more citizens and political leaders abandoned the idea that every citizen should be a soldier and accordingly turned to an army of West Point-trained officers as the only legitimate form of military power.

[382] Petition of Daniel Cobb & Others for the Incorporation of a Literary Institution at Norwich, 16 October 1834, MsVtSP 64:48.

# 5.

## Empires, Expansion, and the Regular Army, 1815-1848

As the respective fates of the U.S. Military Academy and Partridge's military academies reflect, the regular army found greater official acceptance and political legitimacy in the antebellum period while the militia of citizen-soldiers struggled to overcome popular and official indifference, if not outright hostility. West Point's success and Alden Partridge's failures were effects, but not causes, of these trends. Broader shifts in military policy and ideology had their origins in responses to the reconfigurations of global power and international relations that occurred after 1815. Not coincidentally, the increased importance of the regular army relative to the militia happened at the same time that a nascent American empire pushed its borders northward, southward, and westward on the North American continent, competing for land and resources with a host of other nations and empires – some new, some old – with equally ambitious agendas.[383]

After 1815, efforts to define the United States as both a democracy among empires and a democracy with an empire provoked new ways of thinking about the size, strength, and character of the military establishment. Imperial growth and competition thus created the conditions within which the ideological foundations of military professionalism emerged and a professional officer class began to form. Some federal

[383] My sketch here of international relations on the North American continent in the early 19th century is drawn from Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the North American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

policy-makers and military leaders came to believe that the citizens themselves could no longer sufficiently meet the nation's defense needs or advance the nation's interests at its borders. Abandoning their faith in the militia, they articulated new plans for a professional military establishment that they believed would more effectively provide for the nation's defense and advance important national interests. Proponents of this professional military establishment ultimately situated their ambitions within a vision of the United States' global destiny in which a specialized and professionalized military establishment was a necessity. Some citizen activists, however, advanced a competing understanding of global affairs that asserted that pacifism was the only suitable international stance for a democratic United States. Between these two ideological camps, proponents of the militia of citizen-soldiers remained a vocal but increasingly marginal interest in national politics. The few times this faction became prominent were the exceptions that proved the rule.

The politics of the antebellum military were thus marked by three competing visions of power: professional, pacifist, and populist. In the 1830s and 1840s, proponents of these ideas turned their attention to the nation's borders, where they sought to guide the process of national expansion. The ways that pacifists, professionals, and militia proponents contested the nature of American expansion shaped three important military engagements in the antebellum period: the second Seminole War in Florida (1835-1842), a crisis on the Canadian border (1837-1842), and a much longer crisis in the southwest that ultimately erupted into the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). At the end of this era of conflict, the regular army had secured much greater legitimacy from civic and economic elites whose interests depended upon the power and stability that only regulars

provided. The idea that the nation should look to its citizens in order to realize its continental and global ambitions became an increasingly problematic proposition.

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Post-War of 1812 proposals for military reform, such as William Henry Harrison's plan for comprehensive militia education and James Monroe's designs for the improvement of the U.S. Military Academy, originated in a generalized anxiety about American weakness relative to other nations. This insecurity provided the context for more ambitious plans to build and maintain a large regular army in the first five years of peace. Secretary of War James Monroe's 1815 recommendation of a peacetime military force of twenty thousand troops constituted only about a 40% reduction of the army from its wartime strength. This proposed reduction is remarkably minor compared to other peacetime demobilizations in American history. For example, Congress reduced the regular army by 95% after the Civil War and by 77% after World War II.[384] By another way of comparison, Monroe's standing peacetime army of twenty thousand would be about two-thirds the size of the British Army under the command of William Howe in February 1776.[385] Congress balked at such a large peacetime force, but authorized

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[384] Robert P. Wetteman, Jr., *Privilege Vs. Equality: Civil-Military Relations in the Jacksonian Era, 1815-1845* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2009), 12. The size of the army at the end of the War of 1812 was 33,424 troops. Peacetime reductions after the Civil War lowered the size of the army from 1,000,692 troops in 1865 to 57,072 troops in 1866. Peacetime reductions after World War II lowered the size of the army from 8,267,958 troops in 1945 to 1,891,011 troops in 1946. All numbers on the size of the Regular Army are taken from Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 596-600.

[385] By summer 1776 Howe had amassed British troops from England, Halifax, and South Carolina, along with 8000 Hessian mercenaries, to create a force of 32,000 in New York City. Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 340.

10,231 troops for 1816. An army of ten thousand soldiers was still about one-third the size of the wartime force raised at the peak of the War of 1812 and thus a significant regular army by nineteenth century American standards.[386]

As president, Monroe maintained and nurtured this peacetime army with the help of his Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun. In addition to supporting Sylvanus Thayer's reforms at West Point, Calhoun in 1818 expanded the army's staff (which Jefferson and Madison had long neglected) and centralized army administration under department heads located in Washington.[387] Numerical strength would complement this increased administrative efficiency. Congressionally authorized troop levels for the peacetime army hovered above eight thousand until 1820, when the army again grew to over ten thousand. This growth ended the next year when Congress drastically reduced the size of the peacetime establishment at 5,773 troops. As a percentage of the population, Monroe's army was one of the largest peacetime forces of the nineteenth century before the 1821 contraction. The army did not exceed its 1820 level during peacetime until the first three years of Reconstruction (1865-1868), when military occupation of the former Confederacy demanded a larger peacetime force, and not again after that until after the Spanish-American War, when the military occupation of the Philippines likewise required retention of a comparatively large peacetime force. In 1820, Monroe and Calhoun attempted, strictly out of concerns for preparedness, a degree of military buildup more typically adopted in American history for occupying purposes (see table 1). [388]

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[386] Peak size of the Regular Army was 38,186 troops in 1814.
[387] Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 23-4.
[388] To calculate this number as percentage of population, I used yearly population estimates from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States,*

Table 1: Size of the US Army, 1814-1900

| Year | Total | % of Pop. |
|---|---|---|
| 1814 | 38186 | 0.467 |
| 1815 | 33424 | 0.397 |
| 1816 | 10231 | 0.118 |
| 1817 | 8446 | 0.095 |
| 1818 | 8155 | 0.089 |
| 1819 | 8506 | 0.091 |
| 1820 | 10554 | 0.1097 |
| 1821 | 5773 | 0.058 |
| 1830 | 6122 | 0.047 |
| 1840 | 12330 | 0.072 |
| 1850 | 10929 | 0.047 |
| 1860 | 16215 | 0.051 |
| 1866 | 57072 | 0.156 |
| 1870 | 37240 | 0.093 |
| 1880 | 26594 | 0.053 |
| 1890 | 27373 | 0.043 |
| 1900 | 101713 | 0.134 |

Congress's reasons for reducing the size of the army in 1821 were both ideological and pragmatic, but fiscal concerns following the Panic of 1819 trumped the anti-army suspicions that some Congressmen entertained. Congressional cuts to the army, in fact, originated in a recommendation of Treasury Secretary William Crawford that new revenues or new limits on spending would be necessary to overcome a five million dollar budget deficit.[389] When Virginia Representative John Floyd introduced a resolution for a reduction of the Army to six thousand troops, he confessed that "he had no feeling hostile to the Army or Navy, but was actuated by a desire alone to reduce the expenditures of the nation."[390] The size of the army did provoke traditionally

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*Colonial Times to 1970* (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1989), Series A 6-8.

[389] Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 31; Wetteman speculates that Crawford may have specifically targeted the army for cuts because of a rivalry with Andrew Jackson.

[390] Remarks of John Floyd, 29 April 1820, *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* 16th Congress, 1st Session, II: 2145.

antimilitarist warnings about the dangers of a standing army. Senator Mahlon Dickerson (who later served as Secretary of the Navy under Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren) complained that friends of the army had attempted to bring about a "revolution in the public mind, upon the subject of standing armies in time of peace," so that "our liberties after a war or two more are to be controlled by our standing armies."[391] Representative Newton Cannon of Tennessee asserted his continued ideological preference for the militia, arguing "it is to the people composing the Government that you are to look in time of danger… and, so long as you retain this Government in its original purity, just so long will it be supported and defended by the people."[392] Yet these grand ideological pronouncements were subordinate to immediate fiscal concerns. Even Mahlon Dickerson prefaced his comments on military despotism with an acknowledgement that "retrenchment is the object."[393] The 1821 reduction of the military certainly provided an outlet for but did not originate in any particularly strong anti-militarist ideology.

John C. Calhoun did not give up on building a strong military establishment. For him, the reduction in the size of the army simply provoked a different way of thinking about and pursuing military power that emphasized increased professionalism and sophistication within the army as a way to compensate for its reduced numbers. In 1820, Congress requested a plan for the army's reduction and re-organization from Calhoun.

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[391] Remarks of Mahlon Dickerson, 22 February 1821, *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* 16th Congress 2nd Session, 367.
[392] Remarks of Newton Cannon, 8 March 1820, *The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* 16th Congress, 1st Session, II: 1603.
[393] Remarks of Mahlon Dickerson, 22 February 1821, *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States*, 16th Congress, 2nd Session, 367.

He responded with a proposal for a "skeletal army" – a peacetime army that retained a full staff (quartermaster, paymaster, medical department, and military academy, along with "general staff" such as inspectors, aids-de-camp, and a judge-advocate general) and a full number of fully officered regiments and battalions. Under this system, as Calhoun explained, "the only difference…between the peace and the war formation of the army ought to be in the increased magnitude of the latter."[394] In the event of war, the army need only enlist a large number of rank-and-file soldiers and assign them to well-supplied regiments led by experienced officers who had preserved among themselves a sophisticated knowledge of the arts and sciences of warfare. Response to new threats would be immediate and would spare the nation much of the fumbling, embarrassment, and initial heavy losses that had characterized the War of 1812.

Most significantly, this plan abandoned all reliance on the militia as a source of martial strength. Calhoun denied that the militia could ever significantly contribute to the nation's military power. Faced with "a powerful and skilful enemy," Calhoun asserted, "not all the zeal, courage, and patriotism of our militia, unsupported by regularly trained and disciplined troops, can avert them."[395] The militia could, under proper guidance, be reasonably expected to garrison defensive works, but "to rely on them beyond this, to suppose our militia capable of meeting in the open field the regular troops of Europe, would be to resist the most obvious truths, and the whole of our experience as a nation." The threat of war with the European powers required more skill than any common citizen could provide, as "genius without much experience…cannot at once organize and

[394] "Reduction of the Army," 12 December 1820, *American State Papers* Class V (Military Affairs) (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-61) (hereafter *ASP:MA*), II: 189.
[395] Ibid.

discipline an army and give it that military tone and habit which only, in the midst of immediate danger, can enable it to perform the most complex evolutions with precision and promptitude."[396] Calhoun's proposals for the military establishment replaced popular martial enthusiasm and civic obligation with official authority, discipline, and obedience to hierarchy, which he believed would provide a more reliable basis of national strength.

The central elements of Calhoun's ideal army were officer expertise, efficient administration, and decreased reliance on the militia as the sources of martial strength. With regard to these elements, the antebellum army after 1821 closely matched Calhoun's designs for it. Though Congress did cut or consolidate several regiments, leaving something less than a full skeleton for the military, it also created the new administrative position of the commanding general, headquartered in Washington, D.C. and responsible for centralizing army bureaucracy.[397] The reduction actually increased the proportion of officers within the army, from 6.59% in 1820 to 9.48% in 1821. This number remained between 9% and 11% for all years but two (1823 and 1824) until 1836.[398] Calhoun's staff reorganizations survived up to the Civil War. The Quartermaster's Department – an office responsible for procurement of army supplies– flourished under the direction of Thomas S. Jesup, whose tenure lasted from 1818 to his death in 1860. In these years, the Department pioneered new methods of organizational efficiency, bureaucratic management, and enforcement of professional standards previously unseen not only in the military but in most areas of governmental and business

[396] Ibid., 188.
[397] Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 28-30.
[398] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 597.

practice.[399] Calhoun's plan provided a model that later (and more successful) military reformers followed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[400]

In the long term, the national military establishment exhibited significant stability. Congressional reductions like that in 1821 and a later one in 1837 were exceptional. Though the Congressionally authorized size of the regular army fluctuated over the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, drops in the size of the army were often offset by increases in the size of the navy. Thus, the size of the combined military establishment remained fairly stable between ten thousand and twenty thousand soldiers or sailors for much of the antebellum period.[401] In addition, the military establishment (army and navy combined) commanded an increasing amount of federal money. Military and naval spending combined accounted for between 72% and 94% of the federal budget for each year but one between 1808 and 1848. Army spending as a percentage of all federal expenditures actually rose gradually, from about 35% in 1822 to about 65% in 1837.[402] The

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[399] Mark R. Wilson, *The Business of Civil War: Military Mobilization and the State, 1861-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 39-41

[400] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 142-3; Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 27-8.

[401] Ira Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American Statebuilding," in *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*, Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 98. Figure 4.4 provides a graphical representation of army and navy forces from 1801 to 1861.

[402] Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity," 91 and figure 4.3 on page 93. The years in which military expenditures rose to 94% of total federal expenditures were the years of the Mexican-American War. While Katznelson's data certainly demonstrates that military affairs were much greater objects of federal attention than previously supposed, the degree to which these spending levels demonstrate a widespread commitment to Calhoun's principles is still unclear. Quite possibly, had Calhoun's reorganization been accepted, increased administrative efficiency within the military would have kept military expenditures much lower. A breakdown of yearly military spending – showing what

antebellum growth of the military establishment was thus more significant, and the federal government was more nurturing of the regular army, than has often been recognized.

Additionally, several important elements of a military profession developed within the officer corps in the antebellum period. In 1821, General Winfield Scott published his *General Regulations of the Army*, a set of rules and guidelines for all aspects of daily life and daily management within the regular army. These regulations outlined a code of conduct and set of ethics for officers and were thus an important step toward the development of a professional culture.[403] The influence of graduates of the Military Academy within the officer corps steadily increased between the start of Thayer's tenure and 1860. In 1817, only 14.8% of the officer corps had been educated at West Point. By 1830, that number had risen to 63.8%. By the outbreak of the Civil War, 75.8% of all officers were West Point graduates.[404] The prevalence of a West Point education among the officers, along with adherence to the formal rules of army life outlined by General Scott, homogenized the outlook and values among the officers and created social solidarity among the corps, contributing to the corps' self-conscious definition as a professional class.[405]

The prevalence of a West Point education also meant that cultivation of advanced knowledge and skills was an increasingly important component of service for officers.

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portion went to the militia, federal arsenals, pensions, procurement, the Military Academy, Indian affairs, etc. – would be more illuminating.

[403] Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 52.

[404] William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 138.

[405] Ibid., 167-176.

Samuel Huntington labels the fifteen years before the Mexican-American War the "American Military Enlightenment" due to the period's "outpouring of military thought and writing which was, in many respects, unique in American history."[406] Periodicals and journals like the *Military and Naval Magazine*, the *Army and Navy Chronicle*, the *Military Magazine*, and even the *Southern Literary Messenger* provided significant outlets for works on military science and military theory. Dennis Hart Mahan, a professor at West Point, and Mahan's student Henry Wager Halleck published textbooks on military science that both demonstrated sophisticated understandings of European-style military science and asserted the virtues of military professionalism in ways similar to Calhoun's report to Congress.[407] Although a fully mature professional military establishment did not emerge in the United States until much later in the nineteenth century, internal changes in the regular army throughout the antebellum period moved the army significantly closer to one of Calhoun's ideals of an expert officer corps.

These trends in the army's development were nonetheless counter to the trends of democratization that transformed political life in the 1820s. A regular army in which a small group of Academy graduates monopolized positions of power was not a democratic military, and as chapter three pointed out, officers only made it through West Point by submitting to a profoundly antidemocratic culture of authority. The sources that provide access to the voices and interests of common soldiers reveal that they, much like the West Point cadets in 1819, understood the rules and procedures of the military establishment as

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[406] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 217.
[407] Ibid., 219-221. Mahan was the author of several textbooks used at West Point and was also the father of notable naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan (whose middle-namesake was Sylvanus Thayer).

contrary to democratic principles. Enlisted men complained of the conditions of army life as well as the rigid authority and rough treatment they encountered.[408] The army did not abolish corporal punishment until 1861. As happened at West Point, the army was increasingly governed by its own internal values that were far removed from those of civil society. Yet in their own way, military professionals tried to assert a liberal identity and argue that their profession, if not totally democratic, was also not completely unprincipled. Henry Halleck wrote that the proper cultivation of science and professionalism counteracted the potentially corrupting nature of warfare and preserved the officer's liberal integrity. "I do not shoot at my military enemy from hatred or revenge," he explained. "I fight against him because the paramount interests of my country cannot be secured without destroying the instrument by which they are assailed. I am prohibited from exercising any personal cruelty; and after the battle, or as soon as the enemy is rendered harmless, he is to be treated with kindness, and to be taken care of equally with the wounded friend."[409] Officers who constructed a new culture for the American military establishment thus also made some effort to reconcile the military profession with civil principles.

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Outside of military circles, an antebellum pacifist movement arose from a different response to the international situation after 1815 and offered a different

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[408] Paul W. Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 83-102; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 196-203.

[409] H. Wager Halleck *The Elements of Military Art and Science*, 3rd ed. (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1862), 12. Halleck published his first edition of *Elements* in 1846.

understanding of military power as well as a different conception of democratic principles. In 1815, a New York merchant named David Low Dodge founded the New York Peace Society. Later that year, a New England Unitarian minister named Noah Worcester established the Massachusetts Peace Society. By the 1820s, there were about a dozen such groups with memberships that primarily included ministers, merchants, and professionals in the Northeast. In 1828, William Ladd, a former sea captain from Maine, organized the American Peace Society, which coordinated local pacifist activities and published pacifist journals such as *The Harbinger of Peace* and *The Calumet*. Under Ladd's guidance, the pacifist cause developed ideas about the formation of an international mediating body – a "Congress of Nations" – that could enforce international law and prevent future wars. Membership in the peace cause overlapped significantly with membership in anti-slavery organizations, and the movement was sustained by much the same religious fervor that motivated many other antebellum reform movements.[410]

Pacifist arguments in favor of peace were both moral and political in nature. Dodge and Worcester worried particularly about the impact of war and violence on an individual's moral capacity. "Is it not a *fact*," Dodge wrote, "that those who are engaged in the spirit of war, either in the council or in the field, are not usually so *meek*, *lowly*, *kind* and *tender hearted* as other men? Does the soldier usually become kind and tender hearted while trained to the art of killing his fellow man, or more so when engaged in the heat of the battle, stepping forward over the wounded, and hearing the groans of the

[410] For a concise overview of the pacifist movement, see Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 112-120. For a full and detailed account of the movement's formation, see Peter Brock, *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 449-522.

expiring?"[411] Noah Worcester likewise argued that war hardened the heart of the individual soldier. "The depravity occasioned by war, is not confined to the army," he wrote. "Every species of vice gains ground in a nation during a war. And when a war is brought to a close, seldom, perhaps, does a community return to its former standard of morality."[412] Worcester extended his analysis beyond individual morals to argue that war was a more systemic evil. In his critique of the "effort and management" by which global rulers excited the passions of the people, whom he believed were naturally opposed to war, he suggested that all wars were the results of delusions mobilized by corrupt rulers to force the people to act against their interests. He thus implied that wars could end if the people themselves were truly able to take control of their governments.[413] William Ladd similarly placed war within an abusive oligarchic political system, "for, let whoever will get the glory and the plunder, the burthen of war is sure to fall, ultimately, on the labouring poor."[414] Over the antebellum period, pacifists critiqued the growth of military power as morally corrupting and argued that the pursuit of democracy depended upon the practice of pacifism.

An anxious response to international instability provided the other intellectual foundation of the pacifist movement. Pacifists perceived a world populated by ambitious despots, "deluded or unprincipled rulers," who too readily took up arms in the pursuit of

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[411] David Low Dodge, *War Inconsistent With the Religion of Jesus Christ* (New York: Gould & Van Pelt, 1815), 9. I am grateful to Patrick Blythe for sharing his thoughts and notes on David Low Dodge.
[412] Noah Worcester, *A Solemn Review of the Custom of War* (Cambridge: Hilliard & Metcalf, 1815), 13.
[413] Ibid., 6.
[414] William Ladd, *Essays on Peace & War: Which First Appeared in the Christian Mirror, Printed at Portland, Me.* (Portland: A. Shirley, 1827), 125.

national interests and "sacrifice[d] human beings to false notions of national honor."[415] The reign of Napoleon Bonaparte provided ample evidence of the dangers of such men. Reflecting on Napoleon's downfall, William Ellery Channing warned of a new form of despotism with "no pity for the weak, no justice for the innocent, no regard to plighted faith, no settled end but universal empire…sustained by armies disciplined to victory, hardened to cruelty, exulting in success, inflamed with the hope of rapine, and led by generals whose names were a host."[416] For these reasons, William Ladd turned to international law as the effective means of preventing war and proposed "to unite all the nations of Christendom…into one *league* of independent states, for the express purpose of settling all *external* national controversies."[417] The global mediating body would ultimately contribute to the universal spread of liberty.[418] Pacifism articulated a global vision of democracy in which peace, not preparedness, offered the strongest hopes for security and liberty.

Neither pacifists nor military professionals had much regard for a militia of citizen-soldiers. Military professionals disdained the militia for its lack of training, while pacifists considered the militia to be a morally corrupting influence on male citizens. The American Peace Society critiqued the legal obligation for all men to serve as "oppressive, unjust, unequal and worse than useless," citing also the "contaminating influence of military parades, and…the crime, misery and drunkenness of which they are

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[415] Worcester, *Solemn Review*, 7-8.
[416] William Ellery Channing, *Discourse, Delivered in Boston, at the Solemn Festival in Commemoration of the Goodness of God in Delivering the Christian World From Military Despotism, June 15, 1814* (Boston: Henry Channing, 1814), 6-7.
[417] William Ladd, *Essays on Peace & War*, 238-9.
[418] Ibid., 252.

productive."[419] William Ladd wrote that militia laws were "the most oppressive and needless burden, that the most tyrannical government ever saddled an obedient people with."[420] Other groups and interests brought similar complaints to bear against the militia throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Labor unions and working men's associations complained that the obligation to serve in the militia constituted an undue burden on the poor and laboring classes, as men lost a day of wages in mustering and faced significant fines if they failed to turn out. In New York, for example, the fine for nonattendance at the muster was twelve dollars.[421] New pursuits of a free and democratic society in the antebellum period rejected the obligation of all male citizens to serve in the military.

By the mid-1820s, some federal policy makers considered universal service, as mandated in the 1792 militia law, no longer practicable as a result of population growth and increasing social complexity. An 1826 report to Congress noted that the population of military-age men had tripled since the 1792 law, and it was simply neither possible nor desirable to appropriate federal funds to organize and train such a large mass of men.[422] Secretary of War James Barbour echoed this sentiment and asked Congress for a new system to be organized so that "at least a million and a half of our most useful citizens would be relieved from the unprofitable pageantry of military parade…constituting so

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[419] A Poor Man's Son, "The Militia System of New-York," *The Calumet* I, no. 2 (July-August 1831), 45.
[420] Ladd, *Essays on Peace & War*, 62-3.
[421] John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 82; Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston: Little Brown, 1968), 205.
[422] "Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Operations of the Military Establishment of the United States in 1826; and Report of the Board of Officers on the Organization of the Militia," 4 December 1826, *ASP:MA*, III: 388-9.

injurious a draft on their industry."[423] Barbour's recommendation also signified a different understanding of citizenship that merged civic virtue and economic productivity. He saw militia service as antithetical to good citizenship because it interfered with work. The true causes of the militia's decline were not solely apathy and disregard among male American citizens. Instead, changing ideas of democracy, equality, and democratic citizenship forced citizens and political leaders to abandon it not just as a military institution but as a political ideal as well.

The declining significance of the militia in the antebellum period did not mean that the militia became entirely irrelevant. Paeans to the virtues of the citizen-soldier persisted in Congressional debates and featured prominently in statements against West Point throughout the 1830s.[424] Notable militia proponents still invested their time and energies in militia reform in the hopes that they might revive the institution. Alden Partridge, for example, organized regional conventions, where assembled militiamen asserted their political importance by sending proposals for militia reform to the U.S. Congress or planning commemorations of Revolutionary-era battles.[425] These conventions garnered the attention of other interested militia reformers, and Partridge

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[423] Ibid., 331.
[424] See remarks of David Crockett, 25 February 1830, *Register of Debates in Congress* 21st Congress 1st Session, VI: 583; David W. Dickinson, *West Point Academy: Speech of Hon. David Dickinson (of Tennessee) in Opposition to the Military Academy, Delivered in the House of Representatives, on Saturday, June 14th, 1834* (Washington, D.C.: J.B. Carlisle, 1834), 7-8.
[425] "Report of Committee on the State of Militia, Etc," Box 3, Alden Partridge Papers, Norwich University Special Collections (hereafter AP-NUSC); *Memorial of a Committee of the Military Convention at Norwich, Vermont, Praying the Revision and Alteration of the System of the Military Defences of the United States*, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, VT. On a convention to celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill, see "Resolutions on a Well-Regulated Militia," Folder "Writings, Militia/National Defense," Box 3, AP-NUSC.

entertained larger ambitions to organize conventions in each state, united by corresponding committees, with plans to hold a "national Military Convocation" in New York City.[426] As in earlier decades, private initiatives preserved the spirit of the militia where federal law and policy failed to do so. The militia retained a presence in the politics of the military establishment, but it represented only one military interest competing against other voices and interests that were explicitly hostile to it.

Private efforts at militia reform in the antebellum period differed from their predecessors, though, in redefining militia service as a form of leisure for a small subculture of men. These units of self-selected enthusiasts became known as "volunteer companies" or "uniform companies." Some members of these companies still insisted that militia service was a civic duty that all white men should fulfill; however, many others joined purely for, as one observer put it, "the pleasure they would derive by being a soldier."[427] Uniform companies relocated the performance of military duty from the public space of the parade ground to the privatized spaces of clubrooms, magazines, lecture halls, and conventions. The range of articles and editorials in militia magazines like *The Citizen Soldier* (a Vermont journal associated with Alden Partridge), from comments on militia laws to a series of biographical sketches of Revolutionary War heroes, demonstrated the new concerns of the antebellum militia companies. "It shall be

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[426] Truman Ransom to Alden Partridge, Steam Boat Columbus N.(?) River, 9 October 1839, Box 8, AP-NUSC; regarding plans for other conventions, see F.W. Hopkins to Alden Partridge, Portland, 16 February 1839; Truman Ransom to Alden Partridge, La Salle [IL], 23 March 1839; Edmund Burke to Alden Partridge, Newport, NH, 5 April 1839; W. Scott Thurwood to Alden Partridge, Boonville, NY, 24 June 1839; Samuel K. George to Alden Partridge, Baltimore, 14 October 1841 and 8 February 1842; Box 8, AP-NUSC.

[427] Quoted in Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 220.

our endeavour," *The Citizen Soldier*'s first issue declared, "to make our paper the medium of communication for the *whole* Militia, and not only so, but a useful and interesting family paper, contaning always the current news of the day and such other matter as may interest general readers."[428] Public military lectures likewise covered a range of topics from military history to current events and social issues.[429] In these more typical practices, antebellum volunteer companies performed a new martial identity that blended politics and entertainment and redefined militia service as a mixture of obligation and entertainment.

Even as a small subculture, the militia could have a powerful impact on public attitudes about war. Pacifists worried that tying military service to entertainment could be a way to package morally corrupting militarist ideals in a more palatable form. David Low Dodge in 1815 warned of cultural practices, like the historical commemorations that volunteer companies sometimes staged, that taught children "of the glory of conquerors, until they are fired with the desire of being little champions in warfare." This martial culture degraded the souls and the intellectual autonomy of American youth no less than war itself, making it more likely that the nation would engage in warfare. "It cannot be expected that youth should enquire seriously into the spirit or fruits of war" when they had been constantly fed tales of glory and heroism, Dodge explained.[430] One minister at a meeting of the Massachusetts Peace Society complained, "every thing has conspired to interest the minds of the people in military achievements, and to supplant all that

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[428] "The Militia of the United States," *The Citizen Soldier* No. 1 (22 July 1840), 5.
[429] "Lectures on Education" and "All Attend!" Alden Partridge broadsides, Vermont Historical Society.
[430] Dodge, *War Inconsistent*, 22-3.

abhorrence of bloodshed and butchery, which nature, unsophisticated nature, instinctively feels." The culprits were "the tales of wonder, - the songs which hush our infantile restlessness, - smell of gunpowder. Books, ballads, - cap and feather, and wooden swords – Militia trainings, celebrations of the most trifling victories, - Monuments erected on battle-fields," all public cultural acts that "associate military display in all the circles and forms of civil society."[431] Pacifists argued that the militia could still hinder American democracy even if a majority of male citizens no longer participated in it. The size of the militia would not matter if it still kept a love of war strong in the popular mind.

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While the pacifists and other interests moved to suppress the militia, the Democratic Party worked at the federal level to contain or roll back the development of the professional officer corps throughout the 1830s. Some Democrats in Congress reacted to the growth of the corps by advocating the abolition of West Point, as chapter three explained. Andrew Jackson's Secretary of War John Eaton pursued a more modest plan to open up more paths for promotion from the lower ranks, thus creating an officer corps where fewer officers came directly from West Point and more officers rose based on merit.[432] The statistics on West Point's increasing monopolization on officer positions demonstrate that this proposal had minimal impact. For much of Andrew Jackson's presidency, Democrats in power struggled to curb the growth of an elite professional army.

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[431] "Massachusetts Peace Society," *The Calumet* I:11 (January-February 1833), 349-50.
[432] "On the Causes of Desertion of Soldiers in the Army and Suggestion of Remedies for Preventing the Same," 17 February 1830, *ASP:MA*, IV: 286.

Democratic anti-professionalism finally began to have some impact on the army by the late 1830s. Officer resignations spiked dramatically and anomalously in 1836 and 1837. This spike in resignations had various causes, including expanded economic opportunities outside the military (before the Panic of 1837) and officer protests against Jacksonian political hostility.[433] In 1837, military spending as a percentage of total federal spending began to decline significantly, as did the proportion of officers within the entire army. Meanwhile, Secretary of War Joel Poinsett made one last attempt at national militia reform. This expanding Democratic influence on the military establishment thus provided the context for two military crises of the late 1830s: the Second Seminole War and an outbreak of filibustering on the Canadian border. The former marked a defeat for the regular army, while the latter vindicated the army's importance to American foreign relations.

From 1835 to 1842, the U.S. Army struggled to implement the federal government's removal policy with regard to Florida's Seminole Indians and open Florida to the expansion of slave-based plantation agriculture. The Seminoles, inferior in numbers to the American troops, resisted removal with guerrilla tactics until the U.S. Army recognized the impossibility of total removal and unilaterally declared "victory" in 1842. The Seminole War reflected the ways in which professional and populist ideas of military power were brought to bear on the borderlands.

At the onset of hostilities with the Seminoles, leaders and residents of St. Augustine made clear demands for regulars and professionals. In a petition seeking aid

[433] Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*, 216-7 and Figure 11.1. Over 17% of officers resigned in 1836, the first and only year of the antebellum period when the number of officer resignations went above 10% of the total officer corps.

for "the poor families of this community belonging to the country, whose dwellings, provisions, and means of subsistence have been burnt, destroyed, or abandoned," these Floridians asked the federal government to both send both militia forces and officers of the U.S. Army to distribute "provisions for their relief from the public stores."[434] Other residents of the area issued their own demands for "an overwhelming force" that expressed a specific reliance on the professionalism of the regular army. One correspondent stated, "you cannot trust the militia, their term is too limited, and they have been panic struck," while a St. Augustine newspaper commended the "most determined bravery" and the "coolness and deliberation" of the officers and regular troops.[435] These pleas and petitions show local support for and confidence in the regular army as agents of stability and authority.

As the campaigns against the Seminoles continued with no clear signs of victory, the officers of the regular army used the conflict to consecrate regulars, and particularly officers, as paragons of service and sacrifice. A letter from a soldier complained of "the maledictions with which we are daily assailed by the press of the country," while asking for "the exercise of [a] little charity and forbearance" toward the army regulars, who were, after all, up against notorious guerrilla tactics.[436] The regulars in Florida, as one West Pointer remarked, "have evinced the highest military virtues. They have performed the severest labors and endured the bitterest privations. Patience, subordination, discipline, coolness, invincible courage and undaunted enterprise, have characterized

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[434] "Hostility of the Indians in Florida and Military Operations Against Them in 1836," 27 January 1836, *ASP:MA*, VI:19.
[435] Ibid., 20-21.
[436] "The Army in Florida," *Daily National Intelligencer* 20 March 1837.

every month of their operations."[437] Framed properly as "romantic and unparalleled" acts of "self-immolation…upon the altar of their country," the defeats and deaths of prominent officers like Major Francis Dade might secure broader cultural legitimacy for professionals as patriotic heroes.[438] The regular army's engagement in Florida contributed to ongoing attempts to construct a mythology of American military professionalism, perhaps to rival the mythology of military amateurs like Andrew Jackson or Davy Crockett, and to thereby secure widespread popular legitimacy for the military profession.

Politically, the army's operations elicited skepticism about the value of a professional and trained military force, especially as that force, for all its discipline and education, proved ineffective in Florida's climate and terrain. A communication to the *Daily National Intelligencer* argued that five hundred "woodsmen," equipped with the gun, could "put an immediate end to the Seminole war" and accomplish what the federal army had failed to do.[439] Echoing this sentiment in Congress, Representative John Reynolds of Illinois, himself a veteran of that state's Black Hawk War, insisted that removal policies rely more heavily on local militia. "It was the border militia and

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[437] Benjamin Alvord, *Address Before the Dialectic Society of the Corps of Cadets, in Commemoration of the Gallant Conduct of the Nine Graduates of the Military Academy, and Other Officers of the United States' Army, Who Fell in the Battles Which Took Place in Florida, on the 28th of December, 1835, and the 25th December, 1837; the former called Dade's Battle, the latter, the Battle of Okee-cho-bee. Delivered at West Point, NY on the 29th December, 1838* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1839), 48-9.
[438] Wythlacoochee, "Vindication of the Army," *Daily National Intelligencer* 28 September 1836.
[439] Florida, "For the National Intelligencer," *Daily National Intelligencer* 30 January 1837, p.2.

volunteers that they [Indians] dreaded more than any United States troops," he proclaimed.[440]

Near the end of the war, however, Democrats in Congress and in Martin Van Buren's administration came to accept the necessity of regular troops and officers in Florida. Like the Jeffersonians three decades before, Democrats compromised by seeking to "Democratize" the army and give seventy-three new appointments (or about one-tenth of the officer corps) to Party supporters from outside the army. The same reorganization of the officer corps also lengthened the required term of service for West Point graduates from one year to four years. This measure redressed what many Democrats perceived as an aristocratic abuse on the part of West Point cadets who received a free education and then quickly resigned from the service, but it also contributed to the dominance of West Point trained officers within the army.[441] When Congress ended the war in 1842, it froze future enlistments but for the first time did not reduce the army by disbanding or consolidating entire regiments. This measure returned the army to peacetime status without jeopardizing the status of any of its officers.[442] Democratic conduct by the end of the Seminole War thus reversed some of the Party's earlier attempts at halting professionalization and contributed to further reliance on regulars and officers in military affairs.

As the Seminole War reached its high point in 1837 and 1838, a second conflict emerged on the northeastern border. When anti-British rebels in Upper Canada and

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[440] Quoted in Robert Wooster, *The American Military Frontiers: The United States Army in the West, 1783-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 97.
[441] Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 69-70.
[442] Ibid., 38.

Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec) arose in insurrection, citizens on the border in New York and Vermont saw an opportunity to join with the rebels, push the British empire off North America for good, and finally realize the long-standing American goal of annexing Canada. American citizens provided weapons and aid to the rebels, threatening the official American stance of neutrality in Canadian affairs. In late December 1837, over five hundred Americans joined with Canadian rebel William Lyon McKenzie at the Niagara River to declare a new provisional government for Upper Canada. The filibusters represented the possibility that a decentralized, locally organized military force could act semi-spontaneously to advance national ambitions and expand the nation's boundaries. However, state and federal leaders repudiated that possibility when they cooperated to dispatch regular troops under General Winfield Scott to take McKenzie into custody, suppress the filibustering expeditions, and maintain peace. Army forces totaling two thousand troops continued to patrol the border and suppress filibustering endeavors until the Webster-Ashburton Treaty with Great Britain calmed the conflict in 1842. The Canadian border crisis taught a less ambiguous lesson than the Seminole War. By the end, the regular army secured greater recognition as "the primary agents of national policy along the border," despite attempts by small groups of citizens to claim that role as their own.[443]

The northern filibusters attempted to re-assert the primacy of localized military control in the conduct of national expansion. Local assemblies emerged in places like

[443] Samuel Watson, "United States Army Officers Fight the 'Patriot War': Responses to Filibustering on the Canadian Border, 1837-1839," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1998), 486. See also Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 10-13.

Buffalo, New York, where citizens delivered orations, sung the Marseillaise in support of the rebels in Quebec, and even received correspondence from leaders of the Canadian uprisings.[444] Later, shows of support became more overt. The town of Swanton, Vermont, offered refuge to defeated rebels after failed engagements at St. Charles and St. Denis in Quebec. There, the rebels purchased cannon and ammunition, which they hoped to use to fight their way back across the border.[445]

The Canadian rebellions and the possibility of taking Canada from Britain became a concern for Northern volunteer companies through the efforts of Alden Partridge. He lectured before militia companies in towns like Boston, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on "the probability of war with England, our position on land and sea, and a plan to invade Canada."[446] In 1841, he published the contents of these lectures in *The Citizen Soldier*. His scheme for the conquest of Canada relied upon a radical militarization of the citizenry. He envisioned raising sixty thousand troops in ways similar to "the plan adopted in France in the year 1793, after the issuing of the celebrated decree of the French Convention, for raising the nation *en mass*."[447] Though Partridge did not speak for all filibusters on the border, his involvement suggests that the filibustering expeditions represented a new variation on the old ideal of militia service and an effort to establish the militia as the primary actors in national expansion.

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[444] "Canadian News," *Daily National Intelligencer*, 15 December 1837.
[445] "Proceedings on Our Northern Frontier," *Daily National Intelligencer*, 21 December 1837.
[446] "Lectures on Education" and "All Attend!" Alden Partridge Broadsides, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, VT; "War With Great Britain," *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics* 18 September 1841.
[447] Alden Partridge, "North-Eastern Boundary," *The Citizen Soldier* No. 30 (19 February 1841), 234.

Backlash against these actions, however, revealed that those in power were less willing to accept this expansionary role for citizens and militia. Governors S.H. Jenison of Vermont and William L. Marcy of New York issued proclamations of neutrality in late December 1837, warning that any acts that threatened to make their states "the theatre of active warfare" would not "be tolerated for a moment, and every good citizen will appreciate the importance of rebuking all such acts as may tend to produce it."[448] A New York editorial lamented the martial turn that American support for the rebels had taken. "This is not sympathy – this is war – this is aiding and abetting the citizens of Canada, in taking up arms to assail a nation at peace with the United States," stated the *Evening Star*, asking finally, "are our people in their senses?" This senselessness, the editorialist suggested, was borne from the "great error" in thinking that "as this is a free country, every man has a right to do as he pleases…and do any act to compromit the peace and tranquility of the country."[449] In a similar vein, the American Peace Society cataloged the actions of the northern filibusters as but another manifestation of a "war-principle" that led citizens to impetuously and aggressively demand, "give us our rights, or we'll take them." The Peace Society argued that this principle motivated the Vermont filibusterers, the Texan rebels, and rioting urban mobs alike, and would inevitably "bring the ruin of our free and glorious institutions."[450] Condemnations of the filibusters strongly asserted that only the systems of the regular

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[448] "State of Vermont," *Daily National Intelligencer*, 25 December 1837; see also similar Proclamation of William L. Marcy, ibid.
[449] "From the N.Y. Evening Star," *Daily National Intelligencer*, 8 January 1838.
[450] "Workings of the War Principle in Canada," *The Advocate of Peace* No. XV (April 1839), 254-255.

army and the authority of its officers could legitimately manage expansionary violence. It should not be left as a popular prerogative.

In the wake of the Seminole War and the border crisis, the regular army regained strength and official support while political leaders at the state and national levels actually took steps toward dismantling the militia system. The post-1837 downward trends in military spending and size of the officer corps reversed themselves in 1842.[451] Officer resignations began to decline by the early 1840s. In 1843, they fell below one percent for the first time.[452] Congress not only rejected Joel Poinsett's proposed militia reforms but also declared his plan "the last decided attempt to save the decaying system from dissolution."[453] At the same time, several states revised and weakened their laws on militia obligations throughout the 1840s. Delaware, Maine, Ohio, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, and Missouri all abolished their compulsory militia systems between 1840 and 1847. New Hampshire did the same in 1851. An 1840 Indiana law exempted all but the young from service, and New Jersey, Iowa, Michigan, and California all repealed laws that had mandated imprisonment for those who neither turned out at muster nor paid the fine.[454] These events together suggest a turning tide of official opinion regarding the relative importance of regulars and citizen-soldiers in the years before the Mexican-American War.

Though the militia was decaying, the contest between citizen volunteers and regular soldiers to advance American expansion was a complicated issue in the Mexican-

[451] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 597; Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity," 93 (Figure 4.3).
[452] Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*, 216.
[453] Quoted in Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 156.
[454] Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard*, 83.

American War. The conduct of the war provided a final opportunity to assess the merits of professionals and citizen soldiers and determine with greater certainty where military power should be located. Officials within the federal government had maintained concern over the possibility of a war with Mexico since the 1830s, when conflicts between Mexico and the independent Texan Republic threatened to implicate the United States. Policy-makers looked to the regular army to maintain American neutrality. Secretary of War Lewis Cass, for instance, ordered General Edmund Gaines to the Texas/Louisiana border in 1836, informing him of the necessity of his "personal presence at a point where public considerations demand the exercise of great discretion and experience."[455] Nonetheless, when war broke out a decade letter, President James K. Polk expressed his utmost faith in the use of citizen-soldier volunteers for the war, as they "are armed, and have been accustomed from their youth up to handle and use firearms, and a larger proportion of them…are expert marksmen."[456] At the start of the war, therefore, federal officials attempted to apply two competing ideals of American military power to the southwest. That the commander-in-chief wished to rely on citizen-soldiers over regulars revealed that this approach to military power might yet have some vitality. The conduct of the war, however, largely repudiated this idea and only gave the regular army an additional source of authority and legitimacy.

Polk's mobilization of the nation's citizen-soldiers deviated, out of necessity, from the conventional means of organizing and deploying militia forces and instead

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[455] "Instructions to and Correspondence with Major General Gaines and Others, for Preserving Neutrality of the United States on the Frontiers During the War Between Texas and Mexico," 14 May 1836, *ASP:MA*, VI: 417.
[456] Quoted in Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*, 117.

subsumed citizen recruits within the bureaucratic organization of the regular army. Congress abandoned the established national militia law as clumsy and ineffective and found ways to circumvent it. Under the terms of a 1795 law, the president had authority to call out state militia troops only for up to three months of service. Congress therefore made sure to specify at the start of the war that the president would be calling out volunteers – companies usually associated with the formal state militia, but incorporated into federal army administration and thus not legally classified as militia. This distinction enabled Polk to force longer terms of service out of the citizen soldiers, with standard enlistment contracts lasting up to twelve months.[457] The calling out process was thus in some ways much easier and efficient than in the past, when use of state militia had required cooperation between state governors and the federal government. To raise an army for Mexico, the War Department issued quotas to the governors of the states, who then issued a call for volunteers. Volunteers came from pre-existing militia units and uniform companies, although a few companies formed specially to meet the call for Mexico. The companies, after forming themselves, reported to the governor, who directed them to a state rendezvous point, where they were incorporated into federal service. Thus, the deployment of citizen-soldiers to Mexico was mediated through the regular army.

The militia's antebellum transformation into a cultural institution compensated for the legal and political shortcomings of the militia system. Because of the ways that the remaining militia units and volunteer companies had preserved the martial spirit and even

[457] James M. McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 16.

integrated it into popular cultural life, Polk's call for volunteers met with overwhelming enthusiasm, particularly among citizens of the South and West. Baltimore met its assigned quota after thirty-six hours; Ohio met its in two weeks. Tennessee received ten times more volunteers than its quota, while Kentucky received four times more, and North Carolina received three times more. In these instances, states had to turn away volunteers when they were in excess of the designated quota. The formation of volunteer companies took on ceremonial qualities that integrated the companies and the volunteers into communal public life. Public orations accompanied most musters. In many towns, local women contributed uniforms, tents, and company flags, which they presented along with other gifts to the volunteer regiments before they left, often with their own orations and public statements.[458]

The mobilization of the regular Army, by contrast, was initially hampered by internal organizational weaknesses. Though the professional officer class had improved its self-perception through its role in conflicts like the Seminole War and the Canadian border disputes, the Army was still numerically weak and ill-equipped to fight a western war, especially in light of its military difficulties in Florida. At the start of the war, the regular Army was at an authorized strength of 8,613 troops, although illness and desertion had cut the Army down to forty percent of its allotted strength.[459] Enlisted soldiers lacked the martial enthusiasm that motivated the volunteers. Those who had not spent the years before the war at isolated frontier outposts or bogged down in Florida's inhospitable and fever-inducing climate had worked as common laborers on canal

[458] Ibid., 18-21.
[459] Richard Bruce Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 10.

projects.[460] Nonetheless, officers within the Army, and friends outside it, were eager to use the start of the war to assert their importance and power. The United States' earliest victories in the war – at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma – happened before any volunteer forces had joined the army, a fact that many officers were eager to point out.[461]

The tensions and divisions between regulars and volunteers had great significance for the conduct of racial violence against Mexicans and crimes against Mexican civilians. In Mexico, Army officers accused the volunteers as being naturally disposed to the worst atrocities. A young Ulysses S. Grant described, for example, "how much [the volunteers] seem to enjoy acts of violence." General Zachary Taylor complained that the volunteers "scarcely made one expedition without unwarrantably killing a Mexican," and in mid-1847 asked the War Department to at least stop sending volunteers from Texas.[462] Polk set aside his faith in the conquering energies of the citizen soldiers in response to this problem of violence. More often, he relied upon the skills of professional officers like Taylor to handle the delicacies of managing the Mexican population in conquered territories and of protecting them from recurring raids by Comanches or Navajos.[463] The regular Army attempted to use its formal administrative means to control or constrain such violence through the prosecution of soldiers for crimes against Mexicans in military tribunals. Though punishments were inconsistently dealt out, they nonetheless provided

[460] Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair*, 15; Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 142-3.
[461] McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny*, 13.
[462] DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, 280
[463] Ibid., 262-4.

a concrete means by which the regular army asserted its organizational supremacy over citizen-soldiers.[464]

Ultimately, the regular army's attempted control of border violence bore directly on justifications for the war and the conquest of northern Mexico. As Brian DeLay explains, the region of northern Mexico of which the United States took control in 1848 had been a theatre of recurring violence and conflict between natives and Mexican settlers. At the close of the war, American diplomats, Congressmen, and other officials pointed to the inability of the Mexicans and the Mexican government to maintain peace, and legitimized the United States' claims to the land through their supposedly superior ability to subdue the natives, keep the peace, and exploit the land to its fullest economic potential.[465] This justification for conquest required an expanded commitment of military resources and a stronger reliance on the professional officer corps. The demands of conquest thus forced the final repudiation of popular martial enthusiasm and reliance on citizen volunteers. Although citizens met the call for volunteers with remarkable enthusiasm, their propensity to counterproductive violence in the Mexican-American War contributed to their loss of legitimacy in the eyes of military and political leaders. Taking control of and suitably governing the recently acquired territory revealed the necessity and national value of the professional officers and the regular army.

In the decade after the war, the regular army encountered much less official suspicion or hostility as it grew. American voters showed their increased appreciation for military professionals by voting Zachary Taylor into the White House in 1848. Taylor

[464] McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny*, 123-4.
[465] DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, 290-3.

pursued a military policy rooted in his own wartime experiences that attempted to make greater use of professional officers and regular troops. This effort found a great deal of support in Congress. Taylor's proposal in 1850 to augment western garrisons by adding over thirty new privates to each company passed the House by a two-to-one majority. In addition, much of the official faith in militia and volunteers seemed to have dissipated. An attempt by a general in Texas to supplement his garrisons with Texan volunteers, for example, met with opposition from Secretary of War Charles M. Conrad, who argued that volunteers "have a tendency to create hostilities and rather to endanger the peace of the frontier than to preserve it."[466]

President Franklin Pierce's Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, was the most energetic and ambitious Secretary of War since John C. Calhoun.[467] In 1855, Davis marshaled a bill through Congress to expand the military establishment with four new regiments, demonstrating to friendly Congressmen that raising more regular troops ultimately cost a third less than raising an equal number of volunteers. Aided by the simultaneous outbreak of the First Sioux War, this proposed expansion passed the House with a two-thirds majority, and passed the Senate by a vote of thirty-two to seven.[468] In addition, veteran officers successfully claimed a cultural prestige that had previously been problematic. When officers of both regular and volunteer regiments formed a fraternal association, the Aztec Club, in 1847, they met with none of the outcry or controversy that had surrounded the formation of the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783.[469]

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[466] Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*, 124-5.
[467] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 189-90
[468] Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*, 135-8.
[469] Wetteman, *Privilege Vs. Equality*, 17-8.

The aftermath of the Mexican-American War solidified larger degrees of both popular and political support for regulars and officers.

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The antebellum period has been considered an era of the common man and thus a time when glorifications of military amateurism and the primacy of the citizen-soldier dominated politics and culture. This conventional narrative is due for revision. Between the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War, the militia and the whole political ideal of the citizen-soldier suffered greatly in the eyes of policy-makers, while the regular army led by professional officers attracted greater legitimacy and support. The decline of the militia was more than a matter of neglect and disinterest from citizens and political leaders. It had multiple sources in antebellum political and cultural changes. First and foremost was a growing awareness of the complexity of international affairs and the need for specialization, which by 1848 resulted in policy-makers' increasing reliance on the trained skills of the Army and the officer corps to satisfactorily meet national needs. Rhetoric about the virtues of the citizen soldier still had a prominent place in politics up to the beginning of the war, but it became less potent when not backed up by federal policy or federal funding. A second force that contributed to the militia's decline was the growing resistance to violence, both as a principle of pacifism and as a concerted effort to control popular violence in the interest of asserting national sovereignty in the west. By 1848, the processes of expansion and conquest had produced a change in thinking on whether all citizens could or should be soldiers. Military power then rested more securely in the hands of an elite group of military professionals.

# Epilogue

## The Military, Democracy, and Civil War

In times of peace, the organization of the nation's armed forces was a topic of concern for a relatively small group of political thinkers, policy makers, and a few particularly attentive citizens. Instances in which a wider portion of a population engaged with these questions – when issues regarding the military's growth leaked into popular literature or when they manifested locally through, for example, the establishment of a military academy or the army's mobilization to protect a frontier community – were exceptional, but their exceptional nature does not make them any less instructive. None of the ideas and attitudes that this dissertation explores should be interpreted as the political norm or the dominant political ideology in early America. Their significance lay not in the extent of their influence but in their potential to shape and guide democratic practices in subtle ways.

In times of war, the decisions that political elites made about the organization of the military suddenly acquired profound importance for how a large number of American citizens lived their lives and pursued their own notions of liberty and freedom. From 1861 to 1865, four years of war and an unprecedented military mobilization brought about a revolution in American citizenship and democratic practice. This revolution cannot be adequately understood without deeper knowledge of the organization and culture of the military establishment that stood at its center.

The federal emancipation policy that emerged during the Civil War had roots within the Union Army, as the actions and decisions of military commanders regarding the treatment of former slaves became early experiments in emancipation. From a very

early point in the war, the Union Army served as a haven for slaves who had taken advantage of the chaos of war to escape their masters. Large refugee populations quickly amassed at several Union garrisons such as Virginia's Fortress Monroe. In 1861, the commanding officer there, General Benjamin F. Butler, declared all runaway slaves "contraband of war" and invoked "military necessity" to enlist them as laborers in the quartermaster's department.[470] This ad hoc recruitment of freed slaves as laborers became national law in the Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act of 1862, which emancipated fugitive slaves taken in by the army and authorized the military's use of these fugitives as laborers. At the same time, northern abolitionists, free blacks, and political leaders began considering the formation of all-black regiments within the Union Army. In mid-1862, General John W. Phelps in the Gulf region and General David Hunter along the South Carolina/Georgia/Florida coast made the decision to arm male fugitive slaves. Though both generals were forced to disband their black regiments, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton formally authorized the creation of regiments of free black men and male fugitives only weeks later. In May 1863, the establishment of the Bureau of Colored Troops made enlistment of black troops an active priority of the War Department and the Union Army.

The decisions of generals and other military leaders were the result of a number of political pressures, military needs, and self-serving motivations. Benjamin Butler certainly did not have the end of slavery in mind when he refused to surrender refugees to their former masters. More likely, he was thinking pragmatically about weakening the

[470] Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 191-2.

Confederacy's economy and productive capacity. Nonetheless, it may be productive to investigate the roots of the army's policy on slave refugees and slave recruitment in the army's professional culture. Butler was not a career officer, but neither was he a stranger to the professional culture of the regular army. In 1839, he delivered an oration on the nobility and necessity of the military profession, by invitation of Henry Halleck and other members of West Point's Dialectic Society. Butler outlined a theory of the military's importance as an institution "maintained for the purposes of the most weighty and beneficent…to uphold the civil power; to maintain inviolate the liberties of the citizen…to guard the temple of American liberty; to defend it when menaced by open assault or secret machinations; and to secure to all, a safe and ready access to its altars."[471] Butler's idea of the military profession suggested that the army possessed unique agency to autonomously represent American interests and policy on the borderlands or in areas of conflict. No statement in Butler's ceremonial address, delivered over two decades before the Civil War, should be interpreted as the definitive source of Butler's wartime decisions. But perhaps, amidst the exigencies of war, Butler re-fashioned this principle of military professionalism into a justification his unilateral policy-making efforts with regard to the army's refugee problems.

The commanders who formed the first black regiments, John W. Phelps and David Hunter, were both career officers. Professional military culture may have had a stronger influence on their actions as well as those of other commanders of black

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[471] Benjamin F. Butler, *The Military Profession in the United States, and the Means of Promoting Its Usefulness and Honour: An Address, Delivered Before the Dialectic Society of the Corps of Cadets of the Military Academy, Westpoint, At the Close of the Annual Examination, June 19th, 1839* (New York: Samuel Colman, 1839), 14-5.

regiments. As professional officers with distinct understandings of the army's proper operation, they may have supposed that slaves, accustomed to the labor regime of the plantation, would fit into the military's disciplinary regime more easily and make better soldiers than white Northern citizens. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the commander of the First South Carolina Volunteers, expressed just this opinion in his 1869 memoir. "To learn the drill, one does not want a set of college professors," he wrote. "One wants a squad of eager, active, pliant school-boys; and the more childlike these pupils are the better." Higginson thus believed that former slaves made ideal recruits: "there is no trouble about the drill; they will surpass whites in that. As to camp-life, they have little to sacrifice; they are better fed, housed, and clothed than ever in their lives before, and they appear to have few inconvenient vices."[472] A Brigadier General in Louisiana instructed his junior officers that they would find black recruits "docile, impressionable, [and] fully imbued with the spirit of subordination (one of the highest attributes of a soldier)."[473] Recruitment of slaves as soldiers did not emerge from any genuine interest on the part of army officers to end slavery or include freedmen as equal members of the American political community. Instead, the policy arose from a combination of military ideals and racist assumptions. However, it may be fruitful to investigate the extent to which a truly emancipationist agenda permeated the army, the means by which it did so,

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[472] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (repr. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 35-6. Higginson was not a career officer, although his memoir does express a keen interest in professional norms of military discipline and army life.

[473] "Order by the Commander of a Louisiana Black Brigade," 10 June 1863, *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867*, series II "The Black Military Experience," Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 412-3.

and the ways in which the army's organization enabled or obstructed the pursuit of such an agenda.

Tensions within the Army between freed slaves, black soldiers, and white officers also revealed new and old ways in which military professionalism clashed with democratic expectations and ambitions. Black soldiers petitioned the War Department complaining that they and others had been tied up, beaten, and their labor exploited just as on a plantation. "They have us cleaning up farms and cutting up Stumps for these citizens and they pay the officers for it and they are allowing these citizens to run over us if we Say anything to them we are put in jail," one Kentucky soldier wrote.[474] Long-standing problems of authority, obedience, and discipline within the army took on new meaning as soldiers, officers, and Union political leaders alike confronted the question of what, if anything, distinguished the organization and functions of the army from those of the plantation.

In response, commanders and other whites within the army attempted to assert the ennobling character of military discipline in contrast to the degrading character of plantation discipline. As Thomas Wentworth Higginson explained, officers tried to instruct the slaves "that they did not obey their officers because they were white, but because they were officers…,that we were all subject to military law, and protected by it in turn."[475] The evident similarities between the army and the plantation led some in higher posts to seek changes in military practices. One commander in Missouri, for

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[474] "Anonymous Kentucky Black Soldier to the Secretary of War," 22 October 1865, Ibid., 425. See also "Pennsylvania Black Soldier to the Secretary of War," 20 July 1865, Ibid., 424-5.

[475] Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 245.

instance, reprimanded his junior officers for the abuse they inflicted upon the enlisted men. "Men will not obey; as promptly, an officer who adopts, the customs of the slave driver to maintain authority," he wrote.[476] A chaplain of a black regiment in Louisiana complained to a commander that he had witnessed soldiers being beat and cursed by junior officers. "All effort towards their elevation in this generation or the next, will be futile," he wrote, "unless there is an end to the plantation style of government" within the army.[477] Perhaps the most significant impact that the recruitment of black soldiers had on the military profession was that it forced military leaders to more seriously consider the army's antidemocratic and illiberal tendencies, problems which had long been evident but were often disregarded.

The military was also of central importance in the question of the possibility of black citizenship that was raised during and after the war. Historians point to black military service as a crucial factor in pushing white citizens and policy makers to extend citizenship to African-Americans and voting rights to black men. However, they often resort to vague generalizations when attempting to explain precisely how military service led to citizenship. Black service in the Union Army, the story goes, offered the strongest proof that they deserved to be included as equal members of the American political community. James McPherson situates the relationship between black service and black citizenship within a straightforward political and moral calculus, in which "if the black man proved his patriotism and courage on the field of battle, the nation would be morally

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[476] "Order by the Commander of a Missouri Black Regiment," 9 November 1864, Ibid., 454.

[477] "Chaplain of a Louisiana Black Regiment to the Commander of a Louisiana Black Brigade," 19 December 1864, Ibid., 418.

obligated to grant him first-class citizenship."[478] David Blight similarly asserts that "loyalty and sacrifice in war offered a unique chance" for black political leaders "to demand equality and justice in peace."[479] These works take the connection between military service and citizenship as a simple, natural fact. They make no effort to investigate the political or cultural conditions that ultimately made these arguments for black citizenship work.

These broad generalizations are all the more problematic because they disregard the fact that, by the 1860s, military service was in fact a weak basis on which to argue for a radical expansion of citizenship. Strict identifications of citizenship with soldiering – that citizenship required military service and that military service was a privileged form of citizenship – had been present but never dominant in early American political discourse. Additionally, there was an antebellum precedent of non-citizen racial others providing military service within the U.S. Army without any consideration of future citizenship. In the Second Seminole War, the War Department authorized the recruitment of Creek, Choctaw, Kickapoo, Sac and Fox, Shawnee, and Delaware men into the U.S. Army, to be "paid and organized as volunteers, but…placed under the command of some white man."[480] The only recognition of any obligation the government

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[478] James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 161.
[479] David Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 164. For similar statements, see also Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1953), 192; Richard M. Reid, *Freedom For Themselves: North Carolina's Black Soldiers in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), xii.
[480] "Orders and Instructions Authorizing the Employment of Indians in the Military Service of the United States Against the Seminole Indians in Florida, and the Number So

may have owed to these soldiers was that they would be paid for their service and given rations during their service. If they happened to die in service, the remainder of the pay should be sent to their families.[481] Why, then, did black men's military service in the Civil War lead so definitively to official recognition of their citizenship?

Claims for black citizenship that were rooted in military service may have worked at this point in history due to a range of factors. First of all, a strong connection between soldiering and citizenship was accepted by no less influential a figure than President Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln suggested in 1864 that the right to vote might be extended to black soldiers (and black soldiers alone).[482] Secondly, black political leaders like Frederick Douglass were particularly adept at mobilizing the longer tradition that had grounded citizenship within military service in order to give his own arguments a stronger foundation. Douglass, indeed, revived and continued the ideas of men like Henry Knox when he spoke of military service as an obligation to the government, in return for which the government recognized the soldier's citizenship and extended the right to vote.[483] Douglass further argued that military service was the best way for black men "to become familiar with the means of securing, protecting and defending your own liberty."[484]

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Employed," 21 September 1837, *American State Papers* Class V (Military Affairs) (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-61) (hereafter *ASP:MA*), VII: 519.
[481] Ibid., 522.
[482] Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*, 232.
[483] "The Cause of the Negro People: Address of the Colored National Convention to the People of the United States, October 4-7, 1864," in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Philip S. Foner, ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1952), II: 418.
[484] "'Why Should a Colored Man Enlist?' *Douglass' Monthly* (April 1863)," Ibid., II: 342.

The Knoxian claim may have been further strengthened by the fact that the United States government had, for the first time, turned to conscription to meet manpower needs in the war. The Militia Act of 1862 and later the Enrollment Act of 1863 re-emphasized the obligation of male citizens to offer military service, with exemptions permitted for only a few specific reasons, and thus also bolstered the link between military service and citizenship in political discourse.[485] That military service did become so strongly linked with citizenship in the Civil War era had important ramifications for the subsequent expansion of the political community, ensuring that revolutionary ideas of citizenship and equality would extend across racial lines but remain constricted by gender. Black women who had not been enlisted into the military found they had no special claims to citizenship.

The end of slavery and the legal extension of citizenship and voting rights to men (but not women) who had once been slaves are two of the most important and most revolutionary changes in American history. Their full explication depends upon a proper understanding of the American military establishment as well as the larger ideas of power, republicanism, citizenship, and democracy that ran throughout it and shaped its development in the early national period. Long-running debates about the relationship between American democracy and the American military came to a head in the Civil War. The military's relationship to democratic politics became much more ambiguous as it seemingly acquired the power to both emancipate and oppress. The American army was a central actor in the destruction of slavery. The formation of regiments of freed

[485] Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 207-10.

blacks and former slaves imbued military service with a civic importance that others had previously tried, but failed, to attach to it. Yet the institution's confrontation with, and seeming replication of, the slave regime also led many to question the extent to which it could truly participate in the spread of democracy. None of these questions were new or unexpected. From a cantonment on the banks of the Hudson River in 1783 to a refugee camp in the Gulf South in 1862, the American military establishment had long been implicated in some of the most intractable problems that plagued the nation and its citizens in their attempts to create a truly revolutionary society and polity.

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