ARMY OFFICER DEVELOPMENT: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Arthur T. Coumbe

April 2010

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. Authors of Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) publications enjoy full academic freedom, provided they do not disclose classified information, jeopardize operations security, or misrepresent official U.S. policy. Such academic freedom empowers them to offer new and sometimes controversial perspectives in the interest of furthering debate on key issues. This report is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.

*****

This publication is subject to Title 17, United States Code, Sections 101 and 105. It is in the public domain and may not be copyrighted.

*****

Dr. Arthur T. Coumbe is the command historian, U.S. Army Cadet Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia and an adjunct faculty member at Austin Peay State University. He has authored a number of articles and books on Army ROTC history and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 – 1871. He received a B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy and a Ph.D. from Duke University.

Introduction.

Since the beginning of the last century, officer development in the U.S. Army has been predicated on a combination of education, training, and experience. It has entailed formal schooling, rotation through varied assignments, service at progressively higher echelons of command, and self-study to improve overall professional capacity. Career paths (tied to job performance, longevity of service, and promotion patterns) have been structured to broaden the interests, abilities and aptitudes of officers to enable them to function effectively in positions of steadily escalating responsibility. The mentoring of subordinates and regular performance appraisals have been, at least in theory, intrinsic elements of this developmental process. As noted in previous papers in this series, this methodology is broadly similar to that used by many business firms in the Industrial Age.

This paper explores two aspects of the officer development process — the Army's school system and fully-funded civilian graduate education. Examining the historical evolution of these two elements highlights some of the critical and contentious issues that have surrounded officer education and training over the years and provides valuable insights into the officer development process. This paper concludes its coverage of the development process in the early 1980s, the point at which the *Developing Officer Talent* companion paper begins its most detailed analysis.

The Army School System before the World Wars.

The prototype of the modern officer development system arose in the early-twentieth century under Elihu Root, Secretary of War from 1899 to 1904. Root's formula for officer development called for rotation of duty assignments and intermittent periods of professional schooling. Reforms initiated under Root led to an extensive makeover of the Army school network. Branch schools, which formed the base of the educational pyramid, underwent a significant upgrade. In the decade after 1901, schools for the engineers, infantry, ordnance, quartermaster, and artillery were either created or extensively overhauled.

In 1902, the former "School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry" re-emerged as the "General Service and Staff School." This new institution focused on combined army training and preparation for high level command and staff responsibilities. At the apex of the Army school pyramid constructed by Root stood the Army War College. Founded in 1901, this postgraduate military school was intended to prevent another fiasco like the one attending the Army's preparations for the Spanish American War. Although the Officer Corps had generally performed well at the tactical level in that conflict, senior officers had proven themselves to be "almost completed unprepared to handle the problems of sudden mobilization, training, and the widespread deployment of military forces."[1]

The basic system of officer development instituted by Secretary Root remained in place after World War I, albeit enlarged and refined. The Army branch schools were extended and regularized. By the eve of World War II, there were 19 such schools in operation. The Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth grew in stature and prestige during the interwar years. Attendance at the college, in fact, became a mark of professional distinction and a virtual prerequisite for high rank. An important addition to senior officer professional education during this era came with the creation of the Army Industrial College in 1924. This institution was part of a more comprehensive scheme elaborated in the aftermath of World War I to enable the Army to more effectively meet the demands of modern industrialized warfare.[2]

The post-World War I school system concentrated on preparing the Regular Army's small officer corps to lead a vastly expanded citizen army in the event of a national emergency. Officers had to be ready to lead and manage organizations many times larger than any the War Department could cobble together in peacetime. Accordingly, the orientation of this system, from branch schools all the way up to the war college, tended to be narrowly military. Even at the War College, where military affairs were taught alongside national policy matters, the emphasis was on preparing officers for future command and staff responsibilities rather than on acquainting them with the broader political and economic aspects of national strategy. While these broader considerations were not neglected entirely, of course, they were largely overshadowed by what seemed to be more pressing and immediate priorities.[3]

The Army School System in the Post-World War II Era.

During World War II, Army schools were again reconfigured, this time to train vast numbers of officers for specific duties and immediate requirements. The educational facets of the school system were drastically cut back or eliminated entirely. General Lesley McNair, head of the Army Ground Forces for most of the war and the officer responsible for training soldiers for ground combat, wanted to limit formal training along with time spent in the school system as much as possible. He operated under the premise that excessive schooling destroyed initiative and the urge for self-study. In his opinion, practical, on-the-job training in tactical units was the best preparation for leadership in combat. It was a philosophy with many adherents in the Officer Corps, both at the time and subsequently.[4]

In the war's last stages, the Army began to turn its attention to the postwar configuration of its system for training and educating officers. The War Department wanted to ensure that the lessons of the last war were not forgotten. Prominent among those lessons was the need for a more thorough grasp of joint operations as well as a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the other services on the part of officers. The Gerow Board met in early 1946 to fashion a plan for the postwar school system. Its recommendations led to, among other things, the establishment of the National War College and the Armed Forces Staff College, both of which were devoted to the joint training of officers. Three years later, the Department of the Army Board on the Educational System for Army Officers was convened under LTG Manton S. Eddy to review the adequacy and scope of that system. The Eddy Board resulted in a more definitive structuring of the Army officer progressive educational system, the reestablishment of the Army War College, and a more centralized direction of the Army school system.[5]

The message running through the reports of both the aforementioned bodies was that preparation for combat was the central object of the Army's school system. The Army's other roles and missions were considered to be of a decidedly secondary importance. This message was forcefully affirmed by the Eddy board in its report. "The objective of the Army school system," it declared, "can be stated concisely. It is to prepare an officer to perform effectively those duties to which he may reasonably expect to be assigned in war, with emphasis on the art of command."[6]

This is not to say that senior Army leaders were oblivious to the new dimensions that the Cold War, technological progress and the changing nature of the military profession had brought to military affairs. In fact, they understood that the military profession now had to be viewed in a broader social, economic, and political context than it had in the past and that modern officers needed a wide range of executive and intellectual talents to meet the multifarious and complex

demands placed on them. These new development requirements were acknowledged by the Gerow Board, which observed that in the new, post-war world, traits such as initiative, resourcefulness, and the capacity for "constructive thought" were essential for the officer who hoped to keep up with the rapid changes that were transforming the military profession.[7] Still, officer education and training demonstrated more continuity than change. Although the boundaries of the military realm had become more porous, the emphasis of Army schools, along with the officer development system they supported, remained focused on preparation for combat and operational and tactical level assignments.

This emphasis was reaffirmed in 1958 by the Williams Board. Tasked by the Army Chief of Staff to evaluate the "appropriateness" of service school and service college missions, it concluded that the objective of the Army system of officer education and training should remain as prescribed in Army policy and regulations, i.e., "to prepare selected individuals of all components of the Army to perform those duties which they may be called upon to perform in war. The emphasis is on the art of command."[8] Given this focus (as well as what some characterized as the innate conservatism and anti-intellectualism of military leaders), it is perhaps unsurprising that even the Army War College continued emphasizing the practical, the operational, and the immediately useful over the theoretical, the strategic, and the long-term.

Attempts to broaden the War College curriculum in the 1950s often encountered stiff resistance. Even minor changes sometimes unleashed a barrage of complaints about how the curriculum was becoming too "academic" and diluted with "theoretical" and historical subjects that contributed little to the development of practical know-how and operational ability in students. Thus, instruction at the War College continued on the path that it had been on in the inter-war years, with courses demanding only a low level of abreaction and its curriculum resembling training more that education. The result was a school system that, although effective in imparting the mechanics of the military profession, was not particularly adept at cultivating imagination, creativity and analytical ability in future Army leaders.[9]

The Army School System in the 1960s.

With the coming of the Kennedy Administration in 1961, civil-military relations within the government took on a rather troublesome and contentious aspect. President Kennedy, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and William Fulbright, chief of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed reservations about the quality of opinion and advice they received from military leaders. The new Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, made it plain that he did not think that the Officer Corps was, as a body, up to the task of meeting the broad range of requirements necessary to run a complex military organization. As one officer observed, McNamara wanted planners and thinkers but instead got mere warriors.[10] Thaddeus Holt, Deputy Undersecretary of the Army from 1965 to 1967, also entertained misgivings about intellectual talent among the senior officers he worked with in the Pentagon. "I am not sure," he wrote, "that the collective contribution of the military to the larger policy making process is always up to a high standard." He noted the "inability" of senior Army leaders to "analyze problems systematically and in a broad context and to present alternatives and defend recommendations in an articulate fashion."[11]

Open conflict soon broke out between uniformed leaders and their civilian superiors. Tensions between McNamara's army of young "whiz kids" and senior military officers led to some embarrassing confrontations. It was very difficult for senior officers to have an analyst,

many years their junior and with little or no military background, tell them that they did not have an understanding of the military problem at hand. The controversy and in-fighting that arose within the Pentagon led to the early retirement of some senior officers and to constant friction between the executive and congressional branches of government.[12]

Even before the Kennedy/McNamara years, Army leaders had become increasingly aware of the need for a wider and deeper array of intellectual talent within the Officer Corps. In the forties and fifties, the Gerow, Eddy and Williams boards had all noted the need for a broader range of talents among officers. A DCSPER study done in the late 1950s also concluded that the Army was not building the expertise necessary to effectively manage its complex and wide-ranging responsibilities. As a result, a growing number of Army leaders had become convinced that the Army did not possess the intellectual capital demanded by its full range of roles and missions that the nation expected it to. Still, it was the shock administered by McNamara to the Pentagon's entrenched uniformed establishment that finally moved the services to consider fundamental changes in the ways they developed their officers.[13]

There were, of course, profound external forces driving the Army toward a reevaluation of officer development as well. Since 1945, transformations in technology, international affairs, and the ways of warfare made a reevaluation imperative, as did the Army's rapidly expanding responsibilities in the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1965, then Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson announced that the Army was adding "nation-building" to its traditional missions of defending against external threats and ensuring domestic order. Confronted with insurgencies that threatened the international balance of power, political leaders called upon the military services to help friendly governments in the underdeveloped world quell internal disorder and build a foundation for economic and social progress. To meet its new mandate, the Army needed officers proficient in foreign languages, conversant with foreign cultures, and capable of performing the many duties and responsibilities encompassed under the rubric of civil affairs. The importance of nation-building as an Army mission was reaffirmed in the late-sixties with the propagation of the Nixon Doctrine. That doctrine put a premium on officer education across the entire spectrum of social, economic, political, and military measures that would make for successful US stability and counterinsurgency efforts.[14]

Beginning in the mid-1960s, the services were also asked to take an increasingly active role in solving some of the nation's "serious domestic problems." Riots, crime, juvenile delinquency, poverty, unemployment, an underperforming educational system and a host of other societal maladies were, as officials in the Johnson and Nixon administrations pointed out, tearing apart the social fabric of the nation and undermining national security. The Army was called upon to provide officers with the special skills, abilities and knowledge necessary to develop and administer social programs that could attack these ills.[15]

As a result of its rapidly expanded global and domestic responsibilities, the Army began to revise the curricula in its school system to encompass the wide array of subjects and topics deemed necessary. The intent was to go beyond training officers as highly competent commanders and instead produce intellectually astute and innovative leaders who were capable of understanding complex issues, be they command-related or not. This new spirit touched all rungs of the Officer Education System, although it was particularly evident at higher levels where the emphasis on the social, political and technological aspects of national strategy was the strongest.

Two review boards convened during this period provide some insight into the direction officer development was taking: the Haines Board (1966) and the Norris Review (1971). Each

made truly transformative recommendations which, while not fully enacted, did more to change the officer developmental process than anything else since the end of World War II. The Haines Board concluded that the Army's school system should shift focus from preparing officers for their next assignment and instead concentrate on the "professional" aspects of a military career. Such an orientation, appropriate to varying degrees for all rungs of the system, was deemed particularly important at the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College. Courses at these institutions, the board asserted, should be geared more toward studies and related to national strategy and international affairs and only secondarily toward "Army problems" and the functioning of higher level staffs. The board quoted approvingly one general officer's thumbnail assessment of the Army's school system, who characterized the existing system of officer education and training as obsolete. It paralleled

> "…very closely those which obtained prior to World War II. They [i.e., the schools] have not advanced abreast of the times…there is a tendency to reject insertion into the curriculum of subjects or courses (personnel and business management, politico-military affairs, history, economics) that are not purely military but which are needed to train officers for the wide variety of tasks and assignments they will be called upon to fill."[16]

Another theme was that schools should place more stress on education and less on training. Instead of drilling students in the "technicalities" of their profession, the Board insisted, they should be encouraged to question established practices, experiment with new concepts, and try new practices, procedures and techniques. Courses should have sufficient depth and substance to provide a meaningful and satisfying intellectual experience to officers, which they currently did not. This would not only improve cognitive capacity and decision making powers but also constitute a powerful retention tool for the intelligent and ambitious.[17]

To give Army courses more rigor and intellectual validity, the board proposed that the school system enter into a closer relationship with the civilian academic community. As things were, Army schools were "inbred" and generally isolated from the "mainstream of academic thought." This was largely true even at the higher levels of the Army school system. School authorities, the board proposed, should reach out to the civilian academic community by attending conferences such as those sponsored by the Association of Higher Education, the Association of American Colleges, and various universities and, at the same time, engage distinguished civilian scholars and educators to review various aspects of the military education system and provide recommendations for improvements.[18]

The conclusions of the Norris Review were in many respects similar to that of the Haines Board. The review identified several challenges facing the Army Officer Corps and its school system in the 1970s. The nation's Vietnam driven anti-militarism, educational explosion, and social revolution would all have a significant impact on the way the Army trained its leaders. These developments, the review concluded, posed thorny "socio-psychological" issues that added "a new dimension of difficulty and complexity" to the Army's expanding range of missions.[19] Effective communication with the civilian scientific and technological communities, it noted, called for officers who had a level of education and expertise essentially equivalent to their civilian colleagues. Collectively, the Officer Corps would have to possess a wider and deeper set of talents in an era where technology was exponentially expanding knowledge

creation.[20] If the Army did not adjust to these new realities, the review warned, it would find itself being left behind in the race for relevance, societal stature and funding. It was a view that resonated reasonably well in the Officer Corps during the period under review.[21]

For the officer development process, this meant, according to the Norris Review, that Army schools would have to emphasize education over training and cultivate a closer working relationship with the civilian academic world. In addition, the review argued for equipping officers with a greater understanding of all the external factors that were impinging on and threatening to disrupt the military profession. Thus, instead of imparting factual knowledge and teaching techniques, the Army school system would have to focus on the development of conceptual thinking, critical judgment, and creativity in its officers.[22]

Graduate Education for Officers, 1946 to 1973.

Another lens through which one can view and assess officer development is the strength of the full-time graduate education program operated by the Army. Officer graduate education dates back to June, 1775 when medical officers began attending schools that prepared them to be military physicians. After a period of relative dormancy, the Army's emphasis on graduate work was renewed in 1867 following an assessment of operations during the Civil War. Army doctors, dentists, and veterinarians were the first to benefit from the new policy. Shortly thereafter, however, other officers began receiving advanced training in ballistics, metallurgy, and engineering sciences at civilian institutions. Later, business administration was added to the mix. This civil schooling program gradually expanded until by the onset of World War I, it had reached a substantial size.[23]

In a legal sense, the beginning of the program can be traced to the National Defense Act in June of 1916, which allowed for up to eight percent of the Officer Corps to undertake graduate studies (although nothing near that percentage was ever reached). A damper was placed on the program in the early 1920s by a cost-conscious Congress. The National Defense Act of 1920 stipulated that graduate level education for officers must meet officially recognized and specific Army requirements. This meant, of course, the flow of officers into graduate training would be severely curtailed.[24]

In 1927, the Military Academy started sending officers to civilian institutions for graduate work in a few chosen fields such as English and the social sciences. These officers pursued their degrees at night and during the summer when classes were not in session. The Corps of Engineers and some of the technical services also adopted this practice. Later, the Army sent selected officers to China, Japan, France, and Mexico to study languages, to Harvard to study business administration, and to universities such as MIT to study engineering and other "technical" subjects. The numbers involved were not great. A 1938 report recorded that just over one percent of the Officer Corps engaged in graduate study, and the number of officers actually attaining master's degrees was even smaller. Graduate training, after all, was intended to fill a specific need, not to enhance the academic credentials of the officer.[25]

It was during World War II that the need for greater depth and breadth of officer education became evident. As a result, the Army's graduate education program took off in 1946. Due largely to the efforts of the Gerow Board, the initial post-war batch of 164 officer-students began graduate studies in June of that year.[26]

The Cold War stimulated Army leaders to expand the boundaries of the military profession. Senior officers now had to be conversant with diplomacy, foreign trade, industrial and

technological development along with the political, economic, social and scientific aspects of national strategy to a much greater degree than in decades past. Accordingly, after 1946, a gradually increasing number of officers were sent to graduate training to master the complexities that now fell into the Army's domain. Between 1946 and 1962, that number rose from 164 to 554.[27]

There was some sentiment in Congress and among senior Army leaders that the number of officers receiving advanced education was not nearly enough to meet requirements. The Gerow Board had recommended that the two percent cap placed on officers attending graduate programs be removed, believing that five percent of authorized strength was a more realistic percentage. By 1948, Congress was prepared to exceed that percentage, authorizing the Secretary of the Army to send to up to eight percent of the Regular Army officer strength and eight percent of the actual Reserve Component officer strength to graduate school. In 1952, the program was broadened to include training with industrial and commercial institutions. Six years later, the Williams board registered yet another plea for and enlarged civilian schooling program. Not only did the numbers of slots requiring a graduate degree have to be enlarged, the board argued, but slots had to be filled using a more realistic manning formula. As it was, one officer was allotted to each vacancy. This did not allow room for officers to complete other career enhancing assignments and left no room for rapid expansion, emergency conditions, or changes in national policy. The board suggested that three of four officers should be trained for each position.[28]

In the 1950s, these impulses for an enlarged and more robust graduate school program were constrained by fiscal realities, heavy operational demands, and the entrenched view in some quarters that officers worked principally in the operational realm and simply didn't need graduate level education. Officers were to be sent to graduate school only to the extent necessary to meet specific, carefully calculated requirements. This policy, of course, played well in Congress and with the administration, where Cold War fiscal discipline was a prime concern. As in the military education system, the emphasis was on immediate payback rather than on long term value.[29]

By 1960, however, the civil schooling program became progressively more robust. Indeed, the 1960s and the early 1970s were, in many respects, the Golden Age of fully funded graduate education in the Army. Validated requirements for officers with advanced degrees doubled between 1960 and 1965. Over the subsequent five years, these requirements nearly doubled again. Moreover, the Army's officer inventory grew, allowing the ratio of officers studying per validated higher education requirements to rise sharply. The cause of graduate education was helped along by the creation of the Army Educational Requirements Board (AERB) in 1963. By permitting a more precise determination of advanced civil schooling requirements, the AERB paved the way for greater congressional and DoD acceptance of stated Army needs.[30]

While technological innovation and increasing global and domestic responsibilities created pressure to expand officer graduate level education, individual prestige and institutional credibility were additional factors pushing the Army in this direction. The Williams Board had observed that a growing number of officers viewed master's degrees as a sign of professional and societal status. The Haines Board made the point with even greater force, arguing that the baccalaureate degree was "no longer the hallmark of an educated man."[31] By the mid-1960s, about 25 percent of college students entered into a graduate program shortly after graduation. At the nation's most selective institutions, this percentage was as high as 90 percent. Indeed, authorities at some of these top end institutions were reluctant to admit students who did not aspire to a doctorate or professional degree. This might seem "somewhat extreme" to the layman,

the Williams Board noted, but it reflected the conviction of "academicians in the vanguard of education today." If the military profession wanted to be viewed in the same light as other respected professions, the board insisted, it would have to ensure that its practitioners possessed the requisite educational credentials.[32]

Prestige became an even more salient consideration in the 1960s after Secretary McNamara and his "whiz kids" assumed leadership of the Pentagon. Senior leaders in the Department of the Army, who often had little experience or background in the functional areas they were assigned to superintend, were called upon to evaluate and defend a variety of complicated initiatives. While their broad based military experience had prepared them well for previous command positions, it was frequently not effective in preparing them for what they now had to contend. They often appeared confused and incompetent when confronted by specialists from the Defense Department, the Bureau of the Budget or Congress. When dealing with experts, they discovered that intuition and general background knowledge were often inadequate substitutes for true subject matter expertise.[33]

The frequently displayed inability of some of its senior members to deal with complex issues and stand up to expert questioners instilled a sense of intellectual inferiority and professional self-doubt in the Officer Corps. To some, it seemed the military profession was being high-jacked by a corps of highly educated civilian elitists who accorded little respect to the intellectual abilities of soldiers. If Army leaders hoped to reestablish control over the military profession, some concluded, they would have to develop an intellectual ability rivaling that of their civilian counterparts in the Defense Department.[34]

Finally, opportunities for advanced schooling were believed key to retention among junior officers. Rising educational aspirations among younger Americans was making it difficult for the Army to retain talented lieutenants and captains. Studies conducted at the time showed that the higher the education level and the higher the selectivity of undergraduate institution attended, the more likely it was for the officer to leave the service at the earliest opportunity. Both the Haines Board and the Norris Review asserted that graduate education was key to keeping talented officers in the service. If the Army did not expand its fully funded graduate programs, these reviews cautioned, it might find itself "behind the educational power curve" and increasingly unable to compete with civilian industry.[35]

The Army School System in the Age of the All Volunteer Force, 1973-1985.

With the advent of the All Volunteer Force in 1973, the Army's Officer Education System finally experienced something of a transformation. This was driven by, among other things, a redefinition of the threat and a reevaluation of the Army's missions. Many senior leaders had been disheartened by the Vietnam experience and were anxious for the Army to put that conflict behind it. As the war in Southeast Asia wound down, they increasingly turned their attention to the growing threat posed by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies in Europe. General William E. DePuy, the first chief of the Training and Doctrine Command, and his deputy, General Paul F. Gorman, took the lead in strategically refocusing the Army to deal with the international realities of the 1970s — realities that were more easily grasped and cleanly defined that those that had confronted the Army during Vietnam.

As Depuy assumed his new duties at Fort Monroe, he focused heavily upon two things: rectifying the mistakes he believed the Army made during Vietnam and preparing it for the challenges posed by the Warsaw Pact in Europe. The Soviets had built up a powerful and well-

trained army that was thought capable of quickly overwhelming the motley collection of units that the NATO allies could throw up against them. DePuy and Gorman's formula for combating this threat was shaped in part by the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. That conflict demonstrated the greatly increased lethality of weapons that had occurred over the previous decade. It also highlighted the need for better tactical training, well-drilled crews, skilled tactical commanders, and combined arms coordination. These lessons shaped the U.S. Army's vision of modern war. TRADOC soon became absorbed in distilling new, clear doctrinal prescriptions derived from that vision and focused specifically on conditions in Central Europe.

To that end, DePuy implemented what he called a "back to basics" approach to officer development. Concerned that training in the Army had "almost disappeared," he pushed the Army school system away for what he considered undue emphasis upon higher education and back towards tactical training. Accordingly, officer schools, from the pre-commissioning level all the way up to the War College, were told to concentrate on preparing officers for their next assignment. The Army must be prepared, DePuy and Gorman emphasized, to win the first battle of the next war. Long term professional development and the building of critical thinking skills, which the Haines Board wanted to promote, were to be put on the backburner. Military proficiency and "tactical competence" were now the Army's watchwords.

Generals DePuy and Gorman agreed that what was needed was a "train-evaluate-train" methodology that held soldiers of all ranks to strict performance standards. This methodology was embedded in DePuy's famous "systems approach to training" or SAT. The SAT consisted of five interrelated phases: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. All training in the Army was gradually reconfigured to adhere to this SAT model.[36]

This emphasis upon tactical proficiency and technical competence did not abate upon DePuy's retirement, but continued with undiminished ardor over the next decade. In the spring of 1977, an "agreement" was reached among senior leaders about the existing (and unsatisfactory) state of officer training and education in the Army. Due primarily to a lack of funds, that agreement contended, the Army's school system was still not producing officers with "the desired level of military competency" envisaged by DePuy and Gorman. Shortly thereafter, the Chief of Staff, General Bernard Rogers, directed Major General B.L. Harrison to conduct a thorough-going review of the way that the Army educated and trained its officers. The result was the landmark Review of Education and Training for Officers (RETO), a study that set the direction for the school system and the officer development process for the rest of the Cold War and beyond.[37]

The RETO report stressed the importance of officers mastering the knowledge and skills "unique to the military profession." The principal purpose of the school system, it insisted, was to prepare officers for "war fighting." In the Basic and Advanced Courses, lieutenants and captains should acquire the skills necessary to operate small units. At the Command and General Staff College the War College, field grade officers should acquire the skills necessary to lead larger units.[38]

Contrasting the RETO recommendations for the War College's curriculum with those of the earlier Haines Board brings their differences into stark relief. As noted earlier, the Haines Board concluded that the military profession was being increasingly affected by a variety of social, political, economic foreign affairs and scientific factors. Consequently, an officer corps which only understood purely "army" matters was insufficient. Those designated for high level assignments needed to be familiar with subjects, disciplines and perspectives that transcended

the military art — subjects, disciplines and perspectives that would permit them to understand and intelligently shape national strategy and foreign policy.

The RETO report fundamentally differed from this view, emphasizing training over education and recommending a shift of the War College curriculum back towards the military arts. The War College, it asserted, should be focused on the command and control of large units (corps level and above). More instruction should be given in joint and combined operations in a "coalition warfare environment" and more attention devoted to such topics as emergency action procedures, force planning and structuring, and the "strategic deployment and tactical employment of large units marshaled on short notice for specific purposes." Courses on foreign policy, history, economics, political science and other subjects that did not directly relate to ground combat did not play a large role in the RETO scheme for the War College.[39]

The next major review of officer professional development was the Professional Officer Development Study (PDOS) published in 1985. Like the Haines Board and the RETO study, the PDOS reflected the direction the Army's school system was going. Its basic themes were largely similar to those presented by the RETO group. The PDOS was written at a time when the Army was under attack by observers within and outside the military who charged that the Officer Corps was not prepared "for war and combat" and that the officer development process was too focused upon producing efficient peacetime managers rather than effective combat leaders.

The PDOS largely acknowledged the validity of these charges.[40] Its authors asserted that the principal mission of the Army's educational system was to prepare leaders to win on the battlefield. As things stood, they noted, there was a lack of focus on "war fighting and combat action" in officer education and training. The recommended that Army schools reorient instruction to produce "technically and tactically proficient" officers capable of effectively employing weapons systems, prepared for their next assignment, and, perhaps above all, possessing the "warrior spirit." Technical competence, tactical skill, and the ability to appropriately apply doctrine were essential components of this spirit. Whenever possible, the necessary skills and competencies were to be acquired through "hands-on field training," which was considered to be the most effective method of learning. Moreover, the PDOS underscored the importance of time spent in troop units, which was not only the best preparation for their wartime duties but was vital to unit readiness and the overall state of training in the Army. Thus, the Army officer development system of the late-1980s accelerated the emphasis on training begun under DePuy and Gorman in 1973.[41]

Graduate Education in the Age of the All-Volunteer Force.

Given the above, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Army's commitment to, and emphasis upon, fully funded graduate education for officers gradually eroded after 1973. That erosion was reflected in the sharp drop in validated positions for graduate degree holders in the officer inventory. By this measure, the apogee of graduate education in the Army took place in 1972. Thereafter, the trend was sharply downward. Between the end of the Vietnam War and the Grenada intervention, the number of officer positions certified by the AERB as needing a graduate degree fell by about 37 percent. This decline, it is important to note, was steeper and more rapid than the overall reduction in officer strength that took place in this period (it declined by about 23 percent).

Certainly, the high cost of fully-funded graduate education was a powerful force behind this downward trend. Calls for a scaling back of the program began to grow in frequency and

intensity as the services withdrew from Southeast Asia and as pressures on the defense budget mounted. In 1973, the General Accounting Office published a report that was highly critical of advanced degree programs in the services — at least those that took officers out of units for extended periods of time. That report found a host of management irregularities in the program. First, the criteria that the services used to identify positions requiring graduate work, the GAO reported, were "so broad and permissive" that they were practically worthless. Not only were these criteria excessively broad, they were inconsistently applied. In their survey of 14 military installations, GAO researchers found many "validated" positions where the need for a graduate degree was questionable at best. At CONUS Army headquarters, for example, five assistant chaplain positions were certified as needing graduate degrees in comptrollership. Moreover, most officers who had been sent to earn an advanced degree were not working in their designated specialty. Almost 70 percent of the officers surveyed were found to be in this category. The picture that the GAO painted was of a program out of control.[42]

The GAO urged that the fully funded graduate education should be approved only when it was an "essential prerequisite" for the satisfactory performance of duty. In addition, it suggested that less expensive alternatives such as appropriate work experience, short training courses, and partially-funded, "after hours" graduate programs be allowed to substitute for full-time study. The civilianization of validated positions was another alternative it championed.[43]

The DoD challenged the report, contending that the GAO failed to recognize the "intangible" value and benefits of graduate education. Of particular concern to the DoD was the GAO's failure to acknowledge: (a) the rising educational aspirations of the segment of the population from which the services had to recruit military officers; (b) the value of graduate education to ongoing junior officer retention efforts; and (c) the increased capability that an officer with graduate level education brought to billets that lay outside the scope of his or her academic credentials. Graduate study, the DoD noted in regard to the last point, contributes to the intellectual development of officers, cultivating the capacity for "original thought" and promoting "the development of analytical tools for problem solving."[44]

The authors of the GAO report were unimpressed by the Defense Department's rebuttal. They countered that the supposed benefits of graduate education must be weighed against its substantial costs and the extended periods that officers participating in the program were away from their normal duties. In their report to Congress, they recommended that more "stringent criteria" should be applied to the validation of graduate positions and that full-time graduate education should be kept within strict limits. The utilitarian approach to advanced study espoused by the GAO would steadily gain traction over the next decade.[45]

In subsequent years, reports by other federal agencies exposed similar shortcomings in and came to similar conclusions about fully funded graduate education in the services. During the same period, Congress and the Defense Department subjected the budgets for graduate education to closer and closer scrutiny. The effects of these developments were cumulative - graduate level educational opportunities for officers steadily eroded away.

Insight into just how far graduate study had fallen in the Army's post-Vietnam officer developmental system can be gained by juxtaposing the Haines Board and the Norris Review, on the one hand, with the RETO report and the PDOS, on the other. The former underlined the importance of fashioning an officer corps possessed of broad vision, critical thinking skills, and the wide range of academic and intellectual talents needed to run a modern military establishment. The emphasis was clearly on education, as opposed to training, and on close cooperation with the civilian academic community. Graduate schooling was a high priority.

Indeed, there was a fear that if the Army did not raise the collective intellectual acumen of its officers, the military profession itself might be taken over by civilian interlopers.

The RETO report and the PDOS differed markedly. Both can be seen as a reaction by those leaders who thought the Army of the 1960s and early-seventies went too far in accommodating the values and norms of the civilian world. In these documents, military proficiency, technical competence, and tactical skill were the overarching themes. What the Army needed, the PDOS and RETO report implied, was not scholars but warriors, not managers but leaders, not military executives but commanders and, in the Army School System, not education but training. The skills and proficiencies necessary to meet mission requirements and reassert uniformed leadership over the military profession were not to be developed through intellectual exercises in classrooms but through rigorous "hands-on training" in a field environment and service in tactical units.

Thus, in the environment in which the Army found itself after Vietnam, graduate school lost much of its luster. At a West Point Founder's Day celebration in 1976, one distinguished retired four-star general — one known for his wide learning and intellectual prowess — roundly denounced the ACS program. He asserted that officers should not be pursuing graduate degrees in academic disciplines, which he clearly regarded as frivolous for the professional soldier. Instead, in his opinion, they should be focused on earning a master's degree "in the Army," by which he meant getting as much experience as possible in career-enhancing tactical assignments. His remarks were greeted with enthusiastic applause.[46]

Some have interpreted the decline of the Army's officer graduate degree program after 1973 as a sign of the institution's long-standing and deeply rooted anti-intellectualism. There had always been present within the Officer Corps, to paraphrase Thaddeus Holt, a disdain for those whose work entails not the accomplishment of tangible and immediately evident results but passive observation and analysis. With the advent of the All-Volunteer Force, this anti-intellectualism seemed to steadily gain strength as the Army's strategic focus shifted, as the memories of Vietnam faded, and as the institutional self-doubt of the 1960s and early 1970s gave way to a robust confidence. Many officers began to feel that perhaps the civilian academic community had as much to learn from them as they did from the civilian academic community.

Conclusion.

Since World War II, the evolution of officer education and training (and to an extent the officer development process itself) has been shaped by a number of factors, both internal and external to the Army. Externally controlled factors included strategic priorities, the Army's roles and missions, political and social pressures, and, of course, budgetary realities while internally controlled factors entailed operational needs and doctrine and personnel policies (officer recruiting and retention especially).

In absolute terms, the decade and a half after World War II was a period in which, in the world of officer professional development, training and tactical experience trumped professional and graduate education. In the Army school system, the focus, from pre-commissioning through the War College, was on preparation for command and the next assignment. While it true that, in recognition of technological advances and the complexities of the new strategic situation brought on by the Cold War, graduate education experienced a steady if gradual expansion, it was held within strict bounds and limited to specific purposes. Fiscal austerity explains some of this but so, too, does the prevailing view that graduate school was peripheral to the military profession,

good perhaps for a small body of experts but not an avenue taken by officers on the road to high rank and professional distinction.

The 1960s and the early 1970s witnessed a noticeable shift in the Army's priorities and orientation. In the Army school system, this was manifested by a renewed stress on professional education and a concomitant de-emphasis of training. Schools were instructed to make their courses more intellectually challenging, add depth and substance to their curricula, focus on long-term professional development instead of the next assignment, encourage a spirit on inquiry and experimentation, and reach out to civilian educational institutions and associations to enrich the content of their programs. At the same time, the Army's commitment to graduate school deepened. The number of validated positions grew by a factor of four between 1960 and 1970 and almost five by 1972. Moreover, graduate school no longer perceived to be just for specialists who had given up on promotion to the top ranks of Army leaders. Highly competitive officers now pursued master's degrees and doctoral degrees to bolster their professional resume. The new view of officer professional development reflected an expanded set of roles and missions, a heightened awareness of the growing complexity of the military profession, a mounting sense of institutional self-doubt induced by the trauma inflicted by a McNamara-dominated defense establishment, societal changes, and a desire to solve the critical junior officer retention problem.

After Vietnam, the Army returned to an earlier conception of the officer development process. The primacy of training and preparation for the next assignment gradually reasserted itself while professional education and long-term development took a back seat. Unlike the Haines Board (which urged that the school system produce innovative, inquisitive officers with critical thinking skills), the RETO report and the PDOS pushed for technically competent and tactically skilled officers thoroughly imbued with the warrior ethos. Meanwhile, the cause of full-time graduate education suffered a setback. A master's degree from a reputable institution no longer had the professional cachet it did in the sixties and early seventies, when even the Army's best and brightest "warriors" vied for a chance to attend graduate school. New strategic priorities and operational doctrines explain some of this, as do budget constraints, public and internal criticism born of operational mishaps such as the ones that occurred in Iran and Grenada, and, as Vietnam receded into the past, a growing sense of institutional self-confidence.

In the four decades after 1945, architects of the Army's officer development process struggled to find the appropriate balance between education and training, between preparation for the immediate and preparation for the long-term, between leadership and management, and between technical competence and intellectual agility. Today, the Army's officer development system operates in essential agreement with the vision articulated by General Depuy in 1973, one that subordinates intellectual and strategic astuteness to tactical and operational expertise. How appropriate it is for an army trying to make its way in the Conceptual Age is currently a matter of intense debate.

---

[1] John W. Masland & Laurence I. Radway, *Soldiers and Scholars: Military Education and National Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 84-86.
[2] *Ibid*., 87-90.
[3] *Ibid*., 96-97.
[4] Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948), 45.
[5] War Department, Report of the War Department Military Education Board on the Educational System for Officers of the Army (Gerow Board), Washington, DC: 17 February 1946; 10-11 (hereafter referred to as the Gerow Board

Report); Department of the Army, Report of the Department of the Army Board on Educational System for Officers (Eddy Board), Washington, DC: 15 June 1949, 7-9, (hereafter referred to as the Eddy Board Report).
[6] Eddy Board Report, 1.
[7] Gerow Board Report, 5.
[8] Department of the Army, Report of the Department of the Army Officer Education and Training Review Board (Williams Board), Washington, DC: 1958, 1 and 10, (hereafter referred to as the Williams Board Report).
[9] Masland & Radway, *Soldiers and Scholars*, 507-509.
[10] Allen W. Wiegand, Military Participation in Systems Analysis, USAWC, 8 April 1966, 21.
[11] Samuel P. Huntington, "Power, Expertise, and the Military Profession," *Daedalus* (Fall 1963): 785; Thaddeus Holt, The Army Officer Corps and the Pentagon in 1965-1967: Miscellaneous Observations, 7; found in Thaddeus Holt. Papers. 1 Box. Archives of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.
[12] Robert N. Ginsburgh, "The Challenge to Military Professionalism," *Foreign Affairs* (January 1964): 255-268; Cole, iv, 5 and 40, 1964.
[13] Robert J. Baer, "Are We Trimming the Fat or Wasting Needed Talent?" Student Essay, USAWC, 7 April 1967, 11.
[14] Harold K. Johnson, "The Army's Role in Nation Building and Preserving Stability," *Army Information Digest* (November, 1965): 6-13.
[15] Robert E. Ayers, Army Talent in the Domestic Arena, Student Thesis, USAWC, 9 March 1970, 2; Memorandum, Melvin R. Laird, U.S. Secretary of Defense, For Secretaries of the Military Departments, April 28, 1969, Subject: Domestic Action Council.
[16] Department of the Army, *Report of the Department of the Army Board to Review Army Officer Schools* (Haines Board), Washington, DC: February 1966, I:27 and III: 449, (hereafter referred to as the Haines Board Report).
[17] *Ibid*., I:32 and III:414.
[18] *Ibid*., III: 751.
[19] Frank W. Norris, *Review of Army Officer Educational System* (Norris Review), Washington, DC: 1 December 1971, 2-1 to 2-10, (hereafter referred to as the Norris Review).
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Williams Board Report, 223; Norris Review I: 2/5 and 2/6.
[22] *Ibid*., 2-5.
[23] Haines Board Report, II:263.
[24] *Ibid*., II:266.
[25] Masland and Radway, *Soldiers and Scholars*, 88; In 1933, Congress authorized the USMA to award a BS degree to its graduates; in part, this authorization was sought to facilitate the enrollment of increasing numbers of regular officers in civilian universities for graduate study, particularly the sciences.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] *Ibid*., 20-21.
[28] Gerow Board Report, 7-8; Williams Board Report, 35.
[29] Haines Board Report, II: 263; Masland and Radway, *Soldiers and Scholars*, 508.
[30] Haines Board Report, I: 17 and III: 415; Norris Review, I: 41.
[31] Haines Board, III:457.
[32] Williams Board Report, 231; Haines Board Report, III:695-696.
[33] Minot B. Dodson, US Regular Army Officers and Graduate Degrees, USAWC, 2 May 1963, 24-25.
[34] Ginsburgh, "The Challenge to Military Professionalism," 258.
[35] Haines Board, III:415-416-1966; Norris I:8/8.
[36] Department of the Army, Review of Education and Training for Officers (RETO), Washington, DC: 30 June1978, I:v (Hereafter referred to as the RETO Report).
[37] RETO Report I:vi.
[38] *Ibid*., III:2, 8 and 15.
[39] *Ibid*., III:15.
[40] Department of the Army, Professional Development of Officers Study (PDOS), Washington, DC: February 1985, I:21 (hereafter referred to as the PDOS); Donald R. Baucom, "The Professional Soldier and the Warrior Spirit," *Strategic Review* (Fall 1985): 43; James J. McCleskey, III, The U.S. Army Professional Development of Officers Study: A Critique, USAWC, 22 March 1986.
[41] PDOS, I:34.

[42] General Accounting Office, Improvements Needed in Determining Graduate Education Requirements for Military Officer Positions, Report No. B-165558, Washington, DC: GAO, August 28, 1973, 2-3, 15, 22.
[43] *Ibid*., 22.
[44] *Ibid*., 18.
[45] *Ibid*., 20.
[46] Personal recollection of the author, who attended this event.