

The Army and Academic Culture

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The modern American college campus is a curious place for servicemen today. It is a place where eighteen-year-old students who have decided to serve their nation sometimes feel the mild sting of casual disdain and episodic examples of sophomoric persecution. Before long, this experience will be common for a third generation of American servicemen and women. It is not, therefore, remarkable that at this point, some forty years after anti-military protests first started gaining traction on campuses across the country, those who are occasionally the subjects of these anti-military sentiments are themselves somewhat put out.¹ What these servicemen and women often believe they are seeing, even when it is not intended as such, is a criticism of them personally. The generic, vaguely anti-military experience many students have in college is often merely a reflection of the general sentiments of large segments of the faculty. The result, however, is an environment in which future military officers are told in large ways and small that the life choice that they are making is wrong, immoral, or just plain dumb. One vignette can

¹The first large-scale protests of the Vietnam War started in 1965. That spring, following the lead of the faculty at the University of Michigan, faculty at some 122 colleges and universities had a “teach-in” protesting the war. At the same time, the first national-level action of the Students for a Democratic Society took place, when a twenty thousand-person march on Washington occurred that April. A second lieutenant, graduating that year, might have a son who could graduate from college and be commissioned in 1989. Assuming again that each has a child within a year after graduation, such a son could have a child who is today seventeen years old and about to enter college.

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serve to illustrate the general outlook which seems common across the country among faculty members. The narrator was a student. The exchange took place in the late 1990s.

A few months before, I'd seen a poster in the dining hall advertising a talk by Tom Ricks. Then the *Wall Street Journal's* Pentagon correspondent, Ricks had recently written a book about the Marines. I stayed up most of one night reading it. I arrived early to get a good seat and listened as Ricks explained the Corps's culture and the state of civil-military relations in the United States. His review of the Marine, or at least my interpretation of it, was glowing. The Marine Corps was the last bastion of honor in society, a place where young Americans learned to work as a team, to trust one another and themselves, and to sacrifice for a principle. Hearing it from a recruiter, I would have been skeptical. But here was a journalist, an impartial observer.

The crowd was the usual mix of students, faculty, and retired alumni. After the talk, a young professor stood up. "How can you support the presence of ROTC at a place like Dartmouth?" she asked. "It will militarize the campus and threaten our culture of tolerance."²

Many servicemen and women have only a light understanding of history, and so blame this attitude upon the political Left, which admittedly has a strong hold within academe and which it might be fairly said has led the way in these sentiments in the past few decades. These opinions are then often reinforced and further fueled by extremist opinions on the political Right. The result is a reactive attitude towards academia from within the military that is to some degree self-fulfilling.³ Most involved in this fugue look back no further than the effects of the Vietnam War and the obvious fracture that occurred during that war between the military and roughly half of the American population. But the reality is that generic animus towards the professional military is a tradition with a far longer heritage here in the United States, although it was not always focused on college campuses.

²Nathaniel Fick, *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Officer* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 5.

³Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69–72. A West Point graduate and Vietnam veteran, Bacevich makes particular note of the rise of neoconservatism as a reaction by the Right to the dominance of the "New Left" on many campuses and throughout the antiwar effort of 1965–1973.

Historians note that through most of American history there has been disdain for military service among the general population.⁴ Periodically, this dismissive feeling ballooned into full-blown antipathy toward standing armed forces, but all in all it is agreed that anti-militarism is a very old element of the American psyche. What is actually an anomaly are the generally positive feelings towards a large standing army that were expressed in this country from roughly 1946 through about 1968.

This sentiment of distrust was rooted primarily in the idea that standing military forces represented a threat to individual liberty. The greatest fear, harbored right at the outset by the new nation, was that the military might break loose from the bonds of civilian control. It was an attitude that came with the colonists to America from England. A good starting point for documenting this line of political sentiment might be the 1697 publication of a book by one John Trenchard. His title? *An Argument Shewing, that a Standing Army is inconsistent with a Free Government, and absolutely destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy*, which pretty much says it all, doesn't it?⁵ Although the mood went through periods of ebb and flow, it remained a constant in the background of American political thought. The tendency towards distrust of the military rose in parallel with the rise of feelings against English control of the colonies. This line of reasoning found its ultimate expression in the Articles of Confederation, the first governing document for the new nation, which virtually guaranteed that the central government would lack the resources to field a significant standing army.⁶

Of course, as real physical threats to the population receded, so too did the willingness to serve. Whereas during the colonial period, in theory, every able-bodied man was responsible in some way for the defense of home and hearth, as time progressed fewer and fewer bore this burden directly.⁷

⁴For a detailed examination of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attitudes towards the military in peacetime, see Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). For a more tailored depiction of attitudes towards and from officers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784–1861* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

⁵Volker R. Berghahn, *Militarism: The History of An International Debate* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 12.

⁶Garry Willis, *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 31–42. Willis's chapter on the myths of the Revolutionary War cited here is one of the best short treatments of the misplaced faith in militia forces common during and after the Revolutionary War.

⁷Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 94–95, 104–5.

Military service, in the Regulars or in the militia, grew increasingly rare. Constant attention to the “bottom line” within the mercantile society of the American colonies and then the United States exacerbated this inclination among social conservatives and liberals alike.⁸ Whatever the pros and cons in terms of effectiveness and threats to liberty were, regular forces meant higher taxes, which did not sit well with the wealthy, or indeed with most of the American public.⁹ Militia forces, on the other hand, were mythologized and praised. Inexpensive in peacetime, and (in American military mythology anyway) steadfast in war, they were the preferred forces. In short, one might encapsulate the general outlook of the first eighty-five years of the republic as “militias good, Army bad.”¹⁰

In a letter to former president John Adams, William Sumner, Adjutant General of Massachusetts, wrote: “The militia is intended for defense only; standing armies for aggression as well as defense. The history of all ages proves that large armies are dangerous to civil liberty. Militia, however, can never be; for it is composed of citizens only, armed for the preservation of their own liberties.”¹¹ Now consider the implied elements of that statement for a moment. In effect, what Sumner is saying is that the men who serve in the army are not really “citizens.” They may, perhaps grudgingly, be acknowledged to be Americans, but the implication is that they are some sort of second-class element not worthy of the term “citizen.” His attitude, both expressed and implied, is fairly typical for the time.

Those serving in the Regular Army also ran up against social barriers. Enlistment in the ranks was seen as the last resort of the desperately poor, which often meant immigrants fresh off the boats that brought them to the new country. This may partially explain Sumner’s attitude, one common among anti-immigration elements and elitists. It is not without irony then that we should also note that officers also had to contend with a variant of this

⁸Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 143–62.

⁹Coffman, *Old Army*, 7. The first major use of a semi-standing force by an independent United States, the creation of the “Legion of the United States” (more popularly known as “Wayne’s Legion”), was against Native Americans in what is now Ohio. Though they never reached their authorized strength of five thousand men, they did defeat the Indians. In 1794, however, military expenditures consumed fully 40 percent of the entire federal government’s expenditures, something the new nation could not sustain.

¹⁰See Lawrence 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). Cress cites James Harrington’s *Commonwealth for Oceana* (1659) as the starting point for understanding anti-standing army rhetoric.

¹¹Walter Millis, *Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 86.

prejudice against service. In a rampantly egalitarian nation, their sole source of education (at public expense at the U.S. Military Academy) and their role in the strictly hierarchical organization of the military meant that general public opinion tended to regard them as elitist snobs.¹²

Enter Academe

The Civil War did much to change these ideas, and presented some serious issues to Congress as well. Not the least of these was the fact that, contrary to popular belief, war was not a simple affair. It turned out that one could not instantly don a uniform and become a professional soldier. When that was tried, when amateurs took to the field in command of other amateurs, the result was not just slaughter, it was often pointless slaughter. So one needed a source for officers, and in the emergency of the Civil War, West Point was just not enough.¹³

President Thomas Jefferson's purpose in establishing the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1802 was focused less on the provision of specific military training and the development of military capabilities than on the engineering instruction cadets would receive. Jefferson wanted to establish an institution that would produce engineers for the young nation. At the time America had no engineering schools, and the nation needed surveyors and bridge-builders, canal designers (and later railway engineers) and road-builders, and trusting to immigration was not an assured path to national greatness. If the only route to gain those desired skills within her own population was for the United States to found a military school, so be it. But it was a decision that probably forced the generally anti-military Jefferson to hold his nose even as he gave the orders. Jefferson, like many

¹²It should be noted that these critiques only really applied to the army. As set forth in the very Constitution, Congress shall "provide" for a navy, but only "raise" an army. Navies do not represent threats to the government and are technologically focused. Naval officers, therefore, had a technical skill first and foremost. This differentiated them from their ground-bound brethren in that naval officers exhibited the same skills (and discipline) needed of commercial sailors, albeit to a higher degree, and therefore were not viewed as "elitist" per se.

¹³George S. Pappas, *To The Point: The United States Military Academy, 1802–1902* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 321–40. Pappas goes a long way towards explaining the Jacksonian era civilian anti-elitist attitude towards the products of West Point in an earlier chapter, and in the section cited deals with the Civil War critique that West Point had been a haven for secessionists prior to the Civil War. In fact, as Pappas makes clear with solid enrollment and service records, the number of cadets and officers who attended West Point and then later defected to the Confederacy was actually lower than their proportional attendance at the academy, and their numbers almost exactly matched the percentages allotted to them by congressional mandate.

after him, generally believed that any man of “good character” could be an officer. West Point, however, was small. By the time the Civil War began in 1861, only some 1033 graduates were alive, and of that number just 655 were on active duty.¹⁴ The latter figure is the product of all graduating classes from 1830 to 1861.

Thus, despite the advent of America’s military academies at West Point and, later, Annapolis, when America entered the Civil War the method of officer selection and creation was the same old thing. The overwhelming majority of lieutenants and captains were elected, by common vote, from among the recruits; and the majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels (to say nothing of the generals) were selected not on the basis of prior military education, training, or experience, but almost exclusively through political patronage. On the campuses of the few colleges then extant (higher education generally being affordable only to the “better sort of people”), students often enlisted en masse.¹⁵ Quite a few, by the sole qualification of their educations, were subsequently elected junior officers within their companies. Faculty members joined up in large numbers as well, both North and South. In a country without an aristocracy, education was a defining aspect of status, and one discerns not a little sense of noblesse oblige among the students and faculty who took to the colors.¹⁶

But hard in the wake of those initial enthusiastic enlistments and commissions came the carnage of the Battle of Bull Run. It was a chaotic and confused battle waged on the outskirts of Washington, D.C., that highlighted for the world to see what damage two bumbling but heavily armed groups of amateurs led by other amateurs could do to each other. The solution to this problem, or at least a solution to the problem of poorly trained officers, had already been proposed once before.

¹⁴Ibid., 332.

¹⁵The best place to examine Civil War-era military participation is a regimental history of the storied “Harvard Regiment” of the Union Army. The best (and most current) regimental history of that unit is Richard F. Miller, *Harvard’s Civil War: A History of the Twentieth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005). See also Miller’s “Why Don’t Harvard Graduates Join the Military Anymore?” published on the History News Network website: <http://hnn.us/articles/16884.html>.

¹⁶The most celebrated example of this is, of course, Major General Joshua Chamberlain. Until he joined the 20th Maine he had been an obscure professor at Bowdoin College. He led the 20th Maine Infantry in their heroic defense of Little Roundtop at the Battle of Gettysburg (an act for which he won the Medal of Honor) and so distinguished himself during the next two years of the war that he was eventually promoted to Major General and was given the honor of being the commander who oversaw the stacking of their arms by the surrendering Confederate troops at Appomattox.

It was in 1857 that Congressman Justin S. Morrill of Vermont introduced legislation seeking an increase in the government's general support for higher education. His bill provided federal land to the states, land that that would be used to provide the funds for state colleges. But Morrill (as any congressman would) added specification. The states so endowed would be required to provide courses at their universities in mechanics (what we would now call engineering), agriculture...and military tactics. Although passed in 1859, the bill was vetoed by President James Buchanan. It was presented and passed again in 1862, and that time signed into law by President Lincoln. With the exception of the agricultural element, one could argue that in intention it was much the same charter that Jefferson had used in his 1802 creation of the U.S. Military Academy, though on a much larger scale.

Unfortunately, Congress and the president approved the Morrill Act too late to have much impact on the war then raging. States got their land, but the education of future officers who would not even enter service until 1866 was far down on their list of priorities. The war had to be won in the present, and won with the tools on hand—which meant that the old ways would continue at least through the duration of the war. Indeed, once the war was won, America reverted to its historical inclination towards mythology and little was made of the “military training” provision of the Morrill Act. Enforcement of the clause on military training was effectively nonexistent, and the Army for its part did little to challenge that state of affairs. Nonetheless, the increasing complexity (not to mention lethality) of war and the tools of war slowly forced the military to change its hidebound ways. It needed educated officers to form a reserve from which it might draw in times of national emergencies. Still, change came slowly.

For the first thirty years of the Land Grant program Congress only allotted some twenty university teaching positions to be filled by Army officers. In an era of tight budgets and low threats (Canada was not likely to invade), the Army was mostly consigned to the frontiers. That was where the fighting was, and it was small-scale indeed. Accordingly, the Army devoted almost no resources to the efforts on campus. Neither uniforms nor weapons were set aside and, for obvious reasons, the job was seen as a dead end by the officers consigned to it. By 1893, when the allocation for university teaching was raised from twenty to one hundred officers, the damage had already been done. Assignments to campuses was not a route to success for an officer, and in an army that rarely exceeded twenty-five thousand men, it was generally

believed that West Point was an adequate source for future officers. Consequently, as the nineteenth century closed, the military and the campus did not so much clash as exist in mutual isolation. What interaction did occur hardly showed the Army to advantage.

Many of the officers assigned to campus duties focused less on the developing ideas of a rising profession than on turning their cadets into model toy soldiers, adept primarily in marching to and fro across well manicured lawns. Added to this was the lack of any standardized training regime. As Arthur T. Coumbe and Lee S. Harford put it in their report, *U.S. Army Cadet Command—The 10 Year History*:

In some of the larger Land-Grant schools, the Army detailed one Regular Army officer to manage a corps of several thousand cadets. University administrators complained about the quality as well as the quantity of the officers assigned to their institutions. Many received inexperienced second lieutenants when they expected seasoned colonels. Others got officers who were not physically qualified. In 1911, a War Department inspector deemed the retired major serving at North Dakota Agricultural College in Fargo as unfit for his position because of old age—he was to turn 80 on his next birthday.¹⁷

The Regular Army, with only episodic exceptions, focused primarily on policing the frontier, which slowed the pace of institutional change. Keeping the peace, or fighting small conflicts against Native American tribes, was the central element of the army experience throughout the nineteenth century. But as the “frontier constabulary” mission of the Regular Army faded in the 1880s and 1890s, its leaders began to cast about for a new mission.¹⁸ The obvious one was the defense of the nation against foreign enemies trained in the European manner. Despite this, it was not until the 1898 war with Spain that there was any real strong spur to action. The performance of some militia and volunteer units in the Army had been anything but praiseworthy, failures which stood in striking contrast to the successes of the Navy, whose forces

¹⁷Arthur T. Coumbe and Lee S. Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command—The 10 Year History* (Fort Monroe, VA: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Cadet Command, 1996), 11.

¹⁸See Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973). Weigley uses the term “Frontier Constabulary” to describe both the organization and mission of the Army between 1865 and the mid-1890s.

were 100 percent “regular.”¹⁹ The results were the organizational reforms of Secretary of War Elihu Root and the National Guard reform embodied in the Dick Act. While leaving considerable powers to the states, these changes increased the professionalization of the Army and strengthened federal oversight over the state forces. The sources of commissioning, however, still remained something of a sticking point.

Following the outbreak of the First World War, Army chief of staff General Leonard Wood proposed a much broader scheme for training the general population (with an eye towards creating future officers). It was a moderate act of desperation. What the leaders of the Army saw happening in Europe threw them for a loop. Merely contemplating how the United States might expand its overall force from a meager hundred thousand or so (with only a few thousand officers) to something capable of holding ground against armies whose strengths were measured in the millions, was daunting in the extreme. General Wood’s first stab at a solution was the “Citizens Military Training Camp” (CMTC). After a trial run, the first major example of the CMTC was held at Plattsburg, New York, in 1915. It was small. It was inefficient. But it was a start. Over the course of several weeks a few thousand young men received the barest of basic training from some Regular Army cadre. Though this was better than 1861, it soon became evident that this sort of haphazard effort would be insufficient should the nation enter the war. The next year Congress, with the full support of the land-grant universities, created the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). For the first time the army and academe were truly joined.

ROTC started relatively quickly. The first year saw some forty-six schools initiate programs on their campuses with a total enrollment of approximately forty thousand. This was, however, another case of too little and too late. Just as with the original Morrill Act, there would not be time to put the plan into effect before there was a massive need for the products of any such program. Before a year had passed after the passage of the ROTC bill, the United States entered World War I and the size of the Army started a meteoric ascent. The size of the Army blasted upwards from a little more than one hundred thousand officers and men to more than four million men in just under eighteen months. That scale and rate of expansion was too much for the ROTC to support in any meaningful way. And so, once again, America

¹⁹See Graham Cosmas, *An Army for Empire* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998).

sent her young men into harm's way with amateur (if enthusiastic) officers and paid the heavy price.

It was in the wake of the Armistice that the United States witnessed the first developing tensions between the military and academia, as social pressures and politics soured what had been a collegial relationship. The Roaring Twenties had been a comfortable time, but the triple confluence of the onset of the Great Depression, some frustration over the death of more than fifty-four thousand men in nine short months of combat (mostly in 1918), and new social movements provided the impetus for a change in the relationship. As a result, the interwar period saw the emergence of the first virulently anti-military sentiments in America in more than a century. These feelings, however, were not generic.

Directed primarily at the officer corps, this suspicion and condemnation brought the Army into the national spotlight in a way that it had never anticipated. Effectively this was the first time in roughly a century that there was hostility expressed against an element of the military itself instead of towards a foreign policy in which the military played a role. Though there had been very public opposition to the use of the military before (for example, during both the Mexican-American War and the Spanish-American War), this new sentiment came as a shock to serving officers because it was directed against them and not just the use of military force by the government.

The distinction is critical. Soldiers and leaders in the Army had become accustomed to low esteem and indirect slights. In the late nineteenth century it was not uncommon for military spending bills (containing funds for soldier's pay, among other things) to languish on Capitol Hill.²⁰ During some years during the 1800s, soldiers spent half the year waiting for pay because of congressional hang-ups. In many ways the American treatment of soldiers prior to the 1920s and 1930s was akin to the British sentiment towards her soldiers. Kipling's classic poem, "Tommy Atkins," with its reference to "makin' mock o' uniforms that guard you while you sleep," summed up feelings that many American Regulars could understand. But all of this was low-level and generally indirect. Disdain, after all, is not the same as active dislike.

The origins of the anti-military or anti-militaristic feelings of the interwar period are difficult to pin down. Possibly influenced by the Marxist rhetoric

²⁰In one of the more egregious examples of this common phenomenon, Custer's men, at the time of the Battle of the Little Bighorn (at which almost half of them would be killed), had only recently been paid after a six-month delay due to congressional dereliction.

of the era on the left, compounded by the frustration and futility many returning combat veterans felt due to the Depression, both of which added to a resurgence in American isolationism on the political right, and the end result was a broad anti-military sentiment that began permeating the mainstream. America, indeed all of the Western world, was wrestling with a loss of faith in “progress.” Once, all men could look forward and say, “See? Tomorrow will be better than today. Look at all the advances that are being made every day.” After the slaughter of the trenches, the mechanical meatgrinder that was the Western Front, few retained that belief. Replacing confidence in the future was a sense of futility, with a resulting search for someone or something to blame this frustration upon. Much of that blame landed squarely on the armed forces. And university faculties, America’s equivalent to Europe’s “intelligentsia,” played a big role in fixing it there.

On campuses around the country well-respected progressive scholars wrote articles and taught a version of then-recent history that represented a sharp break with past understandings of America. Some contended that America had become involved in World War I because industrialists and military leaders sought to boost profits and garner medals and promotions. The “militarists” were thus to blame for America’s losses in a war that fewer and fewer could defend on moral grounds following American refusal to ratify the Versailles treaty. Anti-militarism was the vogue, far more than at any other point during the twentieth century, and in America it quite easily slipped in to plain-old anti-military emotions.

The mid-1920s saw the first signs that what was local and scattered might become more common. The compulsory nature of ROTC on the campuses of the land-grant universities (and the many private colleges and universities that followed their lead) was the lightning rod for this attention. In 1925 various pacifist organizations banded together to form the “Committee on Militarism in Education,” which demanded, among other things, the removal of ROTC from universities. By 1927 several private universities had made ROTC completely voluntary, Johns Hopkins University and Princeton among them. But the real challenge came from the University of Wisconsin, which filed suit. In 1934 the Supreme Court agreed with them, and ROTC everywhere became voluntary.²¹

²¹Michael S. Neiberg, *Making Citizen Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 29–30.

By the mid-1930s the status of the military had sunk so low that officers assigned to work in and around Washington, D.C., were under orders to wear civilian clothes during the conduct of their normal duties so as not to attract undue negative attention to themselves.²² (The Army played no small role in the dispersal of the “Bonus March” of 1932.) It was only the impending crisis of World War II that saw the reversal of that trend. Yet many officers would not forget the shame and humiliation they had felt during the interwar era, which in many ways was the nadir in American attitudes towards her armed forces, including during and after the Vietnam War.

Post World War II and Vietnam

By the early 1960s the American military and academe were at the apex of their relationship. Thanks to the effects of the GI Bill, which flooded American campuses with returning soldiers and may arguably have been the most significant factor in the burgeoning of the American middle class, universities were well accustomed to the presence of servicemen on campus. Further, given the fact that some fourteen million Americans served in uniform during WWII, veterans comprised a fair percentage of the country’s population. The military was seen as generally competent, and despite the fears elicited by such movies as *Seven Days in May* and *Dr. Strangelove*, America generally believed that the armed forces were the servants of the national will. Vietnam, for many reasons, changed that feeling.

“Why Vietnam?” is a question too many have wrestled with already. There are a host of good works offering different answers to this question, but far fewer studies attempt to address a secondary question, “Why did the focus of blame for the war change from opposition to government policy to opposition to the military itself?”

When President Dwight Eisenhower left office in 1961 there were already some seven hundred American soldiers serving as advisors in South Vietnam. By November 1963, when President Kennedy was assassinated and Lyndon Johnson took the office, there were seventeen thousand.

²²The most widely known account of this uniform issue was recorded by the former aide to the Chief of Staff of the Army in 1930. The chief was General Douglass MacArthur, and his aide was Dwight D. Eisenhower. See Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 212.

Two years later one hundred eighty thousand American troops of all services were in Vietnam, and plans were already in the works for that number to double.

The first signs of a break between academe and the administration came just days after Johnson announced the deployment of Marines to Da Nang, South Vietnam, with faculty members at the University of Michigan organizing a “teach-in” to discuss the nature of the war. Michigan is a big school, but even so the estimated three thousand students who attended represent a surprisingly large turnout. By the end of the spring of 1965 a “National Teach-In” occurred on 122 college campuses nearly simultaneously.²³

That same spring saw the first of the student led antiwar protests in Washington, D.C. Organized by the leftist-influenced Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the scale of the march caught even the organizers somewhat flatfooted. Expecting four or five thousand, the young leaders of SDS were surprised when an estimated twenty thousand protesters showed up in the city.²⁴

As Gerald Nicosia, historian of the antiwar movement points out, a “New Left” was taking shape on America’s campuses. The “Old Left,” political and academic figures who developed socialist inclinations in the 1930s, had been scarred by the Red Scares of the postwar period as well as the realities of the Soviet purges. The New Left, by contrast, was pining for action.²⁵ America, with a much larger new middle class and a massive post-WWII baby boom entering college, was awash with the necessary ingredients for massive civil unrest.

By the late 1960s the civil rights movement and the antiwar movements were fusing. The protests were getting larger and larger (an estimated hundred thousand marched on the Pentagon in 1968), and the environment on college campuses in the North, the Northeast, and the West was becoming decidedly hostile, not just to the policy-makers who made the decision to go

²³*Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War*, ed. Stanley I. Kutler (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), s.v. “Antiwar Movement.”

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Gerald Nicosia, *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans Movement* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001). While Nicosia’s book focuses upon the veterans’ antiwar movement, of necessity it strays into academe as well. Nicosia has several annoying if not glaring factual errors, which is not surprising, since his academic background is in literature, but *Home to War* remains the best single work on the protest movement among veterans.

to war, but to those who would serve their nation in uniform as well.²⁶ At one SDS rally at the University of Washington in 1969 a speaker said, “ROTC is as much a part of the exploitation in Latin America as the United Fruit Company. In order to help the liberation struggles in the Third World we must fight the military as well as the corporation!”²⁷ ROTC became a lightning rod for antiwar sentiment, and at some of the more elite universities was “disinvited” from campus. Just about every one of the Ivies followed this course, Yale, Harvard, and Columbia perhaps most visibly. That, however, was better than the violent alternative.

During the 1969–1970 academic year Air Force ROTC units across the country recorded fifty-five separate attacks against their cadets, instructors or facilities that resulted in either major injuries or major damage, and 138 attacks that ended in minor injuries or damage. The Army ROTC unit at the University of Michigan, however, seems to have had it the worst. That same year they had six major incidents, including a dynamite bombing, attempted arson, a three-day occupation of their building, ROTC vehicles damaged, and a protest that left forty of their windows broken.²⁸ But even that was not the bottom.

When President Richard Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia by American troops on 30 April 1970 campuses across the country erupted in protest, perhaps none more so than Kent State University in northeast Ohio. Although the protests at Kent started peacefully and conventionally enough, by the end of the first day (May 1) full-scale rioting had broken out. Things only got worse. Seeking a target for their anger, the next day student rioters burned down the ROTC building on campus. (The building was closed and nobody was hurt.) In response Governor James Rhodes called out the Ohio National Guard. One day of peace followed, but on May 4 at another protest on campus, the National Guard was present. Without significant (many would say “any”) warning, one platoon opened fire with their rifles on

²⁶In this period it became part of the rallying cry in some quarters to deride the Vietnam War as one conducted for profit by large corporations. It is only a little ironic that the seminal work decrying what we would now refer to as the “Military Industrial Complex” (the authors’ thesis being that the United States entered WWI in order to make profits for the munitions industry and preserve the loans of the banking industry) was originally used by the Nye-Vandenberg committee to castigate the American entry into the First World War. H.C. Engelbrecht and F.C. Hanighen, *Merchants of Death* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1934). Nye, it should be noted, was a Republican.

²⁷Neiberg, *Making Citizen Soldiers*, 120.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 120–22.

the students, killing four and wounding nine.²⁹ This was the nadir: American troops, ironically the inheritors of the mantle of “militia,” using military weapons on American civilians. The reaction was immediate and overwhelming.

Some four hundred fifty schools, from colleges and universities down to high schools, closed almost immediately. Kent State itself was closed for more than a month, and in the only nationwide student strike in American history, an estimated four million students (at more than nine hundred schools) walked out. It would take more than a decade for the United States military to regain something approaching the prestige it had before the outset of the war in Vietnam. ROTC enrollment plummeted. The largest of the ROTC programs, the army’s, recorded a drop from 125,000 cadets in 1969, to 87,000 in 1970, to 45,000 by 1972. With the end of the war in Vietnam (or at least America’s role in that war) the bottom really fell out, and cadet enrollment in Army ROTC hit 31,363.³⁰

By the mid-1980s, however, the military was again an increasingly trusted and popular element in both American general public opinion and, to a lesser degree, on campus. In the Midwest, South, and many areas in the West, colleges once again embraced ROTC detachments and cadets in uniform were increasingly common. (During the low point in the 1970s, some ROTC detachments took to avoiding controversy by the simple expedient of not wearing uniforms on campus.) Although American intervention in Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989), and Desert Storm (1991) occurred during periods of less than booming economic prosperity and, by the time of the last effort, in an international political environment from which the Cold War had disappeared, American opinion decidedly favored these efforts. Yet the resurgence of American affection for the armed forces was (and arguably is) somewhat anomalous in American history. The conditions for a return to the historical norm—disdain for the military, both on campus and off—remained. And on college campuses, any stirring of respect was decidedly muted.

While cadets in ROTC programs no longer had to conceal their identity by not wearing their uniforms on campus, the 1990s saw the emergence of a new angle. In 1993 President Bill Clinton announced the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy for the armed forces. Essentially the policy acknowledged that

²⁹Tom Grace, “As much as we hated the war on April 29, we hated it more on April 30,” in *Patriot: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, ed. Christian J. Appy (New York: Viking Press, 2003), 384–89. Grace was one of the nine people wounded at Kent State on 4 May 1970.

³⁰Neiberg, *Making Citizen Soldiers*, 153.

homosexuals could serve, but it barred them from revealing their sexual orientation by word or deed. In the peaceful 1990s, as the armed forces shrank in size from their Cold War highs, this became the central reason on some campuses for denying the re-admittance of ROTC. The issue was at best low-level. The land-grant universities could not evict ROTC (and in truth most of them never indicated an inclination to do so) and the elite private universities could not be forced to accept them. Then, in 1994, Congress passed the Solomon Amendment.

The Solomon Amendment prohibited universities from barring military recruiters if they accepted federal funding. Almost all accept federal monies, and so the act was potentially important. But from 1994 until late 2001 (in the wake of 9/11), the amendment more or less languished in obscurity. Given the massive drawdowns in the size of American force, there was no perceived need to enforce the provisions of the Solomon Amendment. That changed in 2001.

With the onset of the conflict in Afghanistan (and mindful of those looming), the federal government began to enforce the Solomon Amendment as it was written, and indeed to expand its interpretation. This meant calling for the termination of funding for an entire university if even one component restricted military recruiting. This was seen most publicly in actions taken to put military recruiters on an equal footing with others at law school job fairs. There was, predictably, a legal backlash.

A group of thirty-six law schools and faculties formed the “Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights, Inc.” (FAIR), which in 2003 filed suit, contending that the Solomon Amendment was a violation, no less, of the law school’s First Amendment rights of free speech and association. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, where in 2006 it lost lopsidedly, 8–0.³¹ There is evidence, however, that the real heart of the matter was not the law schools’ dislike of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” but more the generic anti-military bias for which the anti-discrimination issue was only a fig leaf.

University student-led protests have increased moderately since the American-led military invasion of Iraq in 2003. Initially, these protests did not typically target the military per se, but by 2005 the dynamic began to change. Occasionally, protests turned violent. On the campus of the University of California, Santa Cruz, for instance, an estimated three hundred

³¹Justice Alito was not on the bench at the time of the original oral arguments and so he recused himself from the vote and the decision.

student/university protestors angrily pelted Army recruiters at a jobs fair with newspapers and water bottles. One recruiter's car had its tires knifed and even today one can find videos online showing the protestors throwing stones at the recruiter's cars.³² None of this bodes well for the future.

Conclusion

The history of the relationship between academe and the military is complex, and while overall it has moved parallel to the relationship between the general public and the military, it has often been in the fore of change. In the early nineteenth century, when higher education was the purview of the elite, and military service in the Regular Army was considered a low social status position, there was not much interaction at all. During times of national emergencies, however, both students and faculties consciously adopted an attitude of noblesse oblige (as ironic as that was in the hyper-egalitarian United States) and enlisted and accepted commissions in the wartime military.

Despite some half-hearted post-Civil War legislation, this situation did not change much until the shadow of World War I loomed over the nation. With the creation of the ROTC, academe and the military began to interact in new ways. By World War II some hundred thousand graduates of the interwar ROTC programs were available to help lead the massive national mobilization that ultimately resulted in victory. The post-war GI bill further cemented the place of the military on campus, but the next generation took things in another direction.

From roughly 1966 through the early 1980s, the relationship between the military and academe plunged. Students, and students who later became faculty, saw the military as more than just the instrument of national policy; it took on, for them, the very essence of militarism. Not until the mid-1980s did the relationship recover, only to erode slightly again in the 1990s, more from neglect than from anything else. Today, the military and academe have an uneasy relationship at best, with each side eyeing the other warily. In the end, it may be the outcome of this mutual scrutiny that determines how America fares over the next ten to twenty years of the "Long War" many predict.

³²Diana Walsh, "Military Recruiters, Confronted by Crowd, Leave Campus Job Fair," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 April 2006, B-1. See also Damien Cave, "For Recruiters, Antiwar Protests Raise Perils on the Home Front," *New York Times*, 21 February 2005.