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AD-A157 503

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN GENERAL STAFF: 1880 TO 1920

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JAMES F. BRICKMAN, FA

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85 7 23 027

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered) AD A157503 2

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM

1. REPORT NUMBER

2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.

3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER

4. TITLE (and Subtitle)

The Development of the American General Staff: 1880 to 1920

5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED

STUDENT ESSAY

6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER

7. AUTHOR(s)

LTC(P) James F. Brickman

8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)

9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS

11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS

SAME

12. REPORT DATE

22 April 1985

13. NUMBER OF PAGES

31

14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS(if different from Controlling Office)

15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report)

UNCLASSIFIED

15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE

16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)

18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

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ELECTE
AUG 05 1985
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19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

BLOCK 20 (con't)

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN GENERAL STAFF: 1880 TO 1920

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY PROJECT

by

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22 April 1985

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR(S): James F. Brickman, LTC (P), FA

TITLE: The Development of the American General Staff: 1880 to 1920

FORMAT: Individual Essay Project

DATE: 22 April 1985 PAGES: 29 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The principal issue concerning the War Department during the period 1880 to 1920 was the executive control over the resources required to raise, train, equip and supply the Army. Information was gathered using a literature search. Emphasis was given to selected leaders who pioneered the notion of a general staff, reasons for such an organization, and the actual development of the staff compared to the design. After the American Civil War a group of reformers assessed the performance of the War Department as lacking in executive control. Reform proposals including a general staff model were presented to Congress in 1879. The proposals were defeated causing the Army to struggle through a "dark ages" as a useless organization designed to fight Indians when there were no Indians. The War Department's poor performance during the Spanish American War demanded a change. Elihu Root met the demand by instituting a general staff system headed by a Chief of Staff. The system proved itself during the Mexican Border campaign and World War I and, although modified to meet the times, remains today as the capstone for executive control over the resources required to meet the needs of the Army.

INTRODUCTION

Today, it is inconceivable to visualize the Army without the general staff system headed by the Chief of Staff supporting and under the control of the Secretary and the President. Effective executive control over the War Department and its successor, the Department of Defense, has become a reality during this century. How did we get a general staff system? What were the issues? My purpose is to outline the general development of the staff in the United States Army from 1880 to 1920.

From the nation's beginning, the United States has had to address the challenge of how to form an army system appropriate to its needs and at the same time not subvert a democratic society. Throughout its early history a tradition of a citizen army under civilian control of the War Department, although not perfect, met the need. Within a decade after the American Civil War, however, the United States interests expanded beyond its shores to a global outlook primarily because of trade with foreign markets. With this global focus many Americans became aware of the potential threat posed by the large professional armies of Europe. This awareness led to the question, if the need arose, of how to deal with these large armies; could the traditional American system of a citizen army under civilian control cope with foreign enemies? The various answers to this question polarized two groups, the traditionalist and the reformers. To some extent the debate continues today; however, during the period approximating 1880 to 1920 most of the issues were addressed and major changes were made to design an Army capable of meeting its new global responsibilities.

The solution to the challenge of forming an appropriate Army to meet the broadening needs of the United States involved many issues. Two of the more significant issues dealt with the size and composition of the Army and the executive control of the Army which involved the notion of a capital staff. Although both issues will be discussed, the emphasis will be on the development of the system for executive control of the Army. Within this focus, attention will be given to the origin and evolution of the American Army General Staff with special emphasis on the more prominent leaders who pioneered the notion of an American capital staff, that is, a general staff.

WAR DEPARTMENT PRE-1880

In 1789 the newly formed US Congress confirmed the War Department, (originally established in 1781) headed by a Secretary of War. As the representative of the President, the Secretary had full legal powers for all administration and control of the Army and its affairs.[1] The intent of early legislation was to establish firmly civilian control over the military while limiting the powers of the senior Army general. This senior general, a titular military leader of the line Army, was to be known under many names over the next one hundred years until the title Chief of Staff was finally accepted. Among the early designations were General in Chief and Commanding General of Army.

In accordance with the constitution, the President was the Commander-in-Chief. Yet, as a rule, the President was not a man of military education or experience. The Secretary of War, his direct representative and executive agent, also normally lacked skills for military command because his selection generally resulted from political considerations. This situation caused much discord and controversy for more than the next hundred years.[2]

As early as 1809, the Secretary of War indicated the business of the War Department had increased beyond the department's capacity. The War of 1812 confirmed this assessment and resulted in a reorganization of the department to a system of bureau chiefs who were to control the various elements.[3] The objective of the system, created by Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, was to assert centralized control over the department. The system also recognized that the Army was divided into two elements, the departmental staff to include the administrative bureaus under the Secretary and the Army in the field under the designated military commanders. This system of staff bureaus and Army line units remained virtually unchanged into the 1880's. Despite the system, controversy continued over the degree of control and relationships among the Secretary, the chiefs of bureau and the Commanding General of the line.[4]

The Commanding General's role and duties were clearly outlined in the Army Regulations.

> The military establishment is placed under the orders of the Major General Commanding in Chief in all that regards its discipline and military control. Its fiscal arrangements properly belong to the administrative departments of the staff (bureaus), and to the Treasury Department, under the direction of the Secretary of War.

However, in practice the fiscal powers of the bureaus effectively stripped the power of the Commanding General to meet responsibilities given him by regulation. The chiefs of bureau considered themselves under the broad and protective wings of the civil administration in matters of appropriations and expenditures of which the Treasury officials had precedence and power over all military authority. Consequently, through legislation and informal alliances between the bureau chiefs, authority gravitated from the Commanding General to the bureau chiefs. Furthermore, the Secretary's control over the bureaus was quite limited. The chiefs were approved by Congress virtually for life or

until retirement. Each bureau had its own budget appropriated, specified and monitored by Congress. Because of the legislation embodied in the appropriation bills, the estimates having come from the bureaus, the authority of the Commanding General was limited mainly to the approval of the detailed expenditures, as defined by the chiefs of bureaus.[5]

Prior to 1855 the President and Secretary of War sent all orders and instructions relating to military operations, control or discipline through the Commanding General. However, an 1855 change in regulations made the Commanding General unable to exercise command of the Army. By not requiring these orders and instructions to go through the Commanding General, the situation led to significant command and control problems early in the Civil War. Finally in 1864, because of wartime necessity, President Abraham Lincoln assigned General U. S. Grant unlimited authority over all parts of the Army. This appointment was an apparent violation of the constitution which made the President the Commander-in-Chief. However, Lincoln's instructions were limited by the phrase "under the direction and during the pleasure of the President" he "may" command the Armies of the United States.[6] In 1865 at the conclusion of the Civil War, Grant's unique appointment was withdrawn and the authority of the Commanding General reverted to the 1855 role.[7]

When General William T. Sherman became Commanding General of the Army in 1868, his first act was to announce that the bureau chiefs were his "general staff" and that all Army staff officers and officers of the line were to report to him. Sherman was attempting to assume the power and authority Grant had in 1864 to 1865. Within a month of the arrival of the new Secretary of War, however, the orders were rescinded and once again the bureau chiefs and staff officers reported to the Secretary. Again the Commanding General was in

effect barred from the "happy bureaucratic family." Humiliated and disgusted General Sherman reacted by moving his headquarters to St. Louis.[8]

The situation of autonomous bureaus, governed largely by themselves under the detailed and direct scrutiny of Congress clearly violated the concept of unity of command. "Under the prevailing system, or lack of system, it had been impossible even to formulate plans, let alone execute general policies." With little authority and no resources, the Commanding General could not be held accountable for the Army's performance, only the bureau chiefs, the Secretary of War, and Congress.[9]

Up to this point in its history, the nation was unable to arrive at the appropriate combination of executive roles and authority whereby the Army could take advantage of the military's experience and still have civilian control of the Army. None of the major personalities were blameless; however, the primary reason the bureau system continued to dominate the Army's existence was due to the Congressional desires to control Army resources through the budgeting process for each bureau. To a lesser extent, another reason for the bureau system's influence was the alliance among the various Secretaries of War and the bureau chiefs; the bureau chiefs' special fiscal relationship and access to Congress contributed to the forging of numerous personal alliances. Nevertheless, the nation needed new ideas; it needed time to reflect on its recent wartime experiences and look to other nations for the solution to a recurrent military problem.

UPTON THE REFORMER

Emory Upton, a product of the Civil War, analyzed the American system after the war. His assessment led him to conclude that the system needed reformed. Upton graduated from West Point in 1861 and immediately went off to war. As a field commander, he had few equals; he made brevet general

before his 26th birthday. He ended the war with a reputation as a brilliant tactician and as commanding general of a cavalry division. Subsequently, he traveled abroad as an official Army observer visiting the Far East and Western Europe. Even though Upton became a prolific military theorist and reform writer, he was largely ignored during his life. This obscurity and personal health problems culminated in his suicide at the age of 41 in 1881. Recognition came for Upton only after the Spanish American War again showed the desperate need for reform.

Upton's assessment of the 1861 Army was that it was "destitute." The Regular Army was small and ill organized and trained; it had no general staff to make plans; it was run by independent bureaus headed by old men; the Commander General was old and incapable; and it relied on volunteering and conscription. Furthermore, it was augmented by the state militias he identified as "so destitute . . . of instruction and training . . . it did not merit the name of a military force. . . ." He was outraged by what he saw and experienced on the battlefield early in the war. His Civil War experiences served as a springboard for his thoughts toward reforming the American Army. Two themes at the center of this reformation were Upton's bias concerning state control of the militias and civilian control of the Army.

In his travels abroad, Upton came to admire the Prussian Army, particularly their mass army and general staff. It became the model for Upton's reforms during the post war period.[10] The Prussian Army system had proven itself in their wars of 1864, 1866 and 1870, usually defeating its enemies in a matter of days or weeks. Unlike its neighbors, Prussia was able to create an effective mass army, based upon universal conscription and short term service, which was politically loyal and reliable. The central device in the creation of the affordable mass army was a militia organization, Landwehr,

composed of the country's most ablebodied men. While the regular standing Army remained small, Prussia could rapidly mobilize its trained militia in time of need and put a large mass army in the field. Control of the Landwehr to achieve quality, discipline and reliability was given to the regular Army. Each Landwehr battalion was connected to an active Army regiment and the militia officers were elected by the officer body of the regular Army regiment. Thus, the Prussians, through this system, were able to maintain a well-trained, well-disciplined Army under the control of professional officers available to the king whenever he decided to mobilize his land forces. In the 1870s this system of expanding an Army was the wonder of the military world. Many countries sought to copy it.[11]

At the head of the Prussian command structure was the German general staff commanded at the time of Upton's visit by Chief of Staff Helmuth von Moltke. During peacetime, the Prussian general staff collected information concerning tactics, organization, intellegience of foreign armies, and prepared plans for war. The general staff also controlled the military educational system which included a wide variety of postgraduate schools. By 1870 the general staff under the authority of the king had freed itself "from even the nominal control" of the civilian Minister of War and the Imperial Parliament.[12]

The German general staff was unique, and it emerged as a system for autocracy designed to wage aggressive war. As a result of the government delegating policy making concerning military matters to the military, the military gradually swallowed up the country's foreign policy. Over time, the general staff's success led to a gradual estrangement from the society it was to protect and the army it was to direct.[13]

In Upton's opinion, the United States Army needed reforming in order to meet its responsibilities. He recommended abandoning the current staff system

were all locked in a struggle trying to find a solution. Out of this controversy came the National Defense Act of 1916 devised and guided through Congress by James Hay.

Hay, a lawyer and native of Virginia, entered the House of Representatives as a Democrat in 1897. Hay "gained a reputation for legislative skill and political acumen, and became the dominant figure on the House Committee on Military Affairs on which he served for eighteen years." He had been consistently in conflict with the reform-minded Republicans and the military in their attempts to modernize the Army. His opposition to increasing the size and preparedness of the Army was at the heart of the conflict. Hay's committee had defeated the efforts of two Secretaries of War to accomplish these goals resulting in the Army remaining in a "half-organized state" unprepared to meet the nation's need as World War I approached. President Wilson as a result of the war in Europe, became convinced that the armed forces must increase their preparedness. In a compromise he asked his fellow Democrat Hay to formulate a program to this end. Out of party loyalty Hay agreed. After a bitter fight among the key players, Congress approved the National Defense Act of 1916. The Act was drawn up with the assistance of the former Adjutant General Ainsworth.[51]

The National Defense Act of 1916 was one of the most far-reaching pieces of legialation in the nation's military history. It prescribed and defined the roles, missions, organization, composition and strength of all units in the regular Army, National Guard and Reserves. In addition, with Ainsworth's help, the Act addressed the size and role of the general staff. As might be expected, the general staff was just about forced out of existence because the enacted provisions limited its activities mainly to war planning and prohibited it from interfering with the bureaus and their administration. The bureau chiefs regarded the Act as their "Magna Carta" essentially restoring

roll record for each soldier. Ainsworth initially ignored the proposals. Subsequently, after Wood directed Ainsworth to render an opinion, the Adjutant General replied in an insubordinate manner. The reply "quivered with indignation, burned with irony, scorn and contempt" concluding that the proposals were both "illegal and impracticable" and accomplished by "incompetent amateurs." Ainsworth's reply was the final straw. President Taft, having no choice after a legal opinion from the Judge Advocate General and recommendation from Secretary Stimson, authorized court martial proceedings against Ainsworth. A compromise was accepted whereby Ainsworth was permitted to retire without facing the court. This incident ended the open warfare between the Chief of Staff and Adjutant General and appeared to have confirmed the Chief of Staff as administratively supreme over the general staff and the bureaus. Wood continued as Chief of Staff for one year after the election of Woodrow Wilson as President and was followed by Hugh Scott.[49]

Allowed to develop, the general staff system gradually overcame the doubts of those who believed it useless. The first significant success was demonstrated when it anticipated and developed plans to intervene in Mexico in a timely fashion. In addition, it helped to implement additional military reforms such as planning and conducting the first peacetime divisional level maneuvers in 1912. Despite these early successes, certain congressman were still fearful that the general staff would become the nucleus of a dangerous military elite. This group, headed by James Hay, was joined by General Ainsworth with the intent of limiting or eliminating the general staff.[50]

In the fall of 1914, war broke out in Europe resulting in a clamor for increasing the size of the nation's military forces. By 1915 the question of a larger army and preparedness had become one of the country's most controversial political issues. President Woodrow Wilson, the armed forces, and Congress

mind" versus the "outdoor mind," the traditionalist versus the reformer. Only one could survive; it was to be a fight to the finish.[46]

Wood found the situation at the War Department oppressive. He discovered that the bureaus were still powerful; the War College and general staff still weak; the reserve system based upon the National Guard still virtually non-existent. Root's reforms had not been implemented even though they were on the "books" of Congress. With the law on his side, Wood was determined to carry out Root's reforms. Initially despite the support of Roosevelt, Wood made little headway except for drawing the battle line because of Taft's attitude. However, in 1911 this changed when Henry L. Stimson became Secretary of War. Stimson took over where Root had stopped and he fully supported Wood toward carrying out the reforms. The Stimson and Wood team was countered by Ainsworth and John Hay of the House Military Affairs Committee.[47]

Initially Wood focused on the organization of the general staff. After studying the output of the existing committees' studies, he eliminated the committee system and reorganized the general staff into four divisions; the Mobile Army, Coast Artillery, Militia, and War College. These divisions were in addition to the bureaus. Ainsworth did not like the changes; however, they were outside his authority. He could do little but lobby against them.[48]

Subsequently, Wood and Stimson invaded the territory of the Adjutant General in their attempts to streamline the administration of the War Department and to assert firm executive control. This program eventually brought the Chief of Staff and Adjutant General confrontation to the head over who should control the administration of the department under the Secretary. The Cleveland Commission with Matthew Hanna as secretary was appointed by the Secretary of War to study the issue. The commission found much to criticize in the administration of the department. From a number of recommendations they specifically wanted to abolish Ainsworth's "pet" requirement for a muster

bureaus. In particular was the question of the administrative authority of the Adjutant General which had enabled him to rival the Chief of Staff. The final resolution of this issue began on 19 July 1910 when Major General Leonard Wood took over duties as Chief of Staff and broke the claims of the Adjutant General under Taft.

Wood's rival was Major General Fred C. Ainsworth, a past Military Secretary and at the time Adjutant General. Ainsworth was "an extraordinary person" in appearance and demeanor. Under President Benjamin Harrison, he had initially earned his fame by accomplishing the Herculean administrative task of bringing order to the Record and Pension Bureau and subsequently to the Office of the Adjutant General. When he had finished these tasks he was acknowledged as "king and idol" of all bureaucrats. He was "by nature an autocrat, severe and sometimes brutal, with a passion for power, a gift for acquiring it, and a dogged determination to let no particle of it slip" away from him. The feud of Ainsworth and "general stuff," as he referred to it, was famous. Ainsworth had convinced Taft that the Chief of Staff and general staff were purely advisory and that the Chief was head of the general staff only. Taft showed his agreement with him by designating Ainsworth as acting Secretary of War during his many absenses.[44]

Wood was to become the Army's first effective Chief of Staff. He was a former Army contract surgeon who had become the first colonel of the Rough Riders, had risen to the military governor of Cuba and later the Commanding General in the Philippines. He was characterized by a driving ambition, outstanding abilities and keen political sense with many enemies in the Army and many friends in the Republican Party.[45]

The conflict that developed between Wood and Ainsworth was fundamental; it was bureaucracy versus actuality, clerk versus man of action, the "indoor

staff. Also in 1903 the Dick Bill won passage resulting in organization and training improvements in the National Guard.[41]

PRE-WORLD WAR I (1904-1916)

For personal reasons primarily dealing with his wife's dislike of Washington, Root resigned as Secretary of War on 31 January 1904 but his task of reformation was unfinished and the reform movement had lost its driver. William Howard Taft, Root's successor, lacked the "inclination and ability" to follow through in face of the opposition by the bureaus. He had no desire to referee disputes between the Chief of Staff and the bureau chiefs. Taft wanted peace at almost any organizational cost. Partly due to the influence of the bureau chiefs, he abandoned the Secretary/Chief of Staff alliance and reverted to the traditional Secretary/bureau chief alliance.[42]

Many problems were associated with the new general staff system and Chief of Staff. The initial one had to do with the training base; no American officer had any experience with such a system. In addition, there was no clearly defined connection between the duties of the general staff and the functions of the various bureaus. Early Chiefs of Staff failed to assert themselves. The various general staff committees fell into a mold of developing and debating trivial details of military administration. The general staff's hands were tied because, by design, it had no operating duties. They were not to be "involved in any degree the impairment of the initiative and responsibility which special staff corps and departments have in the transaction of current business." These problems coupled with an indifferent Secretary of War, made it little wonder that the new general staff system got off to a slow start.[43]

The major obstacle to an effective general staff system boiled down to the unresolved issue of the independence of the old special staffs and

In 1902, Root submitted his reforms to Congress. The proposals received little enthusiasm and often hostility from the senior officers of the military. Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles, the Commanding General of Army, vigorously opposed the changes. Before a congressional committee studying the proposals, Miles implied that Root's plan was un-American and with its pro-German bias had a potential for a civilian dictatorship by a Secretary of War. Miles also appealed to Army veterans to come forth to halt the discarding of the methods which has won "glorious victories" in the past. Root countered Miles' position by placing General Schofield before the committee. Schofield reviewed his long study and experience of the control and authority question. He urged again that the Chief of Staff substitution for the Commanding General would solve the question both militarily and constitutionly. Schofield's testimony had more impact than Miles' because it was based "on knowledge of facts and conditions, and not at all on sentiment," as Miles had done.[40]

Ultimately, most of Root's reforms were accepted. Legislation in 1901 directed that officers would rotate between line and staff with a tenure of four years. A Congressional vote of 14 February 1903 provided for a Chief of Staff with a general staff to come into existence on 15 August 1903 one week after the retirement of General Miles. The general staff consisted initially of three committees designated as divisions functionally charged with administration, military intelligence and information, and planning. In November 1903, Root formally established the Army War College whose primary function was to train officers for the general staff. During its early years the College was considered part of the general staff. It consisted of three parts somewhat paralleling the general staff's organization. In fact, the War College had been in operation since 1901 and had served as an interim general

principle of unity of command over the departments while gaining the active support of professional soldiers.[36]

Root created the general staff mainly to form a selective and highly trained body of military experts to plan for war rather than to perform the duties of routine peacetime administration, other than that required in coordinating the work of the line and the many elements of the War Department. The general staff was to be the agency for strategic and logistical planning; it was to plan, recommend and translate decisions into orders.[37]

At the top of Root's general staff, like the German system, was the position of Chief of Staff. Under Root's plan, the Chief of Staff was to be the ranking man of the army with supervisory powers over the general staff corps, all troops of the line and selected specified staff departments. In addition, the bureaus were placed administratively under the Chief of Staff. While theoretically exercising no command, the fact that he determined the line of action and gave orders in the name of the Secretary meant the Chief of Staff was in command. When necessary, he also consulted and harmonized the recommendations of the bureaus. The authority of the Chief of Staff exercised in the name of the Secretary presupposed that his actions were taken only with consultation and approval of the Secretary. With his authority and position as outlined by Root, the Chief of Staff would have far greater power than that ever sought by the various Commanding Generals of the Army.[38]

Root's general staff system headed by a chief of staff was the fruition of Upton's proposals and reflects Upton's military admiration for the German system. Root's system combined the Uptonian plan of a central brain utilizing the expertise and experience of the military while encompassing Schofield's civilian control and authority principle. Root's system eventually became a success despite rejecting the ideas of Scott, Sherman, Sheridan and others that the chief military professional must command the Army.[39]

enable the United States to take swift advantage of situations when and where military intervention or the threat of same seemed justified. In this regard he reasoned that the War Department would be wiser to be organized in peace as it would be in war.[33]

A man of lesser substance might have allowed the War Department to continue to operate as it had prior to the Spanish American War. With McKinley's death, a scapegoat identified and dismissed, and the status quo of peace, the previous ground swell for reform had passed. It is conceivable that no change would have occurred had it not been for Root's desire to prepare the military for the next war.[34]

With the firm support of President Roosevelt, Root began to modernize the War Department which, in many respects, had changed little since the time of John C. Calhoun. First on his agenda was the issue of manpower; how large a peacetime regular Army did the United States need? A second item, associated with this question, was Root's objective to breathe new life into the militia system. A third change dealt with eliminating the practice of permanent assignments to staff jobs in the War Department in favor of an interchange from line to staff. The fourth aim flowed logically from the third; the objectives of overhauling the existing military educational facilities and creating an Army War College to meet the educational needs of the service. Fifth, and last, the most far reaching proposal of Root's agenda was the introduction of the general staff principle.[35]

Root's proposals broke tradition as he was the first Secretary of War to abandon the alliance between the Secretary and the bureau chiefs and replace it with an alliance with line officers. With the introduction of the general staff system his goal was to exercise effective executive control through the

departments were often too zealous in pursuit of perfection. There was simply too much red tape, and the Quartermaster and Medical Bureaus were identified as particularly inefficient. The bureau system had been tested in war and found wanting. One element of the solution to the problem was the necessity for greater executive control of the various War Department bureaus and departments. Moreover, the solution must be applicable in both war and peace.[29]

ROOT—MODERN REFORMER

The poor showing of the War Department during the Spanish American War demanded a scapegoat to appease the public; Secretary of War Russell Alger was selected as that unfortunate person.[30] Disgraced, Alger resigned and President McKinley chose Elihu Root, a respected but unknown Republican lawyer from New York, to succeed him. The President selected Root primarily to manage the problems connected with recent acquisitions in the Caribbean and Pacific as a result of the Spanish American War.[31]

After settling the problems of the overseas acquisitions by establishing the machinery of a colonial system, Root shifted his attention to the long overdue reorganization of the War Department. He started with the findings identified by the Dodge Commission and other inquiries. In the process, Major William H. Carter, a member of the War Department, who had served under Emory Upton in the 1870's, recommended Upton's writings to Root. Upton's ideas intrigued Root and he subsequently based his program of reforms upon Upton's recommendations. Root said, "Upton's writings gave me the detail on which I could base recommendations and overcome my ignorance as a civilian."[32]

At the core of Root's reforms for the military was the belief that a strong military force was required in order to have a viable foreign policy to meet the nation's increased global needs. A strong military capability would

the Army to benefit from trained professional military leadership, yet maintain civilian control of the military as a reality. After retirement in 1895, Schofield campaigned for permanent acceptance of the chief of staff approach, a first step toward a true general staff system. His real opportunity to implement such reforms came after the Spanish American War when he provided direct advice to the Secretary of War, Elihu Root.[27]

SPANISH AMERICAN WAR

The consensus of Army officers at the conclusion of the Spanish American War was that the peacetime organization of the War Department was not suitable for war. The Department's system did not meet the needs of the Army in the field. The war was a poorly conducted operation although the United States Army did defeat the enemy. The inability of the staff of the War Department to coordinate its independent activities could not conceal the performance of the disciplined and devoted enlisted men in the companies. The Army "stumbled" to victory because of the greater disorganization and demoralization of the incompetent enemy.[28]

Partly due to public and congressional pressure, President William McKinley appointed a Commission headed by Major General (of Volunteers) Grenville M. Dodge to study the War Department's performance during the war. Dodge was a Civil War veteran and railroad promoter. The Commission concluded that the basic problems were of operation and organization. The staff departments performed inadequately because they lost sight of the realities of war. The unpredictable and disorderly requirements of war overwhelmed the brittle inflexible organization that had ossified over the years. The system could not act to the uncertainity of warfare because of its obsessive concern with certainty. Part of the problem was restrictive legislation; however, the

to conduct a war. A blending of these two fundamental themes was essential to any acceptable solution.[22]

Schofield further concluded,

> that under the government of the United States an actual military commander of the Army is not possible, unless in an extreme emergency like that which led to the assignment of Lieutenant General Grant in 1864; and that the general-in-chief, or nominal commanding general, can be at most only a 'chief of staff,'—that or nothing, . . .

According to Schofield reasoning, this was the only method that actually allowed the President to exercise the commander-in-chief role imposed by the constitution.[23]

Schofield's propositions and fundamental themes were absolutely correct. The Army could not afford to ignore the military knowledge and experience of professional officers concerning military policy nor could it abrogate civilian control of the military and military policy. The solution was to develop new pretentions concerning authority and control.

By 1888, when he became Commanding General, Schofield abandoned the pretentions of Scott, Sherman and Sheridan and "abdicated" the authority of issuing orders without the knowledge and consent of the Secretary of War or the President. Though not in name, Schofield made his office the chief of staff to the Secretary of War and the President.[24] The experiment was initiated when Schofield sent an order to the Adjutant General directing him to never issue an order dictated by Schofield, or in his name, without laying it before the Secretary of War. Schofield further told all the staff that he disclaimed the right to issue any orders without the knowledge of the President or Secretary of War.[25]

Schofield assessed his experiment as a success resulting in "perfect harmony" during the period of 1889 to 1895 when the President was "in fact as well as name" the Commander-in-Chief.[26] His experiment to some extent enabled

was not even considered as part of the War Department for most of this period. Congress supported the system because it felt that this system offered them easier access and control of the Army.[18]

SCHOFIELD'S CHIEF OF STAFF EXPERIMENT

Presidents and Secretaries of War were not ignorant of the Army's situation and the associated controversies. They did make attempts to resolve the control problems but with no hint of a satisfactory solution until the arrival of General John M. Schofield. Schofield was involved in the issue of control and authority during and after his forty-six years of Army service.

As General Philip Sheridan's successor as Commanding General of the Army in 1889, General Schofield was recognized as one of the Army's most able soldiers and experienced administrators. He had commanded a large field army during the Civil War, served as a military governor during Reconstruction, and as interim Secretary of War under President Andrew Johnson.[19]

Schofield's early involvement in the control and authority question came about when President Grant assigned him to study the question. Nothing came of his recommendations to Grant.[20]

General Schofield defined the issues under two propositions:

> What are the duties and what is the authority, of the Commanding General of the Army, and of the general officers, commanding Divisions or Departments, or armies in the field? What are their relations to the War Department and to the several bureaus thereof, or staff departments of the Army?[21]

He felt that two themes were also fundamental to the solution to the question. First, civilian control of the military was essential to the larger national policy in a constitutional democracy. Secondly, military professional knowledge and judgement was equally essential to a constitutional democracy in order

interrelationship between politics and war in a democratic state prevented him from convincing others to accept his reforms. The system as presented was not appropriate to the democratic and peaceful purposes of the United States. Although not initially successful in reforming the Army in 1879, the thrust of Upton's reforms were espoused by later leaders when the time was ripe.[16]

SUPREMACY OF THE BUREAUS: 1880-1898

After the defeat of the Burnside Bill, the impetus for reform slowed to a crawl with nothing major occurring until the Spanish American War (1898). From 1880 to 1898, the Army struggled through its "dark ages" as an organization designed to fight Indians, but there were fewer and fewer Indians to fight. Congress and the public paid little attention to the Army and, on one occasion Congress failed to appropriate any money to meet the Army payroll. The period was characterized by the supremacy of the staff bureaus or special staff, with accompanying bureaucracy, where administrative specialization was paramount. Personalties played a major role in the shifting of power and control within the War Department.[17]

The special staff system generally did not provide for coordination and resolution of problems below the Secretary of War level. Each special staff element or bureau was independently serving directly under the Secretary. Over time, the Adjutant General filled the vacuum created by the need for coordination. He was the only staff officer with interests affecting the entire Army and the responsibility for signing all the various orders in the name of the Secretary or Commanding General. Even as the "chiefest" of the many chiefs, however, he still respected the independence of his fellow bureau chiefs. Yet the prominence of the Adjutant General was further demonstrated by his designation over the Commanding General and other chiefs as acting Secretary of War in the Secretary's absence. The Commanding General of Army

with its bureau and department heads, consolidation of the Adjutant General and Inspector General Departments, and the creation of a true general staff along the German model. The consolidated Adjutant and Inspector General Department with an administrative function would be directly subordinate to the Secretary of War. The Commanding General, in turn, would command the General Staff which had three sections. The first would collect intelligence information relating to foreign armies; the second would study and write the history of American wars; the third would maintain history files of each officer in the Army. For one reason or another, Upton did not address the title or positions of Chief of Staff and General in Chief. Because Upton's reforms were the basis for later reforms his neglect contributed to the later confusion when the general staff system was finally instituted. He went on to recommend the creation of a broader program of postgraduate military education. Furthermore, he desired interchange between staff and line officers; the staff could then find and use the most talented army officers who were cognizant of the needs and wants of the troops. Likewise, the Army in the field would profit by the periodic return of talented, well-rounded staff officers to the line.[14]

Upton's reforms, with modification, were packaged in the Burnside Bill and submitted to Congress in December 1878. The sensitive question of civilian control over military policy questions was not included in the bill for fear of killing the bill altogether. Despite backers' early hopes, the bill was defeated in early 1879 after the Republicans had lost seats in the off-year elections. Most Democrats were against the so-called "Republican reforms" and denounced them as "Germanizing" the US Army.[15]

Upton's system for reform failed primarily because it was rooted in the German experience and not the American. His inability to understand the

their traditional independence of executive control. Further, the act directed that no President could abolish or change the provisions without Congressional approval.[52]

One hundred years of tradition and bureaucracy in the War Department was not going to end without a battle no matter how wanting the system was found to be when tested. Power and position were at stake. The bureaus and Congress had become quite comfortable in their relationship. Congress was not easily going to give up its tight authority that had enabled it to manage the resources through its control of the fiscal system and personnel selection system. Congress was going to have to be persuaded that the nation would be best served by a change. The unfolding situation would persuade Congress to relinquish some of its authority to meet the needs of the nation.

WORLD WAR I

After declaring war against Germany on 6 April 1917, Congress enacted emergency legislation reversing most of the "Magna Carta" provisions of the Act of 1916. The revision provided that the Chief of Staff should have "rank and precedence over all other officers of the Army" and that the general staff was authorized to increase to nearly 100 officers. With this revision, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker could have had the same executive control over the bureaus through the Chief of Staff that Root and Stimson had enjoyed during their tenures. However, Baker did not, believing that "civilian interference with commanders in the field is dangerous." He applied the same logic to the bureaus. Initially, he let the bureau chiefs and field commanders run themselves. Without effective central leadership, the War Department bumped from crisis to crisis. This manner of control subsequently led to serious friction between the Chief of Staff, General Peyton March, and the Commander of American

Expeditionary Forces, General John J. Pershing. The broad delegation of authority given to General Pershing in effect resurrected the position of Commanding General which had caused so many problems in the past. Pershing reported directly to Baker thus bypassing March, the Chief of Staff.[53]

March and his general staff, at the time primarily the War College Division, acted as a planning division rather than the coordinated staff earlier Army reformers invisioned. Baker, according to Ainsworth's views, only looked to the Chief and his staff for advice and plans. He ignored their advice for the need for more effective control over the bureaus through the Chief of Staff until the command and control situation became so bad that he could not ignore it any longer. Conditions had deteriorated to the point that they interfered with the war effort. The fact that the general staff as well as the bureaus lost to the field many of their most experienced and quality officers added to the problems.[54]

The badly needed reorganization of the general staff under the stern hand of March took place on 9 February 1918. The general staff was to be a directing staff responsible for supervising all War Department activities and was to be organized along functional lines. The Chief of Staff was directed to supervise and coordinate "the several corps, bureaus, and all other agencies of the Military establishment . . . to the end that the policies of the Secretary of War may be harmonously executed." This reorganization was under the umbrella of the War Industries Board, headed by Bernard Baruch. In order to alleviate the chaos of manufacture and transport of war materials, President Wilson granted Baruch executive control over the nation's war industries and agencies of the government to include the War Department. This arrangement required the Army to submit requirements for items in short supply to the Board. The reorganization of the general staff continued when on 26 August 1918 General March, under the authority of the Overman Act of 20 May 1918,

consolidated the supply bureaus into a single service of supply. This original Root reform was but one of the steps toward the general staff becoming an operating agency, not merely a supervisory one.[55]

During the war many of the bureau chiefs would not admit failure of their bureaus and the bureau system; they complained to their protectors in Congress about the interference of "outsiders" into their areas of operation. At the conclusion of the war, Congress began the unraveling of the wartime organization. Congress in the National Defense Act of 1920 essentially returned to the traditional military principles behind the Act of 1916. Tight executive control of the bureaus ended upon their return to the detailed supervision of Congress. The legislation did provide for the general staff as a permanent operating agency but only as an equal with the bureaus. Specifically, the general staff's function was to prepare plans for mobilization and war, to investigate and report on the efficiency and preparedness of the Army, and to "render professional aid and assistance to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of War . . . " not to "assume or engage in work of an administrative nature that pertains to established bureaus or offices of the War Department" which might "imperil (their) responsibility or initiative," impair initiative or unnecessarily duplicate work. In addition, the Act of 1920 confirmed the principle of reliance of a small standing army in peacetime supported by a citizen militia.[56]

Even though the general staff lost much of its wartime operating responsibilities and the power of the bureaus reemerged, the idea of an American General Staff proved its worth by contributing to effective executive control of all elements of the War Department. The concept of a general staff system supporting firm executive control as visualized by Upton, Schofield, Root, Stimson and Wood was finally accepted as viable and necessary during war. All

that remained was the acceptance of the same system and degree during peacetime as in war. This peacetime acceptance did not occur in practice until the period after World War II culminating in the National Defense Act of 1947.

SUMMARY

Executive control of the War Department and the development of a capital staff, that is general staff, had been an issue on the American scene since the establishment of the nation. John C. Calhoun's approach employed a series of bureaus headed by chiefs dominated the War Department and lasted until the time of Elihu Root. The bureau system, despite flaws, worked until it was challenged by the demands of the Spanish American War. Out of that war came the conclusion that major organizational changes had to take place to meet the needs of the nation as it entered the 20th century with its new global focus. Root's solution was a general staff system headed by a Chief of Staff, who also had administrative supervisory responsibility over all the War Department staff and bureaus. Root's system was not fully implemented, and only then temporarily, until World War I. The general staff system proved its worth when tested during two wars and stands today meeting the needs of the military establishment and the nation.

ENDNOTES

1. William Harding Carter, The American Army, p. 168.

2. John M. Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army, p. 407.

3. Russell F. Weigley, Toward an American Army, pp. 170-171.

4. James E. Hewes, Jr., From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963, pp. 3-5.

5. Carter, pp. 184 and 195.

6. Schofield, pp. 408-409.

7. Carter, p. 184.

8. Robert D. Miewald, The Stability of the Military Managerial Doctrine: The United States Army, pp. 119-120.

9. Carter, pp. 185-187.

10. Stephen E. Ambrose, Upton and the Army, pp. 17 and 27.

11. Ibid., pp. 89-92.

12. Ibid., pp. 92-96.

13. Miewald, p. 175.

14. Ambrose, pp. 102-104.

15. Ibid., pp. 116-118.

16. Ibid., pp. vii-viii; p. 110.

17. Ibid., pp. 153-154.

18. Schofield, p. 469.

19. Carter, pp. 192-193.

20. Weigley, pp. 171-172.

21. Carter, p. 193.

22. Weigley, p. 171.

23. Schofield, p. 422.

24. Weigley, pp. 171-172.

25. Schofield, pp. 422-423.

26. Ibid., pp. 422-423.

27. Weigley, pp. 171-174.

28. Ibid., pp. 148-150.

29. Miewald, pp. 189-192.

30. Ambrose, p. 155.

31. Edwin A. Muth, Elihu Root: His Role and Concepts Pertaining to the United States Policies of Intervention, p. 27.

32. Ambrose, p. 155.

33. Muth, pp. 34-35.

34. Miewald, p. 201.

35. Richard W. Leopold, Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition, pp. 38-40.

36. Hewes, pp. 8-9.

37. Miewald, pp. 207 and 217.

38. Ibid., pp. 200-202.

39. Weigley, pp. 175-176.

40. Ibid., pp. 174-176.

41. Hewes, pp. 11-12.

42. Ibid., p. 13.

43. Miewald, pp. 207-210.

44. Hermann Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, pp. 95-96.

45. Walter Millis, Arms and Men, a Study of American Military History, p. 198.

46. Hagedorn, p. 97.

47. Ibid., pp. 95-99.

48. Ibid., pp. 100 and 107.

49. Ibid., pp. 120-122.

50. Weigley, p. 175.

51. George C. Herring, Jr., "James Hay and the Preparedness Controversy, 1915-1916," The Journal of Southern History, Vol. XXX, November 1964, pp. 383-391.

52. Hewes, pp. 20-21.

53. Ibid., pp. 21-24.

54. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

55. Ibid., pp. 39-41.

56. Ibid., pp. 50-53.

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