Mr. Jefferson's Army in Mr. Madison's War: Atrophy, Policy, and Legacy in the War of 1812

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MR. JEFFERSON’S ARMY IN MR. MADISON’S WAR:
ATROPHY, POLICY, AND LEGACY IN THE WAR OF 1812

by

David Alan Martin

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School
and the Department of History
at The University of Southern Mississippi
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for the Degree of Master of Arts

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August 2016
ABSTRACT

MR. JEFFERSON’S ARMY IN MR. MADISON’S WAR:
ATROPHY, POLICY, AND LEGACY IN THE WAR OF 1812

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President Thomas Jefferson is a well-known figure who is not well understood. His military policies are under-examined in the historiography. Yet he had a tremendous impact on martial development in the Early Republic. Jefferson reshaped the military to suit his pragmatic republican ideals. His militia system expanded while the regulars were disbanded. The Navy was greatly decreased, and the remainder of his military was used for frontier exploration, riverine trade, road development, and other public works. This disrupted the precedent of strong federal military development as set by his predecessors: George Washington and John Adams. His reforms also left the military in a state of decay from which it was unable to recover before the War of 1812.

Through a blend of financial and presidential policy analysis, this paper examines Jefferson’s effect on the evolution of the armed forces in the tumultuous days of the Early Republic.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to use this space to acknowledge the patience of my advisors who helped me tremendously in the completion of this project. As a Captain in the United States Air Force, I was sent to eighteen different countries while working on this thesis. Dr. Kyle Zelner, Dr. Heather Stur, and Dr. Susannah Ural were always prepared to assist when the project was challenged by exceptional life circumstances. Without Dr. Zelner’s sincere feedback and detailed review of this project, this could not have been possible.
DEDICATION

The United States Air Force helped make this project possible, both through the assistance of various commanders and instructors along the way and for financial assistance throughout. My family also quietly supported me throughout this project. My most vocal and helpful supporter was my wife, Rebecca, who never let me give up on something I believed was important. She has been a tireless companion for a project that took far more dedication than I could have ever anticipated.
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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

In 1801, Thomas Jefferson became the third President of the United States with an agenda to make "every citizen…a soldier, and every soldier a citizen."¹ This inspiration shaped his policies throughout his administration and had cataclysmic effects in the international relations of his Presidential successors. Jefferson’s interpretation of military held that the people of this young nation had the responsibility and the power to serve when needed, and that the regular soldier – if retained at all in the new Republic – must also provide a practical peacetime value to the nation. President Jefferson reduced taxation and public debt through military reduction, which ended the trajectory of military growth begun by his executive predecessors: George Washington and John Adams. He expanded the militia and changed its relation to the battlefield on land, sea, and river. To serve their nation in the time of peace, Jefferson’s federal soldiers led science expeditions, acted as expansive frontier governments, and engineered roadways and bridges into new territories. In a similar vein, his policies effectively destroyed the U.S. Navy and Marines and forced their remnants to become a shallow-water militia amalgam. Although Jefferson’s policies stemmed from a popular confidence in American security from European powers, they were disastrous for professional military readiness. James Madison entered office in 1809, intent to continue Jefferson’s seemingly benign military policy. The War of 1812 and two years of successive, withering defeats at the hands of the British forced the Madison administration to overcome its ideological preference and revert the federal military to a combat-centric,

¹ Peter S. Onuf, Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood (Richmond: University of VA Press, 2000), 133.
Federalist-style, traditional force. President Thomas Jefferson’s civil-centric military reforms disrupted American martial development and diminished the country’s battlefield performance in the War of 1812.

A close analysis of Jefferson’s executive leadership, particularly in regards to his role as Commander in Chief, reveals the extent to which his reforms dismantled his Federalist predecessors’ designs for the military. Over their combined twelve years in office, George Washington and John Adams were equally invested in the growth of the American military to combat eventual threats. To minimize taxation and debt, neither president pursued sudden or ambitious military development. Instead, they opted to incrementally increase forces with the expectation that future presidents would build upon their “gradual creation.” Washington not only established the U.S. Army, in itself a major step towards readiness under the new Constitution, but also governed its administration, reorganization, and expansion over the course of his two terms in office. President Adams then increased Army size and capability both with temporary Quasi-war augmentations and long-term development. Washington also commissioned the first naval fleet, formalized by Adams into the Naval Department which he developed substantially. America’s first two administrations deliberately developed a national defense that would not overtax the federal budget, highlighting the importance of maintaining their budding country’s defenses without straining her resources.

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Historian Richard S. Kohn has expanded upon this argument in his claims that the development and growth of the regular military was the fundamental tenant of Federalism. Washington and Adams both agreed that national security was paramount and the United States was vulnerable without combat forces. Contingencies and crises in the American Northwest and Europe served to reinforce their fears and persuaded the public that defense was a necessary feature within the new government. The inexperience of semi-permanent Armies and militia regularly doomed early military campaigns and served as scapegoats in others -both factors the presidents mitigated through expansion of the trained federal military.

George Washington was initially wary of regulars, but the military failures of America’s forces convinced him to create and eventually expand the permanent Army. With the 1792 Act for making Farther and more Effectual Provision for the Protection of the Frontiers, Washington drew on his wartime experience to enlist, train, and supply regulars. As Commander in Chief, he doubled the federal Army in what became the first of many major expansions and restructures. His decision was justified at the Battle of the Fallen Timbers, in which the series of defeats turned into victory at the congregation of the largest concentration of regulars in the nation’s short history. Washington’s also cut back on the militia in an attempt to militarize the state forces at the start of his second term. He issued the Uniform Militia Acts of 1792 and 1794 to centralize control over

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7 Washington’s opposition to the militia was restrained in the first years of his presidency, this is explored further in Chapter I.
militia responding to unrest in Western Pennsylvania. After their poor field performance, Washington rejected a reliance on the militia as a holistic method of defense, but his determination to federalize and professionalize military assets demonstrates his intent to build an effective force. Washington expanded the ground forces and laid the foundation for what later became the Navy. In his second term, he signed the *Naval Act of 1794* – the first federal authorization of naval assets. His frigates would later serve as a cornerstone of a larger fleet. In each of these calculated actions, Washington sought to create a system of national defenses that later presidents could incrementally increase until America was secure from foreign incursion.

President John Adams continued Washington’s military measures in a way that was affordable, deliberate, and effective. Adams’ actions in the Quasi-War with France justified his expansion of the War Department, but the temporary measures were only part of the new defense scheme. The War Department budget grew in size and function even after the Quasi-War Army surge ended. In light of anticipated hostilities with France, Adams created the Naval Department on April 30, 1798. This new department formed the administrative leadership for Washington’s frigates, as well as a basis for specialization of naval officers and customization of budgets. The Marines were also formed, formalizing the forces Washington had created. At one point under President Adams, U.S. defenses swelled to almost three times President Washington’s largest

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Beyond simple numerical expansion, Adams developed the first official plans to construct a military academy to ensure retention of a professional officer corps. When Adams left office in 1801, the federal military was still over three times the size of the 1789 force. Many of the soldiers then made careers out of military service, and the War and Naval Departments solidified administrative infrastructure and culture continuity for sustained professionalization. Washington and Adams developed a combat force suitable for the country’s defense in both scope and function.

Thomas Jefferson’s administration disrupted this trend of martial development established by America’s first two presidents. He was a reformer who believed his election was a mandate from the people to reverse the political trends of his predecessors. He considered his presidency “the Revolution of 1800” and appealed to Republican principles as the basis for his controversial early decisions in regards to the U.S. military. Military reform was a pronounced and measurable method of national reorganization, and Jefferson’s easiest way to eliminate the debilitating national debt of over seven million dollars per year. Jefferson’s first action in office was to appoint Henry Dearborn as Secretary of War; the decision to act on war affairs first is significant in its own right. Dearborn was an unusual Revolutionary War veteran because he did not advocate military expansion in the early 1800s. Though his military qualities were dubious in the War of 1812, Dearborn proved a capable overseer of peacetime

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12 Allen, Our Naval War With France, 233.
13 Skelton, An American Profession of Arms, 11.
15 Henry Adams, History of the United States under the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, 162.
administrative reform. Together, Dearborn and Jefferson reduced the Naval Department’s operational budget by two thirds; halted new frigate development and replaced the ocean-going fleet with shallow-water gunboats that for coastal and riverine defense only.17 Additionally, Jefferson reduced the number of Army officers by nearly 70%.18 William B. Skelton goes further and argues that the loss of personnel, experience, and camaraderie deteriorated professionalism in the Army’s officer corps.19 Jefferson’s self-proclaimed revolution stunted the Army and Navy’s combat capabilities; the “Revolution of 1800” ended a decade of continuous development of military competence.

Histories of Jefferson’s administration rarely approach a consensus on his various philosophical approaches or motivations. Theodore Crackel, the foremost historian of Jefferson’s Army policies, classifies Jefferson’s Republican values and inconsistently republican policies as a “paradox.”20 Political historians and biographers variously characterize the third president’s policies as pragmatic, aimless, imperial, patriotic, partisan, or merely pacifistic.21 William B. Skelton, who criticizes Crackel for ignoring that 70% of officer political affiliations are unknown, has since countered this argument by claiming that Jefferson appointed officers based on proximity and ability.22 Nevertheless, as the only monograph, many authors default to Crackel as the final word and such authors as Alan Taylor and Donald Hickey have repeated his argument. Other

19 Skelton, An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861, 5.
21 These perspectives are featured in the respective works of Forrest McDonald, Walter Lafeber, Russel F. Weigley, Peter Onuf, Theodore Crackel, and Stephen Watts.
historians have depicted Jefferson differently, leaving the assumption that his military policies followed their caricatures. Forrest Mcdonald paints Jefferson as a power-monger who required “absolute devotion” to support an idealistic vision of a rural agrarian empire.\(^{23}\) Another, Peter S. Onuf, contrasts both of these by arguing that Jefferson was a patriot who made decisions solely to minimize governmental power shifts and preserve the federal entity as an “Empire of Liberty.”\(^{24}\) Still, other historians have remarked on the “Pacifistic thrust of Jeffersonian Doctrine,” reinforcing the idea that Jefferson had little to no military involvement or desire to support national defense.\(^{25}\) Between the pacifist and power monger, partisan and patriot, there is still no consensus, and the studies have rarely tested these assumptions in military decisions. Without Crackel’s theory, no mainstream explanation exists that examines Jefferson’s military policy. Without Crackel’s theory, no mainstream explanation exists that examines Jefferson’s military policy. When policy is considered, historians do not examine the Navy or general repercussions of policy. A comprehensive examination of these factors can solve the paradox of Jefferson’s policies while simultaneously showing his effect on the War of 1812.

None of these approach a single explanation for Jefferson’s military policies as president. Jefferson commissioned the first American expeditions led by army captains and lieutenants and staffed by soldiers, even when the expeditions’ goals were purely scientific. Non-standard uses of the military became frequent and Jefferson personally directed the Lewis and Clark, Hunter-Dunbar, and Freeman-Custis expeditions. The


Army followed his lead with two independent expeditions under Captain Zebulon Pike. The goals of these expeditions were not military development or even tactical knowledge; instead, the journeys served to further the nation’s peacetime interests.\textsuperscript{26} In a similar show of inconsistency, Jefferson—who had protested to Washington in the 1790s that any military academy was unconstitutional—became the father of the Army academy at West Point. His was a plan modified from Adams’ plans for an academy to educate good engineers and refined citizens; the Army led bridge and road construction on the frontiers, the Navy formed hospitals for merchant sailors, and military leaders led dual civilian-military leadership roles. The paradox of Jefferson’s policies was not that he was purely for or against the regular military. Jefferson reformed the military to be a peacetime asset to enhance the country through improved national infrastructure, decreased taxation, and education of the citizenry. Convinced that America was safe from attack, Jefferson used the military he retained as a tool to further his pragmatic Republican agenda. These ambitions cost the military its martial combat expertise and capabilities as infrastructure and professionalism deteriorated in favor of civil service.

President James Madison’s administration continued Jefferson’s military plans until disaster forced reconsideration and reversion to the federalist approach to military readiness. Faced with political challenges and strategic impotence, Madison left the military unchanged throughout his first term. Madison did not prepare, fund, arm, or train the Army or Navy in any way that anticipated war until soldiers were called to action in 1812. The inadequacy of the Army and Navy became obvious after repeated

blunders in the War of 1812. Battlefield failures hampered the Army for most of the war as the superstructure, logistics, and leadership established under Jefferson reverted to a federalist European-style structure with traditional military functions. Inexperienced Canadian forces, faced with greater constraints but a clear combat legacy, outperformed the larger American forces in the war until Jeffersonian personnel and policies were abolished.27 The retired Federalist naval fleet championed the only naval successes – perhaps the only noteworthy successes, of the early war.28 Historians such as Henry Adams and William B. Skelton consider 1815 as the start of America’s professional military, yet the cultivation of military assets under Presidents Washington and Adams made this a military restoration, rather than the genesis of a professional military. After 1815, the American military never returned to the small size, civilian-centered function, or debilitated state of Jefferson’s peacetime-military.

Due to the lengthy timespan and political and military topic addressed, this thesis necessarily crosses a variety of historiographical conversations. Only one major work has explored Jefferson’s Army policies, and no substantial works have examined the pre-Madison era in any way as the basis for military failure in 1812. This thesis attempts to meld the disparate historiographies of military and political issues in the Early Republic into a single cohesive narrative. The first historiographical conversation is the well-studied topic of Thomas Jefferson’s political views. Historians have analyzed Jefferson’s policies and philosophies to a high degree. The themes of these works range from vilification to hagiography. Yet, there is no overarching consensus on Jefferson’s

philosophy or applied presidential policies. The second historiography entered here centers on the War of 1812. Like Jefferson’s policies, historians have reached no consensus on military failures of the War—or even a consensus on the outcome of the war. Early approaches under historians like Theodore Roosevelt monopolized the field until the 1970s. This minimized the variety of perspectives, or indeed sources, used by historians until this point. Due to the war’s recent bicentennial, a new group of historians in the 2010s, such as Alan Taylor and Jon Latimer worked to decipher the conflict’s origin and effects. The final historiography is that of the beginning of the United States military. Serious studies of military development from the American Revolution until the War of 1812 remain practically nonexistent. Traditional military historians have had little cause to examine the military in this era as there were no major wars under Washington, Adams, or Jefferson. Furthermore, the inadequacy of primary sources had proved a major hindrance in the study of U.S. military development. Though a number have survived, much of the primary evidence of the pre-1812 War Department was destroyed in a fire. The records do not exist in the quantity of the later military establishment. Yet enough small conflicts occurred to piece together an effective history of military development in times of peace. Thus, this thesis attempts to explain executive military policy and its relation to the War of 1812.

Histories and biographies on Thomas Jefferson are among the most numerous in the field of early United States history, yet – in spite of the Tripolitan War – little exists to connect the Republican President to federal military development. Theodore Crackel is the only historian to write an extensive study on President Jefferson’s army policies.\(^{32}\) He explains the president’s duality as a product of partisanship. Crackel argues that Jefferson wanted to eliminate the Federalists in the military, not the federal military itself, and Jefferson appointed Republican officers to run an academy for dislodging Federalists. Crackel’s argument, while a useful study of policy, is incomplete. His claims overlook various naval developments, militia formations, and the effects of Jefferson’s decisions. Nevertheless, *Mr. Jefferson’s Army*, written in 1987, is the sole monograph to exclusively examine Jefferson’s military policies. As such, Crackel is the *de facto* source used by later historians to understand the military in this period. William B. Skelton, an occasional critic of Crackel, has argued against this perspective. Skelton points out that political affiliations are unknown, but a factual correlation between geography and availability dislodges the bedrock of the partisanship argument and casts doubt upon Crackel’s theme.\(^{33}\) Despite this discrepancy, Alan Taylor, Donald Hickey, and other historians continue to rely on Crackel’s monograph.

The second major historiographical conversation covered here examines the War of 1812. The basis of the “forgotten conflict” is a debate on how the war began and another on who rightly claimed the victory.\(^{34}\) Conventionally, the view relied on political failure as the backdrop for American military success in spite of bureaucracy. Recently,

^{34}\) Hickey, *The War of 1812*.  

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the argument has shifted to accept a partial United States defeat, and has begun to question the reasons behind the nation’s failures so soon after defeating the same enemy in the American Revolutionary War. Traditional historians like Theodore Roosevelt, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Henry Adams dominated the historiography for nearly a century and left little interpretation about the war apart from a nationalist perspective. Roosevelt assigned blame to Jefferson for naval failures in brief and bitter statements that carried over into other literature, but these claims are unsubstantiated elsewhere in the historiography. 35 *Mr. Madison’s War* by J.C.A. Stagg was the first modern work to examine the war separately from traditional interpretations, and sought to forward a reasonable explanation of battlefield failures. 36 Stagg claims that President Madison caused the war to generate an American commercial advantage. Donald Hickey begins his seminal *The Forgotten Conflict* with a rebuttal of Stagg, but maintains the focus on the short-term causes of the war. 37 Jon Latimer, in his 2008 work examining the British perspective concentrates on short-term cause of the war and its outcome. Alan Taylor’s *The Civil War of 1812* expanded and consolidated evidence to incorporate newer multifaceted explanations to the nature of the war, its outcome, and the scale of battlefield failures. 38 Though these histories have allowed a negative interpretation of American performance and broadened their explanation for the war, none has yet identified roots of the war and why the U.S. military performance before the election of James Madison. American military historians have identified the origins of most

38 Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812.*
conflicts before each war, but the War of 1812 remains enigmatic in this respect. No one has yet to recognize Jefferson as a key contributor to the war’s cause and its battlefield failures, as this thesis will seek to prove.

The final historiography covered here is that of the military organization in the Early American Republic. Disinterestedness in a peacetime military and the insubstantial wars of the early United States have yielded a barren historiography. The bulk of studies on the early period focuses on individual conflicts and occasional naval developments; until recently, none of the historiography has exclusively examined the fall under Jefferson or its effects. William B. Skelton’s work, An American Profession of Arms, is an excellent survey that has assembled much of the military history in this era.39 His works continually identify an early military growth in the 1790s and rebirth into a professional force after the War of 1812. Skelton has shown that recruitment, training, and infrastructure could not flourish under Jefferson or Madison. Richard Kohn examines policies in the Early Republic but reaches the conclusion that the “real” military did not truly begin until after Republican policy reversal in the War of 1812. A number of case studies exist on the various topics of Northwest Indian Wars, gunboat navies, militia programs, or individual frontier battles. These offer an overview of the military supplemented by a number of broad surveys, though the relatively peaceful period under Washington, Adams, and Jefferson leaves this topic under-explored. Together, these sources trace the military’s trajectory before 1815 and highlight the anemic effects of Jefferson’s policies on combat readiness. They do highlight Jefferson’s policies on the military as an agent of Jefferson’s civilian policies.

The primary sources used in this exploration tie the presidents to their policies as the most direct means of understanding executive intent. The writings of George Washington and John Adams make up the basis of the argument that Federalist intent was to develop an adequate military before it became a necessity. Particularly important among the writings of the Federalists are those in the Whiskey Insurrection, Northwest Indian War, and various congressional bills that affected military intervention. Washington’s goals are never more clear than his discarded drafts and speeches. Thomas Jefferson’s writings form the body of this evidence for this entire study. Apparent contradictions and insistence on military management recur in the writings of a figure most have argued detested the military.\(^{40}\) James Madison’s writings reinforce the views of his biographers. In their minds and the minds of those who read his writings, Madison often did not act independently, or in time to make a difference. With each president, their correspondence with the Secretary of War or Secretary of the Navy served as the backdrop for accurate military assessment, and Cabinet opinions rarely conflicted with the executives. Memoirs and letters of these key figures provide a top-down approach to the quandary of civic military reform.

In addition to the writings of key figures, this thesis uses bills and policies to assess how political ideas like those of Jefferson translated to action. Congressional records provide details on the proponents of each bill. More importantly, the text of specific bills signed into law by supportive presidents reveals the roles taken on by these figures. George Washington’s *Uniform Militia Acts*, passed in both 1792 and 1794, join

the Naval Act of 1794 as the first bills to set a developmental policy or tackle the challenges of militia incorporation.\footnote{Allen, \textit{Our Naval War with France}, 233.} Adams’ Naval Act of 1798 created the Navy Department and fundamentally changed the structure of the American military.\footnote{Allen, \textit{Our Naval War with France}, 42.} The most significant evidence of reform is a single bill passed in 1801: Jefferson’s \textit{Military Peace Establishment Act} was the first military bill passed after he took office.\footnote{Skelton, \textit{An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corp, 1784-1861}, 81.} Government records are necessarily the product of collaboration in Congress, but the presidents commented, rejected, or petitioned for bills to shape policy at all levels. These sources outline the pattern of developments advocated by the various executives.

Another source of primary documentation on the military comes from the frontier. The writings of frontier leaders inform the operational and tactical changes in the period through first-hand accounts of frontier expeditions. Orders to military leaders and direct evidence of military reconnaissance offer confirmation of the civic purpose than Jefferson advocated. The journals of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and similar officer-explorers reveal the true intent and military effects of these expeditions.\footnote{Skelton, \textit{An American Profession of Arms}, 10} Additionally, a series of personnel and curriculum records from the West Point Military Academy explain the combat shortcomings of these officers. Battlefield sources on the War of 1812 or the various minor conflicts tie political intent to practical policy. Accounts of Generals James Wilkinson and Henry Dearborn continue the top-down approach to Jefferson’s military policy and show that his forces were insufficient and – at times – incompetent. Naval records from Bay St. Louis to Canada detail the continued
capture and destruction of Jefferson’s gunboat militia. The frontier serves as an ample source of honest assessments of military efficacy.

Critical to the understanding of this era is the foundational perspective this thesis takes toward the role of the president. Presidents did not unilaterally dictate military policy. They required at least some support from Congress and, ostensibly, the Public. However, political resistance rarely stopped early presidents from achieving their goals while in office. This was doubly true for the Republican presidents after the demise of the Federalist Party. The executive office was the Commander in Chief, the highest military leader, and the *de facto* office of responsibility for undetermined government roles at the dawn of American politics.\(^{45}\) Rarely was a president unable to achieve their objectives for military reform or reduction. George Washington’s administration met limited resistance, mostly from disgruntled Republicans, but he was broadly pleased with his military developments and used the veto power only twice. Adams, in his single term, sided with the majority both when he built provisional forces and when he tapered the excess. Jefferson accurately described his policies as part of a “mighty wave of public opinion”; he created policies with little resistance from Congress.\(^ {46}\) Madison had no ambition to prepare the military until war was certain. Presidents were beholden to Congress, but each accomplished their stated reform objectives without much trouble. The limitations of executive authority were inherent in the Constitutional Republic, but they unequivocally influenced and directed martial policy. Therefore, executive

decisions are the vessel through which this thesis explores military policy and the atrophy of the military in the Republican era.

The central claim of this thesis is that Thomas Jefferson’s executive policies of civil-military reform disrupted martial development and resulted in the initial battlefield failures of the War of 1812. This argument requires extensive sources from the creation of the Constitution to the formation of the “real” Army of 1815.\footnote{Skelton, \textit{An American Profession of Arms}, 99.} Three decades and four separate historiographies highlight Jefferson’s ability to thwart his predecessors’ plans for military development and to reform the military away from a combat purpose. The first chapter identifies a Federalist tendency toward long-term military development with an affordable and effective combat goal. The second chapter examines Jefferson’s reforms and their deleterious effects on military roles and capabilities. The final chapter highlights the atrophied martial capabilities of the United States and battlefield failures during the War of 1812. Together, this evidence shows that Thomas Jefferson’s policies of civic military reform disrupted American martial development and significantly diminished battlefield performance in the War of 1812.
CHAPTER II - PRECEDE NTS, PRESIDENTS, AND PRAGMATISTS: THE
“GRADUAL CREATION” OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT48

The first two Presidents of the United States began a professional regular military
suited for defense and designed to develop further under their successors. George
Washington began this process with the post-revolution restoration of the Army and its
subsequent reform into a legionary system. Washington’s Navy was frigate-based,
modular, expandable, and built for the longevity required to become the nucleus of a
larger fleet. President Adams followed his predecessor’s martial vector with temporary
and permanent expansions of the Federal Army at the outset of the Quasi-War with
France in 1798. Adams also expanded the Navy with frigates and associated support
ships, as well as the administrative creation of a separate Naval Department in the
Federal government. Both presidents had circumstances and backgrounds that motivated
their executive actions, but military conflict and near-conflict with France, Spain, Great
Britain, North Africa, various frontier tribes, as well as continuous insurrections meant
that practical military application remained central to their justifications for military
development. Washington and Adams believed defensive institutions practically met the
needs of immediate crises and served to deter the recurrent threat of European war. The
result of this Federalist pragmatism was an established military system similar to the
standard militaries of Europe in function, if not size. In a decade of tension and
skirmishes, from 1789 to 1801, Washington and Adams overcame limited political and
popular resistance to create a capable military force. A policy of “gradual creation”

48 George Washington, Eighth Annual Address to Congress in Writings of George Washington.,
ensured that these policies were sustainable and expandable under future executives.\(^{49}\)

These presidents created a traditional military and expanded its capability and size “by degrees” until Thomas Jefferson took office in 1801.\(^{50}\)

Washington and Adams developed the Army, expanded the Navy, founded the Marines, created a new department, orchestrated multiple major reforms, and attempted to build military academies all in the name of practical defense. They set a precedent and placed the military on a trajectory of development that both anticipated would continue until the nation was defensible; but historians have yet to examine these military developments. Jefferson effected the military deeply and subsequently influenced the outcome of his successor’s war, but his effect is immeasurable without knowledge of the precedents he defied.

Modern historians justifiably view George Washington as a staunch advocate of a traditional standing military, but this was not the case throughout his life, and not in his entire presidency. Instead, Washington adapted his military plans to the political climate as long as the nation remained safe from foreign powers. Pragmatism was more important to Washington than party politics. When he entered office, Washington succumbed to popular will by favoring a Republican scheme of a militia-based defense. He shifted this stance later when he determined the Republican military concept was untenable in the New Republic. The stark difference in policy between his early presidency and later years is significant. His early policies tolerated decentralized government oversight of the military, but modern historians and biographers favor the


Federalist image of Washington, cemented in his second term, as the authentic view of his presidency.\textsuperscript{51} Washington initially relied on the militia for the country’s defense. However, various Indian Wars, Western uprisings, and constant naval threats convinced Washington that an effective military force required centralization and steady development. The Republican military concept failed to achieve savings or military preparedness, and Washington adjusted his plans accordingly.\textsuperscript{52} By the end of his presidency, he staunchly advocated for regulars instead of militia.\textsuperscript{53} By 1797, Washington was militaristic in a way that upset the sensibilities of his “essentially unmilitary” Secretary of State – Thomas Jefferson.\textsuperscript{54} Washington’s initial willingness to entertain Republican defense policies collapsed after his military failed on two occasions, and he instead opted to develop a proven military construct.

Washington’s executive policies originated, in part, from his experience in the American Revolution. The Revolution’s drawn-out campaigns reinforced his opinion that professional soldiers won the war, not citizen soldiers. Although divisions grew between his Army and the citizenry, he used the militia in the limited battlefield capacities that he could accommodate.\textsuperscript{55} At locations like Valley Forge and the Siege of Yorktown, Washington’s conviction grew that a force of military professionals and a large naval fleet provided the only command and control necessary to win the war. Militia forces were difficult to predict, direct, and unreliable for service far from their

\textsuperscript{52} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, 35:314.
\textsuperscript{54} Mahan, \textit{Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1905), 281.
\textsuperscript{55} Charles Royster, \textit{A Revolutionary People At War: The Continental Army and American Character 1775-1783} (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina, 1996), 315.
home locations. Washington believed that order and discipline was the weakness of militia. He credited Baron von Stueben’s talents as a cause for victory through training and discipline. The final campaigns through 1783 validated Washington’s faith in a professional Army over a militia system. He wrote to Robert Morris of his newfound conviction that militia ultimately exceeded the cost of expensive regulars, and that he was “convinced” that the nation should always maintain “an army as is sufficient to operate against the enemy.\footnote{Washington, \textit{The Writings of George Washington}, Vol ix, 349.} However, the war shifted the political climate towards Republicanism, and advocation of a centralized standing Army at times of peace became politically untenable. The Revolution turned relatively neutral citizens against the British by proxy of their Army; anti-military sentiment and the war became inextricable.\footnote{Joseph S. Tiedemann, “Patriots by Default: Queens County, New York, and the British Army, 1776-1783.” \textit{William and Mary Quarterly}, Vol. 43 No. 1 (January, 1986): 35-63.}

Republican fear of the professional military became reality in the Newburgh Conspiracy at the end of the Revolution. A number of disgruntled officers entertained ideas about using force against Congress to settle pay disputes. Washington quelled the attempted coup, but could identify a practical example wherein a peacetime military was a threat to the new nation.\footnote{Richard S. Kohn, \textit{Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America 1783-1802} (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 32.}

At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, peace had supplanted efficacy in Washington’s martial designs. He wrote warning Alexander Hamilton about the “dangerous instrument” of a standing Army.\footnote{Washington, \textit{The Writings of George Washington}, Vol 10: 215.} He was critical of the dangers against its unchecked employment. He reemphasized in his correspondence that the government
should “disband the Army as soon as possible.”\(^{60}\) Washington’s reluctance to maintain
regulars in peacetime was significant enough that staunch anti-militarists supported these
military decisions. Thomas Jefferson, who opposed a peacetime military in the 1780s,
considered Washington a political ally.\(^{61}\) Washington wanted a militia force to be the
center of the Confederate defense policy. He considered the dangers of the Army when
he urged Congress to consider that the future government should consider militia the
“palladium of our security.”\(^{62}\) Washington’s military service taught him the value of a
trained military’s battlefield acumen, but he was cautious of their value in the peaceful
postwar.

The government could not effectively raise or maintain a centralized Army or
Navy under the Articles of Confederation. Congress disbanded the Continental Army at
the end of the war to less than 100 troops and retired the Navy entirely. Instead, the new
government relied upon summoned troops stationed across the Northwestern Frontier
near present-day Ohio. The new form of defense highlighted the martial dysfunction
under the Confederate government.\(^{63}\) The troops that arrived were untrained, poorly
supplied, and lacked the infrastructure necessary to self-administrate. The government
only occasionally neared the quotas requested under this system, never to exceed 640
personnel of the requested thousands. Composition of this force was limited to single-
term volunteers from four Northeastern states: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and
Connecticut –states with proximity to the Northwestern frontier.\(^{64}\) The government

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\(^{64}\) Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 82.
lacked the power to enforce or entice additional support from the other state governments, or even the four approved states. The same states ostensibly supplied and funded the garrisons—though the logistics of this arrangement repeatedly fell through.\textsuperscript{65} Manning rarely matched allotments, pay and supplies were inconsistent or nonexistent. Further, the force was loyal to the states they came from over the Confederation government.\textsuperscript{66} States fought over the fair share of contributions to frontier security, and the volunteers were not under any clear jurisdiction and power struggles emerged. The ostensibly balanced officer corps did consist of any individuals from Southern states for a decade, a limitation on what could considered a representation of the United States federal power.\textsuperscript{67} With desertion, starvation, and an unsustainable supply of volunteers, the dubiously legal army could not effectively defend the frontier.

Washington was increasingly sensitive to the Army’s shortcomings under the Confederation, though trade threats and a Navy were his chief military concerns. The Confederacy did not have a Navy, Marines, or the legal authority to establish either branch of service. This created a scenario in which the early Army and Navy lost in various significant encounters. Algeria and Libya seized American vessels in exchange for ransoms and trade agreements. Faced with no military recourse and a need to sustain trade through the Mediterranean, Confederacy had no military options and consequently paid ransoms to preserve trade rights.\textsuperscript{68} Washington viewed this a needless humiliation.

\textsuperscript{65} Weigley, \textit{History of the United States Army}, 84.
and embarrassing capitulation and the creation of a capable defensive system became his priority. 69

The first time Washington had a direct role in the political formation of the post-Revolution military occurred in May of 1787 at the Constitutional Convention. Many feared the “ruinous” consequences of a Federal Army or Navy, were anxious at the prospect of a peacetime military. 70 These feared that a single executive officer would concentrate federal power over the Army and Navy. Fears of this scenario were worsened as Washington, the former head of the Continental Army, presided over the Convention. This only served to enflame anti-military passions, as some feared that an ambitious president could become an opponent to liberty. Although Washington was highly respected in 1787, his martial achievements were the core of his public persona. State representatives presumed Washington would become the first president and many feared a veteran with extensive military powers. 71 Given the contentious nature of the military clause and his mild mannerism, Washington rarely intervened in the development of the Constitution at the Convention. The one significant exception was his expression of interest in practical defense. He felt that the new government should sustain a military of unspecified design to centralize national defense efforts. 72

Washington’s transition against militia-based defense occurred after he took office as president on April 4, 1789. He immediately set about to secure a practical national defense; though, in early days, he favored the militia system. Washington struggled with

71 Kenneth R. Bowling, Neither Separate Nor Equal: Congress in the 1790s, 240.
72 Richard S. Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 77.
the burden of precedent at this point in his career. He believed his actions would set a vector for future presidents, and his actions exhibited political ambivalence in order to accommodate alternative ideas.\textsuperscript{73} The Constitutional Government was new when he took office, and the document created only a few of the basic institutions of the new federation. The American military was among the unestablished entities of the new administration, with only the four-state coalition haphazardly managing the frontier. Washington sought to rectify these defensive shortcomings as president. Washington drafted a 64-page inaugural address that he never delivered in its original form, but captured at-once his mindset in 1789. “It remains for you” was the phrase he repeated most often in the draft and many subsequent addresses to Congress.\textsuperscript{74} The phrase highlighted an ambiguity because Washington would acquiesce to any practical scheme of national defense.

Acquiescence was not indifference, though he appeared almost entirely Republican with his military policy. Initially, he recommended that Congress rely on a sizeable contingent of militia because they would provide a defense and still remain politically and fiscally conservative. Militia were also economically sustainable in Washington’s scheme since many were concerned about the impoverished new government’s finances. In most instances, states provided and supplied personnel, equipment, and supplies. The treasury struggled to pay its bills, and Washington believed that the payment of debts was a key platform of the new government. Adequately armed and equipped, militia could overwhelm an invader by sheer force of numbers. Thus,

\textsuperscript{73} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 10: 460.
\textsuperscript{74} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 35:307; vol 35:494.
Washington believed he could satisfy national security, divisive politics, and economy by using the militia as the basis for all defense and garrisons in 1789.\textsuperscript{75} He suggested Congress arm them with the armaments stored at the conclusion of the Revolution. These arms, artillery, equipment, and stores from the Revolution had the potential to place the militia on competitive terms with regulars. He proposed the foundation of a “grand arsenal” of old equipment to provide easy access to weaponry in the event of conflict.\textsuperscript{76} Washington acquiesced to the idea of militia-based defense as a political and pragmatic method of national defense.

Washington’s initial passive support for the militia system in 1789 is a testament to his faith in the national safety situation. He did not think America was in any significant danger of international war when he entered office. The Newburgh Conspiracy had shaken his trust in peacetime regulars, but not enough to make him doubt their battlefield efficacy.\textsuperscript{77} He shared a popular view with Thomas Jefferson and many contemporaries that the nation was unthreatened from within and unassailable from without –militia would be a sufficient defense. For Washington, offensive wars were never an option, even in the case of Northern Africa’s trade disputes geography favored the United States. In Washington’s opinion, America was in a “fortuitous” location that protected the nation from foreign incursions.\textsuperscript{78} The prior war with Britain seemed to vindicate this position; a superior foe could not sustain military operations an ocean away. Washington believed that a trained militia could survive in a defensive war against

\textsuperscript{75} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 12, 73.
\textsuperscript{76} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 30:320.
\textsuperscript{77} Kohn, \textit{Eagle and Sword}, 10.
European armies, and at a minimum, buy enough time to create a defensive Army before serious threats materialized.\textsuperscript{79} He wanted to avoid a situation where, like in the prior conflict, “the sword was forged on the anvil of necessity.”\textsuperscript{80} Militia could provide readiness for a defensive military stance against unlikely foreign incursions. This sense of security however, did not survive his first term. While later presidents bought into this mindset, Washington adjusted his military philosophy to fit immediate security needs.

In spite of Washington’s acquiescence to a militia centered system of defense, he still pursued enhancements for the approximately 500 federalized militias the United States inherited from the Confederation. These would be the seed of professionals around which proper regulars and later militia augmentation might form. He informed Congress that he intended to “revive the ancient martial spirit” of a professional Army.\textsuperscript{81} The steps he took were primarily administrative and tended only to occur as a reaction to crises. Until significant threats emerged, Washington saw little reason to advocate a peacetime regular military concept.

President Washington’s naval policies were similar to those of his Army, but remained consistent throughout his terms in-office. He believed a strong Navy acted as a deterrent to foreign attacks and prevented harassment to American trade. In his inaugural address, he asked Congress that “when the circumstances permit” they would direct the “gradual creation” of a naval fleet.\textsuperscript{82} Gradual development was again the theme of Washington’s military policy when he entered office. A navy was practical for defense, but expensive,

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\textsuperscript{79} Guthman, \textit{March to Massacre}, 2.  \\
\textsuperscript{80} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 30:296.  \\
\textsuperscript{81} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 30:303.  \\
\end{flushright}
even without procurement of a new deep-water fleet. With incremental procurement as the modus operandi, future presidents could complete Washington’s defense designs with less cost. Thereby, Washington hoped to “lay a foundation for future defense” and plant the seeds for a Navy that his successors could grow and adapt as necessary.\textsuperscript{83} Washington entered office intent to secure national safety, but was unconcerned in 1789 that a regular military force might be immediately necessary.

The figure on the following page is an analysis compiled from all the War Department funds allocated by Congress between 1789 and 1797 and their respective categories. (David Martin, 2015). The budget of the War Department from 1789 to 1797 reflects the broad changes in military policy that occurred during Washington’s tenure. The first two years of military expenditure were almost static the president and the government formed basic institutions and were involved in only minor projects related to military readiness. The majority of War Department expenses to 1790 were payouts to pensioners from the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{84} The budget of the whole department in 1789 totalled a meager $137,000. In March of 1791, frontier conflicts caused the first revisions to monetary policy in regards to Army readiness. As conflict in the Northwestern settlement flared fighting with the natives, the budget began to reflect Washington’s skepticism of militia efficacy in combat situations. The budget increased sharply, and the funds allotted to frontier defense overtook pension payments in


**Figure 1. War Department Budget, 1789-1797.**

The above figure is an analysis compiled from all the War Department funds allocated by Congress between 1789 and 1797 and their respective categories. (David Martin, 2015)
proportion of expenditures for the first time. With a single exception, War Department funding increased each year of Washington’s presidency. By the time Washington left office in 1797, the defense budget had mushroomed to $1,383,314.\textsuperscript{85} The ten-fold increase was not anomalous, but the natural progression of responsive defensive measures. National threats motivated a reversion from \textit{laissez-faire} defensive preparations to the groundwork of a permanent professional military.

In addition to a general tendency towards expansion, Army expenditures indicate that capabilities increased alongside force size. In 1789, Congress allocated the budget for the War Department in a specific broad category. In 1790, Congress split the budget into specifically allotted amounts for pensioners, the Indian Department, and the larger Army. Each year thereafter, the list of expense categories grew to reflect the increased sophistication of the defense system. By the time Washington left office in 1796, the delineation of allotments had increased to a further twenty categories. The figures grew less exact for individual expenses with each successive year, a phenomenon indicative of less specific Congressional oversight. Instead, the added budget complexity reflected the increased capabilities of the Army. The new categories funded for the first time included equine procurements, cavalry funding, harbor fortifications, field artillery piece acquisition, frontier fort creation, formation of a quartermaster corps, and the establishment of the first naval fleet. Some of these categories reflected immediate crises on the frontier or elsewhere, but the majority were permanent additions to the force that only grew with time. Military expenditures illustrate the broad success Washington had in the creation of a formidable defense system.

\textsuperscript{85} Peters, \textit{Public Statutes at Large}, vol 1: 552.

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The nature of the military’s increase did not perfectly reflect the views Washington initially ascribed when he claimed to prefer the militia force for its security value. Deliberate responses to national crises forced Washington to abandon his early presidential hope to preserve the militia as the primary means of defense. He lost trust in the United States’ relative security as threats developed internally, on the frontier, and across the Atlantic. Each time he called out the militia, they disappointed him in some fundamental way, usually in recruitment and mustering shortages alone. He wrote “No man wishes less than the President to see a standing Army established; but…” he wrote to Benjamin Hawkins in 1791 as his faith in the militia system waned.86 He described his feelings towards an effective militia system as “despair”.87 He perceived increased need for defensive measures for national security, and he adjusted policy away from the conspicuously Republican approach he espoused in 1789. At the end of his presidency, this metamorphosis meant that he no longer felt the nation was “prepared for war” without a permanent professional Army.88 Washington’s transformed views affected his approach to policy, the Army, and his colleagues. The conflict this created between himself and Thomas Jefferson was critical and served to cement in the latter’s mind that Washington’s policies had to be abandoned and reversed.89 Military encounters transformed Washington’s policies in a way that permanently altered the Army and polarized Thomas Jefferson against his policies.

In particular, combat conflicts on the frontier served as reasons for Washington to transform from a passive militia advocate to a leader who gradually developed the Army. These included three campaigns in the Northwest against the Natives in the region and the Whiskey Insurrection in western Pennsylvania. These conflicts were isolated incidents with far-reaching outcomes. Each compounded Washington’s views that the nation was vulnerable and that the more potent federal forces was required for national security and readiness. Washington revived the “ancient” martial spirit not in the populace or militia, but in the creation of his own federal organizational legion.\textsuperscript{90}

Most frontier conflicts of the period occurred in the Old Northwestern Territory; an area from Western Pennsylvania to what would later become the State of Ohio. Mass migration into the Ohio Territory continued occupation of frontier forts by the British Army, and the creation of new treaties and systems of governance created instability from 1783 onwards. This necessitated the American Army’s continued present in the Northwest through Washington’s administrations. The Northwest Indian War, from 1790 to 1794, brought these issues to their climax under the new government. The United States attempted to stop frontier violence against immigrants by military force on the Natives. This was at times retaliatory and preemptive. The nature of the military meant that the Indians won easy victories while the U.S. only gained a foe legitimately united in opposition. Rather than dissuade the idea of regulars, defeat drove paranoia, and the idea of national security grew. Though the Indian coalition deserves credit for their strategic

and tactical victories, the repeated failure of the Army lies primarily on its own incompetence.\textsuperscript{91}

The first campaign developed after large numbers of settlers encroached on Indian land in the Ohio Territory. Due to agreements with the Natives and a frontier due East, encroachment in this area had been relatively benign until after the Revolutionary War. A postwar spate of land grants to Revolutionary War veterans caused an influx of migrants after 1783 that disrupted the equilibrium of frontier relations. With limited legal recourse to bolster their military, the Confederation government, retained a four-hundred pseudo-regular force in the region that could do little but monitor the egregious violation of treaties and land agreements. Major Josiah Harmar was placed in charge of the area, one key fort, and a number of small outposts in the region. In 1785, less than two years after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, he noted the security threat of increased immigration to the West. In response, he marched onto land South of the Wabash Tribe to evict seventy illegal American homesteaders.\textsuperscript{92} This temporarily relieved frontier tensions, but the scale of immigration worsened over time. Two years later, Harmar described an “almost incredible” six-thousand settlers spotted from his outpost alone over a six-month period.\textsuperscript{93} Harmar, with a force poorly supported at both the state and federal levels, was powerless to enforce the government’s laws. He was neither qualified nor supplied to prevent encroachment on this scale. On August 7, 1787, Harmar established

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\textsuperscript{93} Brown, “The Role of the Army in Western Settlement”, 189.
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new outposts to stop immigration from the South where “a door was opening very fast.”

The next day, Harmar brokered deals with French settlers, and Indians shot at least twenty arrows and mutilated two of his soldiers. This retaliatory violence became characteristic of the 1790s as the Army struggled to maintain any semblance of peace. In 1790, one year after Washington entered office, reports of illegal settlement reached their recorded crescendo. Within eyesight of Harmar’s main garrison alone, over twenty thousand settlers entered the Northwest Territory to settle on lands designated for the Native Americans. Local tribes sought assistance from both Britain and the United States as they found their resources diminishing every year as each successive “rush of squatters” arrived. As a result, violent tensions increased between the civilizations in an “inexorable drift” towards war.

1790 marked the height of violence that justified intervention from the United States Government. Frontier officials reported an exponential increase in annual deaths, the sum surpassed fifteen hundred. The small Army post could neither restrict settlement nor effectively evict encroachers; Indians killed dozens of soldiers each year. With few military options available, Washington and John Knox, the Secretary of War tasked six hundred soldiers on the frontier as a continuation of the old Confederate force. In reality, the number was less than four hundred untrained men spread across

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95 Thornbrough, Outpost on the Wabash, Armstrong to Harmar, Aug 8, 1787, 43.
96 Brown, “The Role of the Army in Western Settlement,” 189.
97 Weigley, History of the United States Army, 90.
99 Guthman, March to Massacre, 175.
100 Thornbrough, Outpost on the Wabash, Hamtramck to Harmar, August 12, 1877, 105.
multiple garrisons.\textsuperscript{101} Thus, Washington met with Congress and reemphasized that defense must remain an object of “particular regard.”\textsuperscript{102}

Washington and Knox developed a military implementation plan that was consistent with the country’s attitude towards regulars and the president’s own measured demeanor. The president gave Arthur St. Clair (governor of the Northwest Territory) and Josiah Harmar increased military authority to summon militia from the local territories and nearby states. If violence continued, an inevitability given the frequency of contact, they were to “subdue” the Indians in the Northwest. Harmar and St. Clair were given leave to summon the militias of Kentucky, Virginia, and Western Pennsylvania to “punish” Indians and extinguish frontier violence.\textsuperscript{103}

On April 30, 1790, Congress increased Army troop authorizations to a full regiment of infantry.\textsuperscript{104} This brought the Army’s allotted strength to 1,216 soldiers, and broadened its capabilities for the first time on record.\textsuperscript{105} The bill also made provisions for a small contingent of artillery, less than 300 troops in total, to support the infantry. However, frontier logistics and poor military pay meant that the force did not develop quickly.\textsuperscript{106} Six months after the new troop authorizations, the Army began its campaign with barely half of its allotments filled. Harmar’s end-strength totaled 353 regulars, less than he had at times under the Articles of Confederation. Undeterred, Harmar used his Presidential authorization to request a force over two-thousand militia from the States.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{101} Guthman, \textit{March to Massacre}, 177.
\textsuperscript{102} Washington, \textit{The Writings of George Washington}, vol 30:303.
\textsuperscript{103} Washington, \textit{The Writings of George Washington}, vol 30:492; vol 30:512.
\textsuperscript{104} Peters, \textit{Public Statutes at Large}, vol 1:552.
\textsuperscript{105} Guthman, \textit{March to Massacre}, 175.
\textsuperscript{107} Guthman, \textit{March to Massacre}, 182.
Neither Pennsylvania nor Virginia, whom Harmar had counted on, supplied their share of requested militia. The Western counties of Pennsylvania had supplied the majority of frontier forces during the Confederation period. Consequently, the state’s war fatigue was high, and militiamen turnout was inconsiderable. The request alone, coupled with new federal taxes, helped foster anti-federal sentiment in the state. Harmar did not resent the slow growth of his regular force, but he did develop animosity towards the militia when they disappointed him in the final hours of campaign preparation. Washington was sensitive to the militia’s absence and the complaints made of Harmar, by then a Brigadier General. Harmar had expressed mortification at the thought of leading a militia command. To mitigate these shortfalls, Washington requested that nearby counties in Kentucky provide a surplus of troops. He also requested cavalry to serve as advanced patrols and a rapid deployment force, a gap he perceived as significant in the Army’s capabilities. Kentucky provided the requested manpower, but the troops that arrived only just in time, were poorly equipped and, Harmar claimed, unskilled and incapable of basic firearm operation. Harmar’s frustration with the militia was evident from the start of the campaign and recurred as a theme throughout the march.

The strategic objective of the campaign was unclear, but the approximate goal was to enter Indian Territory and exact violence on a number of Native villages to force a stable peace. After the Secretary of War had received Washington’s approval, he commanded the Army to “extirpate [the Natives], utterly, if possible”. General Harmar

111 Wiley Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 87.
began his campaign on the last day of September 1790 with 1,453 men.\textsuperscript{112} Consistent with executive policy at the time, the force was primarily militia, with the bulk of the U.S. Army regulars at the center with 320 troops. A poor supply line hampered the campaign from the start, but the leadership also complained throughout about the poor discipline of the militia troops.\textsuperscript{113} Harmar departed Fort Washington, with the intention of splitting his forces to increase visibility and provide less exposure to Indian ambush. Chief Little Turtle, of the Wabash, turned these tactics into opportunity through a divide-and-conquer approach to individual ambushes.

The first contact with Native forces revealed the inadequacy of the militia forces under Harmar’s command. Colonel John Hardin, of the Kentucky militia was detached with 180 men to locate the Indian encampment. Little Turtle ambushed Hardin’s forces; the forward Kentucky militia immediately broke into a retreat, while the rear militia refused to march to the aid of the embattled regulars. Hardin returned some remnants of his force to Harmar’s lines that night, but with thirty-one confirmed dead—mostly regulars—and the remainder of his force greatly reduced by casualties and desertions. Furious, Harmar castigated the militia and threatened to fire into their ranks. Three days later, a second ambush broke the campaign when Harmar’s flank suffered an 83% death rate for regulars and a 27% rate for militia.\textsuperscript{114} This second ambush cost Harmar over one hundred and fifty casualties and the faith of his beleaguered forces. Harmar then attempted a dignified retreat to Fort Washington. Three weeks of tactical failures exposed the substructure of the military complex as the supply system, command

\textsuperscript{112} Guthman, \textit{March to Massacre}, 187.  
\textsuperscript{113} Alan S. Brown, “The Role of the Army in Western Settlement,” 174.  
\textsuperscript{114} Sword, \textit{President Washington’s Indian War}, 108.
structure, and militia forces proved inadequate to achieve any of the campaign’s military goals. The first military engagement of the United States Army was a failure, and the planned strategic show-of-force was instead a public display of weakness.

Washington monitored the campaign as closely as possible given the limitations in communication between the East Coast and the frontier. He was furious in early November when he first heard rumors of defeat, before the official news reached his office. The short campaign nearly destroyed the only military force America possessed, over one-hundred of the remaining regulars left the Army after the campaign. He labeled the defeat as a “disgraceful” massacre caused by General Harmar and – eventually- his militia. In his correspondence to Knox he called Harmar a drunk, a rabble-rouser, and incompetent military leader. Not content to express his frustrations in words alone, Washington also relieved Harmar of command and attempted to summon a Court of Inquiry. This incident reflected Washington’s conviction that the American forces -especially the militia- were to blame for the mistake, and he did not intend to allow for a second failure. The inquiry was public and was the focus of national news, its lessons were widely publicized. Harmar mounted an adequate defense with his goal being to attack the militia system and the general incompetence of his irregular force. Harmar’s colleagues corroborated his argument, and the militia became a scapegoat for Army failure. Although the militia collapse was likely the root of Harmar’s defeat, the

116 Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 122.
119 Brown, “The Role of the Army in Western Settlement,” 175.
perception mattered more than the circumstances and the perception of the defeat belonging to the militia quickly became a reality. Washington initially distrusted Harmar’s account after this first Northwestern Campaign, but the court found him innocent and the president reconsidered. The President began to believe his militia policy had led to a disastrous outcome: Natives strengthened in the region the Army was weakened, the frontier more dangerous. This initial military performance became Washington’s one regret in the first eighteen months of his administration.\(^{121}\)

The second Northwestern campaign took place a year later. On March 3, 1791, Congress passed a law legitimizing the previously unlawful settlements in the Northwestern Territory.\(^{122}\) This served to exacerbate tensions and provided further cause for both sides to resort to violent recourses. The Native alliances were emboldened after their victory over Harmar, and they grew increasingly resistant to new settlements. In order to rebuild the Army after Harmar’s defeat, Washington and Knox campaigned for and won further reforms from Congress. Despite Harmar’s defeat, Washington still believed the nation could be safe with a modified militia-based defense. However, this attitude had begun to shift along with the ratio of regulars to militia in later campaigns. The “exigency” on the frontier convinced Congress to entrust the President with powers to incorporate militia cavalry into the forces, train two-thousand temporary troops, and form a second regimental legion of permanent regulars.\(^{123}\) This was a major overhaul of the military system, the second since its formation in 1789. Washington effectively doubled the regular Army in response to Harmar’s frontier defeat, a feat only possible in

\(^{122}\) Peters, ed., *Public Statutes at Large*, 222.
\(^{123}\) Peters, *Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, 222, 267.
1791 after the introduction of a new excise tax on Whiskey and luxury goods. Ironically, these new taxes fueled a civil conflict in Western Pennsylvania conflict that necessitated further military centralization to control. Washington used militia bills to control the military more and centralize response to these frontier crises. In response to factors such as militia inefficacy and frontier defeat, Washington remained only favorable to the mobility force of the Cavalry. By October, the frontier situation forced Washington to reconsider whether the nation was safe with a militia-based national defense. By 1781, he was no longer taking a passive view towards military development. He advocated a “systematic and solid” arrangement for defense to mitigate the “hazard of fortuitous circumstances.”

In 1791, Washington appointed Major General Arthur St. Clair to lead the second Northwestern campaign. St. Clair had been an advisor to Knox and Washington in the first campaign, as well as Harmar’s superior on the frontier. He was also a veteran of the American Revolution the administration believed to be a competent tactician. The Army’s budget allotment had doubled in a year, which also engendered confidence in the force. The Army was supposed to have 2,128 regular troops split between two infantry regiments and a contingent of artillery. Another 2,000 militia men and raised additional levies formed the remainder of the force sent against the Northwest. The new Army was ostensibly double the size of Harmar’s, and the ratio of regulars was

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significantly higher. Over 50% of the force was composed of regular troops that marked the shift in executive policy.

Prior to the second campaign, Harmar had suggested that Washington and Knox field regular cavalry due to the unpredictable nature of militia units. Further, he recommended deliberately moving to a professional officer corps with better training and administrating skills. The War Department and Washington ignored Harmar’s suggestions, and his mistakes were “compounded in the expedition of his successor,” Arthur St. Clair.128 Like Harmar, St. Clair lacked sufficient time necessary to recruit or train soldiers for the second Northwestern campaign. The Army could not enlist recruits efficiently, and the militia once again continued to miss recruitment quotas. St. Clair never amassed more than 2,700 of his intended 4,000-man Army. St. Clair considered the failure of the previous campaign a fluke of poor militia training and ambush. He did not anticipate the need for force preparation to full-strength. When the expeditionary force left Fort Washington in July of 1791, his army’s manpower further deteriorated. St. Clair had fewer men when he entered hostile territory. Significantly, entire militia units deserted as he ventured further West. St. Clair echoed Harmar’s former pronouncements when he praised Army professionalism and simultaneously disparaged the militia at this stage.129 When St. Clair reached the Native settlements, only around 1,700 of his soldiers remained. The disintegration of the forces alone identifies the poor organization and composition of Harmar’s undeveloped army. Supply sources were new and untested for a campaign of this size, and these shortfalls became apparent. Food shortages, to the point

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128 Guthman, *March to Massacre*, 211.
129 Guthman, *March to Massacre*, 221
of starvation, became a feature of the campaign. Barely 25% of the army was dressed in adequate clothing, and all of the soldiers marched on half-rations of food. One remarkable example of military logistics failures was the flour shortage that brought the Army to a complete halt when they starved without bread.¹³⁰ From this experience, St. Clair, and eventually the federal government, learned that professional soldiers and established infrastructure could be vital to a successful offensive.

The second campaign was an exercise in military inadequacy, but the Battle of the Wabash on November 4, 1791 exposed the Army’s ineptitude in its rawest form. After three months on campaign without a battle, St. Clair’s Army declined to 1,450 troops fit for duty.¹³¹ On November 3rd, scouts identified a large abandoned Indian settlement in what they believed to be a key strategic enemy encampment. St. Clair directed his soldiers to make camp without defensive earthen works. The confederated Indians attacked and defeated the Army at dawn the next morning. In the attack, the Natives first caused chaos when their force fell on the encampment after reveille. St. Clair dispatched no patrols and did not engage his scouts. When the Natives fell upon the militia, the U.S. forces were caught by surprise and began panicked rout of 350 from their camp section. As the militia collapsed into the regular encampment, chaos ensued and the Natives quickly encircles the entire force. Afterwards, the Natives pressed the attacked from their encircled position, and made the Army’s losses catastrophic. Casualties totaled to over 630 killed and 280 wounded.¹³² The destruction of St. Clair’s force was total, with only remnants left operating the Fort Washington and its secondary outposts. By the end of

¹³⁰ Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 167.
¹³¹ Guthman, March to Massacre, 237.
¹³² Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 195.
the retreat, the Army lost all of its artillery, as well as the critical supply train that had minimized starvation. St. Clair had marched with 2,000 effective troops and returned with barely 500 stragglers.\(^{133}\)

St. Clair and the officers who survived the attack blamed their ambush—much as Harmar had before—on the militia collapse and their battlefield failures. In this instance, their claims demonstrate accurate portrayals of the militia’s unreliability. Militia scouts had discreetly disobeyed orders to survey the area and post guard that night. The encampment was, literally, unguarded in the night and a highly vulnerable target for hostile forces.\(^{134}\) The militia had also collapsed early in the fight, leaving few viable chances for escape or counterattack. St. Clair survived, but he became opposed to the militia construct after his encounters with the Native forces. Indians forces in the battle likely numbered less than one thousand. Yet, General St. Clair’s army suffered what is arguably the most comprehensive defeat in American military history.

St. Clair’s loss humiliated President Washington. He resolved to put on a stoic public face and “give a happy issue to the business” until he could concoct a solution.\(^{135}\) Unlike Harmar’s failed campaign, Washington did not investigate Arthur St. Clair’s leadership in the wake of his defeat. This was partially because the Army’s senior leadership were either dead or had resigned, too few senior officers survived the battle to form an investigatory board.\(^{136}\) In addition, Washington did not feel another inquiry was necessary since the facts of the defeat were more apparent in the second campaign.\(^{137}\)

\(^{133}\) Guthman, March to Massacre, 243.
\(^{134}\) Guthman, March to Massacre, 234.
\(^{136}\) Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 202.
Washington fell into the popular chorus that placed blame squarely on the militia for the defeat. After the campaign, Washington abandoned any public defense or predilection towards militia-based federal defense. He expressed this newfound position to his Cabinet the next time he considered military measures against the frontier Natives. Washington complained to the Cabinet his belief that irregulars -as a rule- were unprofessional juveniles, “boys,” and “the worst miscreants,” who only knew how to desert.\footnote{Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 32:127.} The pro-militia rhetoric that had colored Washington’s writings in 1789 disappeared after two consecutive military humiliations that he believed stemmed from the citizen-soldier concept. In August, Washington wrote to Knox that the militia was no longer a rational choice for large military operations. St. Clair’s defeat pushed Washington towards the one institution he felt he could stabilized national defense: a professional regular army.

Washington aggressively promoted military reform in 1792 and helped pass a revised defense bill in early March. The bill first called for the Army to rebuild its regular capabilities in the artillery and infantry. The Legion of the United States was set to double again in size that year, an expansion which reflected the magnitude of St. Clair’s failure and the newly exposed vulnerabilities on the Northwestern frontier. The new bill added three full regiments to the Army structure, up from the decimated two at the Battle of the Wabash. This brought the allotment to 5,424 regulars spread across all five regiments of infantry and an artillery contingent.\footnote{Skelton, \textit{An American Profession of Arms}, 5.} The new Army would be larger in regulars alone than the combined forces designed for the first campaign. The growth
was remarkable. In only three years, Army allocations grew over 500%. What had been caution in 1789 was deliberate defense planning in 1792. Expansion was not merely a matter of numbers. Washington diversified the army’s capabilities with a new organizational structure. Washington began to push for an enlargement of the regular U.S. Army. Congress ultimately approved Washington’s redesign of the Army with a plan that created the “Legion of the United States.”

In the legionary-structure, the Army would be split into fully independent units each with their own sub-branches of cavalry, artillery, and supporting bureaucratic infrastructure. A self-sufficient Legion was designed to pursue its objectives independently without need for further resources each campaign. The advantage was easier supply acquisition, and no lost capabilities when a legion marched. Moreover, the legionary system was modular in that Washington could summon more legions without subtracting from the Army’s administrative or logistical structures. With the new structure, Washington was actually adhering to Harmar’s original recommendations by institutionalizing cavalry in large numbers for the first time. The legion system divided the U.S. Army into four separate sub-legions that consisted of each type of unit: cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Theoretically, this allowed each legion to operate independently and support independent threats. It was the first time the U.S. Army possessed all three major components of a standard field Army. Each commander would possess the instruments necessary to campaign with regulars-only and the basic tools of war.

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140 Weigley, History of the United States Army, 92.
Washington’s military reforms in 1792 created a legion that represented the first iteration of a deliberate and “fixed” regular army under the Constitution.  

The third and final Northwestern campaign demonstrated the efficacy of regular forces in the new legionary structure. Upon Knox’ recommendation, Washington appointed Major General Anthony Wayne to lead the 1793 campaign. Wayne had a reputation for battlefield effectiveness; military performance was his main focus as an army leader. Rather than call on militia to sustain his campaign, Wayne took the time to train his regulars as extensively as political pressure allowed. He avoided the haphazard preparations of his predecessors and made his soldiers experts at defense preparations and temporary encampments, a conspicuous oversight of his predecessors. Wayne promoted drill and moved training away from the local towns to force the men to focus on their training and discipline. Wayne conducted arduous developmental drills from 1792 until late 1793, by far the longest training period of any commander during Washington’s Indian Wars. His insistence on standards of professionalism earned his reputation as “Father of the Regular Army.”

The campaign began in 1793, but Wayne did not draw on militia in the same way as Harmar and St. Clair had previously. With the exception of mounted scouts from Kentucky, Wayne minimized the militia in his campaign. The militia had not performed reliably in the prior campaigns, and even the limited forces Wayne used let him down on more than one occasion. In the winter of 1793, shortly after the start of the

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142 Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 234.
144 Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 197.
campaign, the entire augmented force returned to Kentucky. This left Wayne without mounted scouts and forced him to delay the start of his campaign until he summoned more militia scouts. This proved to Wayne that militia was a firm source of support in a remote campaign.

As in 1791, a single battle decisive determined the outcome of Washington’s third attempt to dislodge the hostile northwestern native forces. At the Battle of the Fallen Timbers in August of 1794, General Wayne’s Army survived an ambush by the coalition of Natives that resembled the previous defeats Generals St. Clair and Harmar. After the start of the battle, the ambush appeared likely to route Wayne’s Army because the mounted Kentucky militia collapsed into the regulars. Unlike the equivalent battles of St. Clair or Harmar, the militia retreat was stopped through the exertion and exhortation of trained regulars. Wayne’s officers directed two volleys into the militia to prevent further collapse of their lines.\textsuperscript{145} In spite of early setbacks, the battle was a resounding American victory. Wayne’s regulars repulsed and scattered the Indian parties almost to annihilation, and spent the following days completing their campaign goals against Native villages and fields. The local British garrison only rallied a handful of Natives still arrayed against Wayne’s forces, and refused to accept the remainder into the nearby garrison. The U.S. Army suffered only 30 dead and around 133 overall casualties.\textsuperscript{146} The campaign was a victory for regulars who, for the first time, could effectively “dictate the terms of battle.”\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{145} Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 301.
\textsuperscript{146} Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 307.
\textsuperscript{147} Grenier, The First Way of War, 200.
Wayne’s success cauterized Washington’s view that the appropriate method of national defense revolved around the cultivation of regulars. Each campaign of the Northwest Indian War contributed to the growth of the regulars, but each also proved that the system of militia-centered temporary armies was inefficient. At the conclusion of the campaign, Washington intended to continue federal Army development. Congress attempted to dissolve the regular cavalry stationed on the frontier in the aftermath of Wayne’s campaign. In what would be one of only two vetoes throughout Washington’s entire presidency, he rejected their disbandment attempts and returned the bill to Congress unsigned. He refused to allow dissolution of mounted units, citing national security and a well-rounded regular force. If his veto action did not demonstrate how important he felt a regular Army was to national defense, he stated it explicitly to Congress. He believed that regular cavalry were more useful and less expensive than any equivalent provided by the militia, and a diverse and professional regular force of this kind was necessary for “preserving peace.” 148 He no longer acquiesced to congressional will as he claimed he would in 1789, he ended his veto with a simple phrase: “a part of the Military establishment should consist of Cavalry.” 149

The losses of the Northwest Indian War stemmed from political expediency, the goal was conservative and aimed at achieving effects with minimal risk or investment. This approach was not militarily effective, Harmar and St. Clair attempted offensive campaigns but the entire Army infrastructure was insufficiently equipped to support these actions at short-notice. Their losses identified the absence of basic forces like cavalry

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and artillery and served as an example of the need for better training. Wayne was successful with a new army and equally vulnerable to his processors’ supply issues. Yet, he provided time to train to his legion, build-up his forces, and enhance capabilities. At the least, he had the continuity to charge contractors for their errors when supplies were not dispatched on-time. When tested in a battle, the regular army won the war.

Washington internalized the lessons of the Northwest Indian War. In late 1792, when war with the Southwestern tribes appeared likely to compound the frontier crises, Washington abandoned his former reliance on the militia. He wrote disparagingly to John Knox that the government should avoid use of militia after the Northwestern Campaign. He claimed that the militia would “always be eluded in the attack, and never be overtaken in a pursuit.” Clearly, the transformation of policy from militia-based to a traditional regular force began with Army failure in the Northwestern Indian War.

In the same years that regulars proved their worth in the Ohio region, the militia failed to meet Washington’s expectations once more during a Whiskey Insurrection in Western Pennsylvania. The frontier counties, in particular those in Pennsylvania, resented their lack of representation and overbearing tax burden in the 1790s. After the Revolution, the federal government failed to deliver its promised reforms. To add insult to injury, the federal government sourced Western Pennsylvania for many of its soldiers in the St. Clair expedition. These new and expansive laws, passed in May of 1793, lessened the effectiveness of militia recruitment and fomented resentment in the West. This situation fomented strong resentment along the frontier. To minimize the Indian

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152 Peters, *Public Statutes at Large*, vol 1: 300.
violence on the frontier, the government increased the financial burden of farmers who traded whiskey as a currency system for the yields of their labor. Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of Treasury, believed that a commodity tax to aid in their defense was a balanced solution to tax luxuries while leaving farmers unmolested. However, on the frontier, distilled whiskey was often the only currency due to limited transportation infrastructure and lack of specie. Settlers on the frontier felt disenfranchised by tax laws, underrepresented in the new Federal Government, their State, and unable to prevent Indian attacks. Unrest grew significantly from 1791 to 1794, with some pockets of resistance becoming armed and leading uprisings. Washington blamed these developments on “dangerous” ideals, ones that he felt were unwelcome for the Early Republic. Washington attempted to dissuade the insurrectionists with various bills, but his largest efforts to prevent civil conflict on the frontier unrest were two militia bills in 1791 and 1793. Using militia, Washington could act on behalf of the people and suppress unrest. This shows that Washington still believed in a strong militia for internal use, even as the Indian campaign cast aspersions on their effectiveness.

With newly granted militia powers, Washington summoned thirteen thousand troops from Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey to stop the insurrection in Western Pennsylvania. At the start, he personally led the army into the West, though he did not remain present throughout the march. The militia army was once again a disappointment for Washington. The force gained a reputation as marauders and thieves across the West. Washington received reports that the militia variously burned local

153 Slaughter, The Whiskey Rebellion, 47.
fences for firewood and raided valuables from local settlements.\textsuperscript{155} Due to their reputation for field theft and their general ineptitude as a force, the militia earned a derogatory nickname of “Watermelon Army.”\textsuperscript{156} The campaign produced some casualties, and even a few deaths. However, all losses were innocent victims of negligence and sheer military incompetence.\textsuperscript{157} The rebel forces disbanded by the time the Army arrived.

Washington considered the campaign a strategic victory, but lost his limited faith in an expansive militia system. In his sixth annual address to Congress, on 19 November 1795, Washington addressed army conduct in the Northwest and Western Pennsylvania. He summarized both conflicts as hampered by a reliance on militia or inexperienced regulars. He noted the “striking defects” of militia laws that prevented the state from complying with executive summons issued after the laws of 1791 to 1794. He also noted that the “extraordinary expense and waste” of the militia was as an equal or greater threat to liberty than regulars.\textsuperscript{158} Even if Congress enacted further reformation of the militia system, Washington felt that they would be a poor auxiliary force. In contrast, Washington highlighted Anthony Wayne’s successes. The regulars at the Battle of the Fallen Timbers proved to be reliable fixtures of the new government, a permanent and increasingly competent force both on the march and in battle. In the event of a major war, as Washington feared was possible in Europe, a militia system was completely insufficient while a peacetime regular force was necessary.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{155} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 34:8.
\textsuperscript{156} Slaughter, \textit{Whiskey Insurrection}, 204.
\textsuperscript{157} Slaughter, \textit{Whiskey Insurrection}, 204.
\textsuperscript{158} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 34:35-36.
\textsuperscript{159} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 35:315.
The creation of the United States Navy under Washington was far less tumultuous, as naval forces were more popular among Republicans. Republicans, and the public-at-large, tended to favor naval defense for the new nation. The navy inherently upheld Third Amendment principles, by being a force unable to lodge and quarter troops in cities or be a threat to communities. It also could not sustain conflict without significant national resources. As early as 1789, Washington identified the navy as central pillar to his national security strategy. Given minimal political resistance, Washington faced and a broad consensus that naval defense was justifiable, he called for a “gradual creation” of naval forces, with considerable success.\textsuperscript{160} Chief among the reasons Washington took a pro-naval stance was that ships could act as a shield to military threat of European powers. They could also protest American trade ships and merchant interests in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Oceans. Washington resented the threat of violence American commerce faced against Algiers and Tunisia in the Mediterranean. He was critical of the nation’s military weakness when trade conflicts occurred. However, without a navy, Washington and the government had no recourse but to pay demands for ransom. He wanted to “work by degrees” on a moderate Navy to guarantee success in a “future War of Europe.”\textsuperscript{161}

Washington’s reluctance to initiate a large naval build-up was due to fiscal constraints and large national war debts from the Revolution. He developed a plan to mitigate his financial concerns through a method that ensured the government would construct a limited number of excellent frigates, rather than an expensive and hastily

\textsuperscript{160} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 35:315.
constructed naval armada. Large frigates of fine timber with heavy guns could form the center of a fleet. Their longevity prevented obsolescence and allowed future presidents to increase their number until the United States possessed a formidable force. Washington sought a small initial quantity to serve as an affordable bedrock for later growth and enemy deterrence. He also felt no need to train many sailors because the naval skills in American ports were world-renowned. The only preparations he advocated were that they “anticipate events” and “lay a foundation in time” for future conflicts. This foundation included a “grand provision” to include “warlike stores, arsenals, and dockyards.” In short, Washington advocated a small number of frigates that could best their equals when quantity matched the enemy. This meant the creation of a fleet “in time.” Washington built the first fleet explicitly for war, with plans for expansion under later presidents.

In March of 1794, as army conflicts began to subside in the Northwest, Washington prepared and signed the *Act to Provide a Naval Armament*. The bill enabled the construction of the three frigates primarily to deal with Algerian threats: the *Constitution, Constellation*, and the *United States*. Each ship later gained a reputation for battlefield victories. To quote historian Elizabeth M. Nuxoll, these ships were for deterrence and “developing the American infrastructure necessary to produce a stronger defense in the long run.” Each ship was larger and longer than its European equivalent, able to hold more guns, yet operate with a smaller crew. On average, these

166 Elizabeth M. Nuxoll, “Robert Morris of Pennsylvania” in *Neither Separate Nor Equal*. 53
ships could carry more weapons and crew, if needed, than nearly every other ship in any Navy.\textsuperscript{167} These would form the core of a Navy that Washington envisioned would grow incrementally.

Though Washington ostensibly commissioned the ships only for the Algerian conflict, he defended further expenditures on their creation even when that threat passed. When peace with Algiers seemed likely in 1796, Washington personally and deliberately acted to secure the fleet, even though further national debt was likely if they were built.\textsuperscript{168} In his only veto (apart from cavalry retention), Washington went against Congress in 1796 because he felt a regular Navy with large warships could enable “the Executive to defend the Country.”\textsuperscript{169} Large ships, built “by degrees,” could spare the treasury and while still preventing future conflicts.\textsuperscript{170} Washington intended his Navy to be the start of the strongest protective measures for commerce, and a military bedrock for future presidents to augment. Washington believes that in only a few decades, the United States would be a military power at sea would be on par with any nation on earth.\textsuperscript{171}

John Adams succeeded Washington as President on 4 March 1797, where he continued military development in the same capacity as his predecessor. He had not always been in favor of a professional federal defense force. As late as Washington’s second term, Adams was opposed to peacetime armies under the new government.\textsuperscript{172} This changed with in response to repeated threats to American security. Though he did

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\textsuperscript{167} Theodore Roosevelt, \textit{The Naval War of 1812} (New York: J.P. Putnam and Sons, 1882).  \\
\textsuperscript{168} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 34: 500.  \\
\textsuperscript{169} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 35: 273.  \\
\textsuperscript{170} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 35: 315.  \\
\textsuperscript{171} Washington, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, vol 8: 151.  \\
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not accomplish massive reforms in a single term, his policies developed alongside a military contingency. He appealed to Congress to develop the military on multiple occasions.\textsuperscript{173} He accepted the role of a professional federal military for defense against France, but while he advocated short-term enhancements, he established permanent martial institutions. He created the modern structures for maritime defense, developed the first fleet, and established permanent plans for the first military academy. He sanctioned defense preparations for the “pestilence of foreign intrigue,” for war with France, and unknown future belligerents.\textsuperscript{174} Adams’ buildup of military forces was conservative and mostly addresses the immediate threats, but the military grew in size and function throughout his presidency and he continued the gradual creation begun under Washington.\textsuperscript{175}

War Department expenditures under President Adams illustrate the broad contours of United States military development to 1801. The spike caused by a Quasi-War with France obscures the fact that the final year of war saw higher expenditures than when Washington left office. In 1798, the budget stood at $1,241,734, near that of Washington’s final bill the year before. The next year, Adams oversaw a dramatic increase in the budget of the military.\textsuperscript{176} Though a large part of this was due to the sudden cost escalation of forces in preparation for war with France, the various categories of expense increased in volume and variety. Categories of training and support increased

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\textsuperscript{173} John Ferling, \textit{President Adams and Congress in the Quasi-War Crisis}, 315. \\
\textsuperscript{174} John Adams, \textit{Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States}, 11. \\
\textsuperscript{175} Grant, James \textit{John Adams: Party of One} (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 415. \\
\textsuperscript{176} Howe, \textit{The Changing Political Thought of John Adams}, 207. \\
\textsuperscript{176} Peters, \textit{Public Statutes at Large}, vol 1: 552
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Figure 2. War Department Budget, 1798-1801.

The above figure is an analysis compiled from all the War Department funds allocated by Congress between 1798 and 1801 and their respective categories. (David Martin, 2015)
dramatically. These tenants that had been reinforced under Anthony Wayne’s successful army in previous years received the highest increases from 1799 onwards. The Quartermasters Corps, responsible for supply and logistics in the army, saw its operational budget increased, as did support for artillery and personnel costs for more manpower within the military. By 1801, the budget stabilized without further surge forces, but financial sustainment of the enhanced Army was 165% of the 1798 total at $2,052,730. In addition to the increased expenditures, the budget lines for combat needs became the primary focus of the War Department and its budget. The Indian Department suffered significant cuts as treaties as funds for diplomats and Indian agents gave way to increased combat capabilities. Light artillery and increased cavalry became focuses of Adams’ War Department, while general frontier defense fell out of favor. The budget shows that Washington’s legacy of focused, traditional military development continued to take root in his successor’s administration.

One significant addition to the budget was Adams’ 1798 allotment of $17,600 to create defenses for the Great Lakes. A permanent presence in that region ostensibly secured control of the rivers and waterways of the Northwestern Territory and frontier with Canada. On the advice of the Secretary of War, James McHenry, Adams acknowledged the possible advantage and chose to build up freshwater navy. Through a series of fortifications and ships on the Great Lakes, Adams’ defenses reflected a conservative preemptive measure to provide security to the frontier. An established garrison on the frontier, if maintained, would have greatly affected the tactical and
strategic decisions made in the early 1800s. Adams’ Great Lake developments were the last until war with Britain was underway fourteen years later.  

The Adams administration’s budget adjustments prioritized combat capabilities over noncombat roles. The War Department expanded in size, budget, and capability. The most significant came from the creation of a new and independent branch of government –the Naval Department. Adams’ creation of the Naval Department is among the most significant military administrative decisions of the Early Republic. The development of a new department signified the addition of a new permanent and professional military administrative structure complete with its own Cabinet member and budget. A permanent Marine Corps, Secretary of the Navy, and the requisite bureaucratic additions to support an independent new department. As a Federalist and a pragmatist, Adams had long advocated for the Navy as the first line of defense in the geographically distinct young nation. He did not share the republican confidence that geography was the only defense the United States needed against European encroachment. He did believe that ships could intercede in the event of conflict. North Africa and France had been noted examples of incursions to American trade in the Early Republic. A naval force could protect the nation and its trade routes abroad. The development of the Naval Department was a natural, and constitutionally sanctioned, means of defense for both peacetime and war.

Unlike a number of his fellow Federalists, this was not the singular focus of his political ambitions. Rather, his views developed in the years just before his election.

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177 Peters, ed., Public Statutes at Large, all bills.
179 Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 193.
The ransoms on American shipping in Northern Africa vexed Adams during the Washington administration. Adams viewed inaction as cowardice, but cautiously avoided the idea of a temporary military. He instead campaigned for the pragmatic option of continuing development of Washington’s Frigates. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, he expressed support for temporary forces to increase the permanent pragmatic military. In the trade disputes with Algeria, he prioritized naval development over conflict resolution in a theme that permeated his action throughout his administration.\textsuperscript{180}

Adams founded the United States Navy on April 30, 1798.\textsuperscript{181} Unlike the Army, the disbanded Continental Navy retained no vestibules of operation after the Revolution. In the 1780s, the nation had no maritime military forces. To Adams, this became a critical oversight. He believed the United States Navy was the “wings of the Eagle” in that it was a necessary component of the new government, and sought to see it well established.\textsuperscript{182} Washington’s frigates launched under the Adams administration in 1797 after three years of contract and construction challenges. With the new ships came the need for sailors and an assurance that the government could administer the new assets. The Naval Department, was a permanent organization formed to oversee the first fleet. The launch of the \textit{Constitution}, \textit{Constellation}, and \textit{United States} revealed the infancy of American military system, but also the deliberate attempts towards gradual development. The ships underwent heavy modification for months after the \textit{Constitution} failed to launch after multiple attempts.\textsuperscript{183} Adams closely followed their construction and was

\textsuperscript{180} Adams, \textit{The Works of John Adams}, vol 8: 413.
\textsuperscript{181} Allen, \textit{Our Naval War With France}, 54.
\textsuperscript{182} Adams, \textit{The Works of John Adams}, vol 8:140.
\textsuperscript{183} Allen, \textit{Our Naval War With France}, 54.
even present for the Constitution’s first failed launch. Adams advocated a Navy, as “essential” to future years of American greatness.\textsuperscript{184} The creation of a fourth branch of government beyond the Secretary of State, Treasury, and War, with its own respective Secretary in Benjamin Stoddert, was a clear evidence of the Navy in Adams strategic ambitions.

Even as Adams sought to expand the Navy, he shared the same general caution of new federal entities as Washington expressed a decade earlier. His private writings show that he was moderately skeptical of his large Navy, while his public letters disclose an earnest belief in Washington’s defense scheme. In a timeline that mirrored Washington’s twenty-year naval development cycle, Adams affirmed that the United States should and could match the great navies of Europe by 1810.\textsuperscript{185} To this end, Adams petitioned Congress to commission a further three frigates on May 4, 1798 with the Congress, Chesapeake, and President.\textsuperscript{186} Once again, the focus in these acquisitions was quantity over quality. At this point, tensions with France transitioned to open conflict and seizure of naval assets. Adams again petitioned Congress for more frigates as a permanent measure. Adams also made allowance for an addition of smaller vessels as support ships for the frigates.

At the height of the Quasi-War with France and its navy, the United States fleet had grown to forty-five warships. The majority of these were small vessels from the Department of Treasury’s Revenue Cutter Service and converted merchant ships.\textsuperscript{187}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[185] Adams, \textit{The Works of John Adams}, vol 8: 140
\item[186] Peters, \textit{Public Statutes at Large}, vol 1: 553.
\end{footnotes}
However, these vessels acted as support ships to the various frigates and won many of the prizes and engagements tasked. The frigates were the permanent establishment of the Navy with Adams’ amassing eleven ships. The majority of the Quasi-war navy remained dry-docked in the postwar period and after the election of 1800. The Federalist’s logic was that Jeffersonian Republicans would not destroy the fleet and the Naval Department in a single stroke of policy if the fleets had minor associated costs.188 Even with the retraction of many forces, the government retained the frigates as the permanent center of the naval establishment. The Navy sold or retired several cursory vessels, but Washington and Adams’ development of the navy hinged on the continued presence of the frigates as practical wartime assets and a statement of force. The net result was that Adams ended his presidency with significantly more naval assets than when he became Commander-in-Chief. Crucially, the personnel who fought in the Quasi-war would be the key actors in the War of 1812. The ship-borne experience of the officers became an important basis for later naval success. Washington had expected twenty years of growth to build a Navy, and Adams continued the fleet towards this goal.

Adams was responsible not only for the creation of the United States Navy but also the United States Marine Corps. On July 11, 1798, only a few months after the creation of the navy, Congress passed a bill to create the Marines as a subdivision of the Naval Department formed by Adams and Stoddert.189 The function of marines was not novel, temporary marine forces existed alongside American forces in the Revolution. The change of 1798 allowed Marines to become a permanent and distinct segment of the

188 Allen, Our Naval War With France, 257.
189 Peters, Public Statutes at Large, 1:594.
U.S. military in a structure on par with European militaries. The next year, in 1799, the Corps grew into a force of nearly 1,000 Marines –larger than the entire combined War Department in Washington’s first year. Adams had sustained the maritime growth begun under Washington, but he also formalized and expanded these new offensive capabilities expressly designed for war.

Adams’ developed the army with less fervor than the navy, but in equally deliberate steps. As president, he expressed to James McHenry –his Secretary of War-the rueful necessity of a permanent peacetime Army. Adams stated in 1799: “both an army and navy establishment are essential to the present and future interests and greatness of the United States … we must run the risks which other nations have run.”

With far less ambivalence than his predecessor, he expanded the Army both in response to and in spite of French war threats. The historiographical focus of Adams’ Army has rightfully been his failure to assemble a force in the Quasi-War. However, this was cursory to the broader army growth he enabled through consistent developmental policy.

In 1798, Adams signed a bill into law that created a temporary and additional pool of regulars in case of war –a provisional army. This bill created a force of thirty-thousand temporary enlistments to become a part of the regulars during the crisis with France, but he simultaneously enabled the expansion of permanent regular forces. Former President George Washington led the new force, but Alexander Hamilton took direct control in the function of the Quasi-Army. After Anthony Wayne’s death,

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193 Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 252.
Washington was the most experienced available leader of the Army as well as a political icon to quell dissent. Hamilton developed the provisional Army, and in many ways did not succeed in its creation. He could not train or establish supply at an adequate scale in the year the new force existed. The Army assembly was unsuccessful, and a major cause of political conflict, but the larger result was the strengthened regular Army. Washington had left office with nearly four-thousand trained regulars, Adams left office with nearly fourteen-thousand trained regulars in his ranks, a new structure, and the ability to summon more augmentation in the time of war.

In addition to the physical increase of the Army, Adams also oversaw a number of crucial military reforms. In particular, the same bill in 1799 ushered a large change to Adams’ military establishment. The first change was the highly specific reform of the army back to a regimental system. The new bill enumerated unit functions that retained both the cavalry and independent artillery in larger numbers. In addition to the need for retention of cavalry within individual regiments, for the first time Adams created a regiment entirely composed of cavalry. The new bill also retained artillery regiments, and commissioned a battalion of riflemen. These enhancements to capabilities were entirely separate from the provisional forces for war with the French. In fact, the reform bill specifically provisioned a separate set of units to be drawn up in the event of war.

Adams also expanded the Army’s capabilities to execute war. Adams’ army reforms also developed a number of administrative systems to command the new forces. In particular, the Paymaster General’s office functioned as a permanent boom to retention and financial logistics. Another permanent fixture was the office of the Quartermaster General which

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195 Peters, Public Statutes at Large, vol 1:793.

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Adams had established earlier in his career. With these new posts, the Army could work towards a semblance of structure that would outlast the burden of temporary Army and the inherent costs of new administrative efforts.

Adams’ War Department innovations were not limited to enhanced administration and restructured forces. He worked with Secretary McHenry to develop the nation’s first military academy. This was the culmination of a concept that would ensure a professional officer corps for the future. Washington envisioned a professional academy in his inaugural address as well as his farewell address. Thomas Jefferson convinced Washington that an academy was unconstitutional, but Adams held no such convictions. Adams chose West Point, New York, for the location, where limited training was already underway for army officers. A fire subsequently ruined these designs. The Quasi-War absorbed Adams’ focus, and Congress was not receptive to the idea of an academy at this time. Though Adams military academy never materialized, it demonstrated Adams desire for a permanent, professional officer corps to lead the nation’s newly designed military.

The study of Washington and Adams’ efforts illustrate the broader contours of American military development in the Early Republic era. Washington believed a trained peacetime military was the best preparation for war, but also acknowledged its dangers. After contingencies, Washington set the nation on course to have what he believed would be a world-class military within a few decades of his administration. Adams was a Federalist who shared Washington’s perspective when he entered office. He continued his predecessor’s defense plans, expanded the military, and ensured a trajectory for

continued growth. The collaboration of national security goals meant that the Army of 1800 was twenty times larger than when Washington entered office, with a fleet of heavy frigates and a professional army. The first two Presidents of the United States began a professional regular military suited for defense and designed to develop further under their successors.
CHAPTER III - “SUPREMACY OF THE CIVIL”

THOMAS JEFFERSON’S MILITARY REFORMATION

Throughout his political career, Thomas Jefferson believed the government should be founded on principles which featured the “the supremacy of the civil.”197 This approach subsumed the needs of the federal military beneath peaceful development. As President, Jefferson believed the militia was preferable to regulars, and civic improvement outweighed military development. Armies endangered liberty via their proclivity for coups, and Navies threatened war and the treasury as expensive semi-autonomous weapons of political will abroad platforms abroad. President Jefferson eradicated the majority of the federal military system in favor of his own public-focused approach. He dry-docked the Federalist frigates, purged the officer corps, disbanded the army regiments, dismantled the Office of the Quartermaster, and eliminated the majority of the forces under his command. Taken alone, Jefferson’s actions merely underline his disapproval of a standing American force and show his willingness to decrease the military establishment. Understood in their larger context, these efforts represent the transformation of the United States military into a new Jeffersonian model – one that favored public service over national defense. Jefferson’s definition of the public good fluctuated over the course of his administration, but its purpose rarely concerned national security. Rather than fortifying the existing Navy, President Jefferson took steps to replace it with a naval militia. This freed resources vital to civilian projects. Jefferson sent soldiers on the first scientific expeditions in the frontier, used the army to build

bridges and roads, and directed officers to administer Western government. Additionally, he established a military academy that trained men as engineers more than war-minded soldiers. Thus, Thomas Jefferson’s executive policy of civic-minded, military reform disrupted martial development and diminished combat the country’s capabilities by reducing and repurposing America’s forces for purposes “not merely military.”

Jefferson updated the military to match his ambitions, but what emerged was not qualified for war and lacked the infrastructure necessary to expand as into a fighting force. Though the military would eventually recover from his reforms, the damage to readiness did not heal until after 1812.

Historians have shown little interest in Jefferson’s presidential military policies. Military history for the period under Jefferson’s administration does not draw interest because there were no serious wars and the ramifications of his policies appear minor at first glance. During this period, only two notable conflicts occurred: the Barbary War (1801-1805) and the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair (1807). The Barbary War has a solid mythos but a limited historiography apart from traditional histories of the conflict details. The Chesapeake-Leopard Affair caused a build-up of forces, but no great war sparked in the aftermath of the two-ship skirmish. The absence of interest from military historians has left Jefferson’s presidency largely open to political historians and biographers who have naturally emphasized his personal and political precedent, leaving his military influence and the ramifications of his policies nearly undiscussed.

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Only one monograph has attempted to examine the scope of Jefferson’s military policies. Theodore Crackel’s work, *Mr. Jefferson’s army*, claims that President Jefferson based his martial philosophy on a partisan stance and that he shaped the military to reflect his favor towards republicanism. Unchallenged in the field, Crackel’s work is the *de facto* explanation for Jefferson’s military decisions. However influential, this work still does not analyze the spectrum of Jefferson’s policies in the context of his political predecessors, nor does Crackel confront Jefferson’s contradictions or willingness to accept Federalist ideas in his policy decisions (actions that would seem in direct opposition to Crackel’s own thesis). Recent historians have cast aspersions on Crackel’s arguments, but without an alternative theory, the historiography still relies on *Mr. Jefferson’s army* when discussing the military policy of the administration. Beyond Crackel’s argument, political historians and biographers variously characterize the third president’s policies as pragmatic, aimless, imperial, patriotic, partisan, or merely pacifistic. This apparent “paradox” of Jefferson remains large in the literature as his enigmatic philosophy and practices rarely intersected. Examining Jefferson’s military policies and their long-term ramifications is crucial to understanding the history of the Early Republic, the development (or stagnation) of the United States military, and the philosophy and presidency of America’s third Commander in Chief.

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200 These perspectives are featured in the respective works of Forrest McDonald, Walter Lafeber, Russel F. Weigley, Peter Onuf, Theodore Crackel, and Stephen Watts.
Beyond the historiographical limitations, the second roadblock to a study of Jefferson’s military is a shortage of primary evidence. Jefferson’s personal writings are extensive, but not fully reliable as a source of accurate data. Legacy is a theme in his writings as he was undoubtedly conscious of how future generations would interpret his statements. He deliberately encoded controversial decisions, and he expressed frequent distrust of the postal service.\textsuperscript{202} The real Jefferson is difficult to draw out, as his writings are deliberately vague and he preferred to deal with conflict in-person, which would obviously leave no record. To aggravate the problem further, historians have tended to draw on his entire life to encapsulate the man into a single monolithic descriptor. This intensifies an assumption in the field that the Revolutionary Jefferson of 1775 was philosophically stagnant and unchanged in his views in 1801 or 1809, undergoing no political growth or change over three decades. Understanding Jefferson’s military requires an aggregated study of both the development and the consequences of his political philosophy.

More significant than Jefferson’s own limited works is the dearth of documentation of this period are the military records lost to the War Department fire.\textsuperscript{203} Without these primary documents, the full effect of Jefferson’s policies on the military are obscured. Historians and archivists have replaced significant portions of early army records, but the internal correspondence and reception of his policies is difficult to piece together.

\textsuperscript{202} Thomas Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, 8:305.
Where does this leave the study of early military development? Military historians have largely ignored Jefferson as a peacetime president, Crackel’s unchallenged monograph dominates the historiography, and limitations of the primary material conceal the effects of Jeffersonian policy. The solution is a continued top-down approach to examine Jefferson’s philosophies and policies from their Revolutionary origin through the end of his presidency. This study reveals a leader who was a military reformer dedicated to the public benefit at the cost of military readiness. His policies reshaped the military into a distinctly Jeffersonian image with measurable and calamitous consequences.

As early as the Revolutionary War, Jefferson espoused qualities that would later mark his executive policies. Though his opinions on the military’s role were dynamic in his early political life, he resented the British army to the same extent as his contemporaries in the Republican faction. Jefferson, like much of the pre-Revolution public, maligned the British for their policies that allowed quartering soldiers in homes of colonists, enforcing taxes, and perpetuating perceived injustice in the form of the Boston Massacre. Revolutionary Jefferson’s correspondence reveals a common apprehension of powerful government and of Armies, no matter their loyalties. In his draft of the Declaration of Independence, criticisms directed toward Britain were on the conduct of the regular army. On three occasions, he highlighted the egregiousness of King George III through a criticism of his military policies. The King maintained an army and Navy in times of peace, and – to greater offence – “affected to render the military, independent of,

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and superior to, the civil Power.” Jefferson’s martial anxieties extended beyond the British army. His draft of the Virginia Constitution confirms his apprehensive stance when he wrote that the commonwealth did not intend to retain a peacetime military force in any capacity due to its dangers. Here, at the dawn of the Revolution, Jefferson reveals misgivings about traditional federal military structures, an opinion he would carry into his presidency.

The Revolutionary War deepened Jefferson’s distrust of the military establishment in America. He held various civil positions throughout the conflict, to include congressional representative and Virginia governor. Jefferson’s exposure to the military within those capacities did not leave a favorable impression. In one notable instance in 1781, threats of British invasion forced him to abdicate his gubernatorial position in favor of martial law. A military leader, General Thomas Nelson, took and held the civil position that Jefferson was unable to resume. Though allied, the Colonial army had proven a threat to civil liberty by taking control of the state capitol from the local government when he felt it necessary. Joseph S. Tiedemann’s article on the social history of New York has shown that British combat actions sparked a change in local perspective of standing armies throughout the war. Civilian distrust of both militaries grew as soldiers raided supplies and took quarters in civil residences. This discordant metamorphosis was evident in the culture at large. The Continental army drained budgetary resources faster than the United States could sustain, and a gulf of resentment

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developed between the military and civilians.\textsuperscript{209} As a legislator, Jefferson felt the performance of the army was hardly worth the cost of the defense budget. Additionally, he often remarked in his correspondence about the evils of the British army. The British army released American slaves and aggravated fears of insurrection that naturally caused a rift among slaveholders.\textsuperscript{210} Jefferson perceived their conduct as “shocking beyond expression” and further reason for continued resistance.\textsuperscript{211} At the conclusion of the war, Congress was under threat of a military coup from officers of the army who demanded their pay. At once, Jefferson’s mistrust in his own mind when he professed that the coup’s only aversion was due to Washington’s actions – the army as a whole was a threat to liberty.\textsuperscript{212} His overall resentment of standing armies mirrored that of most of the population; however, his opinion was more influential as it became the foundation of his presidential policies of defense.

Jefferson’s distrust of the military grew during the Revolution and gave way to ideas of an alternative military system. He began to consider other avenues of defense and, for the first time in the literature, advocated shallow-water gunboats over a deep-water navy. He praised gunboat abilities, prices, and localization to various economies instead of only the major seaports. These ships were an unconventional Navy, but Jefferson felt that they offered speed and an option of quick retreat. In the decades to come, his admiration of shallow gunships became a recurrent theme when he discussed

\textsuperscript{209} Charles Royster, \textit{A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 341.


\textsuperscript{211} Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 2: 297.

military affairs. The Revolutionary War also produced his first expression of American military exceptionalism. He believed that the American frontier created a nation of exceptional soldiers due to the incubation of shooting skills and defense opportunities. American victory in the Revolutionary War convinced Jefferson that a small army created mid-crisis could defeat a large European force. He emerged from the Revolutionary period with a distrust of the traditional military system, while small fleets and militia became increasingly attractive option, as his confidence in American security and ability to ready quickly for military victory appeared justified.

In the postwar years, Jefferson remained politically active and became a vocal proponent of his military philosophy in opposition to Federalist policy. He was involved in the creation of the Bill of Rights—a document that specifically safeguarded against federal military expansion. Under President George Washington, in 1790, Jefferson reluctantly accepted the position of Secretary of State, if only in order to guide the nation’s government towards a “Republican Tack.” He won occasional debates towards this end, both with his peers and the president. In one instance, he proved to Washington that a national military academy was unconstitutional and a threat to citizens. However, Washington’s continued development of forces prevailed over Jefferson’s attempts to limit the federal military government. Frustrated, he resigned in 1793, convinced that he was in the right and his opponents were corrupt. Bitter, Jefferson was certain that Washington’s mental state had failed and that the president was allowing

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accused interlopers like Hamilton to control the entire government. Washington’s development of the army, an action Jefferson considered unjustifiable in the 1790s in light of a militia system, reinforced the former Secretary’s apprehensions. Jefferson took his theory to its logical conclusion and insisted that the Whiskey Insurrection (1794) was a fabrication to centralize military power with the federal government. He stated that the feigned attempts to put down the Whiskey Insurrection only “answered the favorite purposes of strengthening government and increasing public debt” and was “announced, proclaimed, and armed against … but could never be found.”

In short, Jefferson was proclaiming government conspiracy, so alien was the idea of preferring a standing military to a national militia.

Jefferson’s apprehensions about the power of the military and concern for its effect on the national debt increased when Washington commissioned several deepwater frigates in March of 1794. Jefferson naturally opposed this as he maintained his faith in natural American security, without the use of a strong standing – and in his mind useless – military. After the victory of the Revolution, he believed that an effective army could assemble in short order, and a traditional Navy was unnecessary to win a war with a European power. Furthermore, he believed that America’s isolation from Europe afforded the nation a level of impregnability. Therefore, a deepwater fleet and standing peacetime army could only serve nefarious purposes and signal Constitutional government gone awry. Faced with the construction of permanent ships, Jefferson complained to James Madison that politicians had “poisoned [Washington’s] mind.”

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219 Allen, *Our Naval war with France*, 42.
In his memoirs, he insinuated that dementia had overtaken Washington in the 1790s and that the nation’s first president was unfit to serve in high office. Jefferson’s resentful retirement was short-lived in light of the military policy; he wanted to intervene in a government he found misguided. By the late 1790s, Jefferson sought offices to redeem the government to his principles and oppose military development.\textsuperscript{221}

In the 1796 election, Thomas Jefferson ran for president. He lost the election to John Adams by only three electoral votes. This gave Jefferson the position of Vice President but provided no outlet to affect policy. Under Washington’s administration, Jefferson was a vocal proponent of republican principles; under President Adams, his principled opposition developed even further. Adams and Jefferson continually disagreed on each military expansion.\textsuperscript{222} Like Washington, President Adams drew up plans for a military academy that Jefferson had fought. Adams also supported a permanent Navy in a controversial bill that Jefferson believed would permanently expand the government instead of serve as a short-term deterrent to French aggression.\textsuperscript{223} The actions of President Adams were an affront to Jefferson’s favorite European ally, France, and his ideals of Republicanism.\textsuperscript{224} In this period of military growth and tension with France, Jefferson signed each letter to James Madison with the French adieu in support of their president’s supposed enemies. Jefferson opposed the Adam administration in 1798

\textsuperscript{222} Tucker, The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy, 11.
\textsuperscript{224} Allen, Our Naval War with France, 63.
for their anti-French stance as well as their military expansionism; his frustration eventually motivated reforms during his own presidency.

Jefferson’s criticism of executive policy increased in proportion to the military. In a letter to Edmund Pendleton, he expressed his despair at having “yet two more years of Mr. Adams.”225 Nearly every piece of political correspondence Jefferson wrote from 1797 onward decried the evils or idiocy of the Adams administration with particular resentment of the military buildup. The XYZ affair in 1797-1798 was a key ingredient to the international unrest between France and the United States. Jefferson did not even believe the event occurred with any real effect. He variously derided the conflict to allies and enemies alike as the XYZ “dish,” “fever,” “mist,” “contrivance,” “duperies,” or “delusion.”226 He believed inept Federalist conspirators created the XYZ crisis. Jefferson wrote that developments such as the launch of the Navy were mere conspiracies to gain Federalist control of government. He saw their actions as a plot that only flourished because Adams controlled a “military conclave” that encouraged military developments through their “propensities to war, and to expense.”227 This was antithetical to Jefferson, a Vice President who wanted no federal military, debt, or taxes. Adams’ creation of a temporary army in response to conflict seemed to confirm Jefferson’s concerns. He perceived the executive-directed development of the military as waste and tyranny from the highest office, the worst of military expansionism in the form of a “presidential army.”228

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If the executive office could destroy the nation, as Jefferson saw it, then redemption was equally attainable under office. Thus, in the election of 1800, Jefferson campaigned vigorously to secure the presidency for the first time, and to ‘correct’ the course of Federal development.\textsuperscript{229} In this election, military reformation was one of Jefferson’s top priorities. He won the election and immediately saw his selection as a popular referendum against the Federalists, and a mandate for reform. After a decade of unacknowledged criticism against Federalist policies, securing the presidency was his chance to right the wrongs of past executives. Jefferson openly declared that his election would be a “Revolution” to return to the foundational principles of small government.\textsuperscript{230} The reality of this mandate and its implications is hard to identify. Jefferson was convinced that only he could repair the misalignment of federal policy with the ideals of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{231} Decades of frustration with the direction of the government fueled Jefferson’s “Revolution of 1800.”\textsuperscript{232}

The main target of Jefferson’s reforms was an overhaul of the traditional military system. He was opposed to regular armies in peace, but rather than eliminate the forces already built up under Washington and Adams, he merely redefined their purpose. He retained elements of the force to serve as tools for the public benefit. A small peacetime army seemed the ideal compromise. Without entirely shaking the young nation, Jefferson could downsize the regular force while still maintaining a portion of the military to

\textsuperscript{230} Forrest McDonald, \textit{The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson} (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1987), 29.  
\textsuperscript{231} Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 1: 86.  
provide a core of defense around which militia would rally. Downsizing to include the destruction of the Navy would also resolve the debt crisis. By reassigning the existing army with civic labor, Jefferson could cheaply improve infrastructure around the nation. Perhaps most attractive, war could be avoided without a large peacetime force that could potentially threaten the citizens’ freedom. Jefferson first reduced the size of the federal military to lower the debt, tariffs, and taxes. He made state militias the primary, almost solitary method of land-based defense. Similarly, he created a new system of maritime defense. His naval militia was designed to operate a “mosquito navy” to reduce expenses and end the Navy’s ability to wage war abroad.\footnote{Forrest McDonald, \textit{The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson} (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1976), 44.} Instead of a military force exclusively trained in readiness and military response, Jefferson’s army explored the West for the first time in American military history, built roads to and from frontier territories, engineered bridges and canals, functioned as a civil government on the frontier, and various other tasks unrelated to combat readiness. Jefferson effectively reversed the popular concept of civic militarism. His small, regular military was designed to improve the citizenry in peacetime rather than protect a society at war. The definition of public service changed with Jefferson’s priorities, but the military was his tool for continued attempts at development. Decreasing the military’s size and training the remaining soldiers for engineering and exploration inflicted long-term damage on the ability of the military to wage defensive war, much less offensive campaigns, but they defined Jefferson’s military philosophy throughout his presidency.
After a decade of calcified resentment against Washington and Adams, the content of Jefferson’s correspondence shifted in 1801 from complaints to methods of reform. He strategically assembled a cabinet to oppose a traditional standing military. The first letter he wrote after learning of his successful election to office was to appoint a first Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn.\footnote{Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 9: 141.} Dearborn was nothing if not dispassionate about his post as Secretary of War, making him an ideal candidate in a period of intentional executive reformation. Wanting a Secretary of State to match his own policies, Jefferson appointed James Madison, his long-time confidant, to the post. Both men shared a belief that the nation had security in its geography and populace that foreign powers could not dislodge. A federal military was redundant to the new Secretary of State. Additionally, and perhaps to greatest effect, Jefferson appointed Albert Gallatin as his Secretary of Treasury.\footnote{Steven Watts, \textit{The Republic Reborn: War and Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 229.} Gallatin was a forceful and notoriously persuasive opposition figure against naval expansion under John Adams. On the senate floor, he fervently debated against proponents of any the traditional military as an affront to liberty and economy.\footnote{Henry Adams, \textit{History of the United States During the Administration of Thomas Jefferson}, 648.} Jefferson’s choice in the formation of his first administration’s cabinet reveals his immense concern for a metered military, His appointment of Dearborn as Secretary of War before any other appointments shows that, at a minimum, Jefferson was deliberate in his reforms. Jefferson’s final nomination was for the Secretary of the Navy, and not by choice. Jefferson’s politics preceded his policies and quelled any prospects for the navy position. His prospective appointees suspected
Jefferson would dismantle the Navy under their tenure, and first three nominees turned him down in short order. Jefferson expressed discomfort in his dim prospects and worried he would not find a nominee to accept his nomination before the damage to his reputation became severe.\textsuperscript{237} The President eventually persuaded Robert Smith to accept a temporary and conditional nomination, but only until such a time as Jefferson could find a replacement more in-line with his own agenda. With a cabinet stacked against military development, and a Congress in favor of republican policies, Jefferson had a clear pathway toward dissolution or reform.

Jefferson outlined his military reform agenda in his inaugural address on the floor of the unfinished Senate chamber on March 4, 1801.\textsuperscript{238} He knew the disquiet party conflict had generated and he hoped to “get social intercourse restored” while in-office. In spite of his verbose appeal for compromise, Jefferson’s approach did not relent or offer an alternative to his agenda, only expectations of cooperation. His attempt at bipartisanship was essentially a veiled threat to dissidents. In his bid for reformative support, he sought to rally representatives to “true Republican principles, which few…had thrown off, I sanguinely hope.”\textsuperscript{239} Jefferson urged the representatives to adhere to his narrow interpretation of these “principles of our revolution.” He reminded his audience of his political principles when he stated, “we are all Federalists, we are all Republicans,” as he ushered in Republican reform. He believed fewer taxes allowed

\textsuperscript{237} Henry Adams, \textit{History of the United States During the Administration of Thomas Jefferson}, 149.


America to be at peace “to practice her liberty.”

Orthodox principles required small government; small government required few taxes; and few taxes required a small military footprint. Military growth had been the single largest expenditure in the United States in the years prior to his election. His notes on the topic are disheveled, scrawled, changed, or cryptically abbreviated; however, one statement remained unmolested in his edits. The “Supremacy of the Civil over the Military authority” remained unchanged, this idea was not a sudden or empty goal but a lifetime of ideals represented in a single policy. America had been on the verge of war under the Federalists, and Jefferson attributed much of this tension to the steady growth of the “eventual armies” formed by his predecessors. He reiterated once more his aims of isolation and controlled military: “peace is our most important interest and a recovery from debt.” Jefferson’s inaugural address allowed him to declare his intentions and begin to work with Congress that they “may avoid, instead of imitating, a general bankruptcy and disastrous war.”

Jefferson’s speech and intentions would have had little effect were he not quick to execute his intent in conjunction with his allies in Congress. In March of 1802, Jefferson enacted the largest single military reform since the foundation of the government over a decade before with his Act Fixing the Military Peace Establishment of the United States. Jefferson reasoned it was “needful or safe that a standing army

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241 Peters, ed., *Public Statutes at Large*, all military bills.
should be kept up in time of peace.”

In one bill, the War Department lost eleven years of growth and development in what may have been the largest single reduction of ground forces in American history in proportion to the Army’s size. Jefferson’s reform reduced numbers, but also slashed capabilities. A combined 3,287 soldiers and officers remained authorized after the bill. Under Adams, 5,400 fighting personnel were necessary for military sustainment, with a further 5,000 for wartime preparation. Recruitment was already a challenge for the army, but the challenge increased with the prospect that the billets would not exist in future years. The same reluctance to join an unsteady position such as Secretary of the Navy also kept recruits from their uncertain military commitment. His bill erased over a decade of army development and left the smallest force on record since Washington’s initial foundations.

Structurally, Jefferson’s first reforms devastated the army. He reduced the army from eight regiments to only four, and only three of those served a mobility function that enabled them to deploy. The 1802 bill eliminated the last of the regular cavalry, though they had comprised two of the army’s regiments in 1800. The cavalry simply had no place in Jefferson’s new army. Unlike the infantry, the cavalry were useful exclusively for combat. Infantry could maintain inexpensive garrisons on the frontier or provide a core force for militia to train with in the event of conflict. Cavalry were combat forces, and expensive forces in that respect. Jefferson’s reductions cut the army back to less than

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three-thousand troops. Significantly, this elimination was not a strategic choice by the army but a financial decision under the Jefferson administration.

Alongside general reductions to personnel, the officer corps absorbed a substantial portion of the reductions. Officers from both branches lost their commissions. Jefferson’s bill eliminated almost 70% of all army positions.²⁵⁰ Only around two-hundred and fifty commissioned officers remained in-service. Those that remained were more likely to be unskilled and financially motivated, as they had lost esprit de corps, training, and stability.²⁵¹ Unforeseeable reductions discouraged young career officers, those with the most potential to improve the force, and left a scant establishment that remained too scattered across various outposts to develop camaraderie. Due to career instability under Jefferson, historians such as William Skelton consider this the failure to develop of the officer corps, and consider its true founding to be in 1815.²⁵² Jefferson was quickly setting America on her “Republican tack” through drastic reductions to the War Department.²⁵³

Beyond changes to army size and structure, the qualitative effects of Jefferson’s reforms were extensive. Recruitment of soldiers, like career officers, was a problem Jefferson exasperated. Yet another qualitative aspect of Jefferson’s initial reform was the immobilization of the army Corps of Engineers. The army Corps of Engineers was the fourth army regimen and previously served a mobile function in support of deployed

²⁵² Skelton, An American Profession of Arms, 10.
forces. Jefferson relocated them permanently to West Point, New York. Engineers continued to augment garrisons, but they lost the potential for quick and effective wartime application under Jefferson’s reforms. Jefferson created the army he wanted, one “safe” for the budget and populace, but deprived their wartime capabilities in the process. The remainder of forces achieved Jefferson’s ideal through attrition: they could not threaten the peace, but neither could they threaten war.

Administrative reductions to military infrastructure are another area where Jefferson’s cuts had a measurable effect and betray an unfounded optimism in army adaptability. Embassies closed under Madison’s State Department, but Dearborn’s War Department faced a deeper challenge with the total elimination of the army Quartermaster Corps. Jefferson envisioned an army logistics system that would rely exclusively on contractors on an as-needed basis to meet the needs of the army. He believed the administrative costs of the Quartermasters outweighed the financial costs of their function. Contractors were notoriously unreliable; their inability to supply the army was conspicuous from the Northwest Indian War through to the starvation under Wilkinson in 1809.254 However, contractors were inexpensive, and Jefferson made his decisions with an eye toward the common good rather than then military reality.255 With the elimination of the Quartermaster General, a decade of built-up supply infrastructure and practices became obsolete. The Secretary of War became entirely responsible for managing the procurement of contracts for what was left of the regular army. These reforms slowed the purchase of materiel and ordnance. They also removed predictability and reliability from

254 James Jacob Ripley, Tarnished Warrior: Major-General James Wilkinson, 250.
255 Skelton, An American Profession of Arms, 8. ALSO A Sketch of the Organization of the Quartermaster's Department, from 1774 to 1868 (pg 14)
the supply chain. This was the only period in American history the United States army did not maintain a Quartermaster General. Efforts to fill the absence were insufficient.\textsuperscript{256}

The causes of General Wilkinson’s crisis of 1809 included his private contractor, Secretary of War monetary approval, and supply chain failures to austere locations. The beginning of Jefferson’s changes ended in embarrassment and failure. Shortly after Jefferson left office, the Secretary of War petitioned Congress to reestablish the Office of the Quartermaster.\textsuperscript{257}

Jefferson’s policies devastated the effectiveness of the army though they achieved his stated goal of “relying, for internal defense, on our militia solely, till actual invasion…and not for a standing army in time of peace, which may overawe the public sentiment.”\textsuperscript{258} Without trained cavalry, a quality force structure, a cohesive officer corps, or a supply system, the army infrastructure was not in a position to provide for defense or mount an offense. Jefferson might have been correct when he claimed the exceptional nature of the American populace allowed the army to raise trained infantry quickly. This force would not include cavalry, a quartermaster corps, supply networks, administrators, and quality officers until after war was underway. The shortage of capabilities was irrelevant to Jefferson who believed that he could summon half a million militia troops at his will.\textsuperscript{259} Jefferson’s early military policies caused critical reductions to army size and

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\item \textsuperscript{256} Harrison Augustus Royce, \textit{A Sketch of the Organization of the Quartermaster’s Department, from 1774-1868} (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1869), 14.
\item \textsuperscript{257} Peters, \textit{Public Statutes at Large}, vol 2: 696
\item \textsuperscript{258} Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 9: 23.
\item \textsuperscript{259} Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 1:160.
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deliberately lowered combat capabilities in favor of lower taxes and a decreased national debt.

Jefferson’s involvement with the army was conspicuously “not merely military,” and he retained them when it suited his purposes. One example of which was his commissioning of scientific expeditions to the frontier.260 Under the Federalists, the United States had avoided the precedent of army exploration and utilization beyond their frontier garrisons. Other nations had used military power for various explorations, but such a precedent was not in place with the American military in 1801, nor had Jefferson’s predecessors suggested such a pursuit. Jefferson, who had opposed the peacetime military before taking office, began to see the varied uses for a easily accessible workforce left on retainer and therefore started to consistently expanded army roles with new tasks. With continued use, expeditions became routine. Jefferson’s administration oversaw the development of five separate expeditions: the Lewis and Clark, Dunbar-Hunter, Red River, and two Zebulon Pike expeditions. Jefferson personally designed and orchestrated the Lewis and Clark Expedition to a minute detail. Army leadership under James Wilkinson adopted his precedent and sent Zebulon Pike on expedition without extensive presidential coordination. Jefferson changed the mission of the small army he retained and redirected war preparation efforts to peacetime expeditions.

The prevalence of scientific exploration throughout Jefferson’s personal correspondence make it no wonder that these expeditions took a central role in the military’s new mission. Discovery was a core tenant in Jefferson’s belief that increased

knowledge could improve the nation through growing education and developing manufactory. This affinity for discovery and learning stemmed from a personal curiosity in the developing world. President Jefferson attempted his own experiments, and enlisted the help of others when he could. He coaxed Eli Whitney into revealing early details of his cotton gin, speculated on prospective inventions with Robert Fulton in regards to mines and the steam engine, and even sought a private collection of mammoth bones for personal study.\footnote{Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 8: 177.} Jefferson pursued the diffusion of knowledge throughout his life, and especially during his presidential terms. He chose expeditionary leaders from military ranks, despite roles being purely scientific; “persons qualified expressly to give us the geography of the rivers with perfect accuracy, and of good common knowledge and observation in the animal, vegetable & mineral departments.”\footnote{Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 10: 136.} Soldiers were a Constitutional construct under presidential authority, and the most practical way to direct scientific exploration in the Constitutional constraints of the early 1800s. Jefferson trained his explorers in the disciplines of geography, geology, biology, and botany to form his “Corps of Discovery.”\footnote{Elliot Coues, ed., \textit{The History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition}, vol 1-3 (New York: Dover Publications), vol 1: xxiv.} Martial readiness was now far from the goal of Jefferson’s army, exploration was a core focus.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was Jefferson’s first explicitly non-military use of the nation’s forces to advance civilian interests during peacetime. Jefferson proposed a massive frontier exploration system to Congress, initially claiming that the dispatch of personnel to the West would eliminate the possibility of unknown threats on the frontier.
Once Congress approved his proposal, he largely abandoned any pretense of national defense in his further correspondence. The military was to be a tool to promote a peacetime agenda for the good of society, without playing a defenseive role. Even in his direct interactions with the explorers, Jefferson focused exclusively on the scientific merits on their task. It is difficult to overstate Jefferson’s involvement in the conduct of what was ostensible a military expedition. Meriwether Lewis was a longtime friend of Jefferson before the expedition. In 1801, he was removed from his military post to become Private Secretary to the President of the United States. Lewis accepted the position, but in an early unconventional use of the military, Jefferson allowed Lewis to retain his commission as a captain in the regular army. The same day that Congress funded the expedition, Jefferson selected his secretary, Captain Lewis as the team leader. Jefferson addressed the document to Lewis, as though the appointment was purely military in nature: “Captain of the First Regiment of Infantry.” Jefferson maintained that Lewis was to be the “commanding officer” of the expedition. Led by Jefferson’s example, Lewis maintained a military theme -if not military interests- and assembled his team from enlisted soldiers. The expedition removed most from their posts at the garrisons in the Ohio territory. Notable amongst these was Lewis’ friend and fellow officer: William Clark. The operation consisted of seventeen soldiers, three of whom enlisted specifically for the expedition. Jefferson recommissioned Clark as a Second Lieutenant specifically for this expedition, though the president had formerly

promised a rank commensurate with Clark. The expedition was extensive, challenging, and worthwhile, but it added nothing to military readiness — nor did it serve to scout the borders of expeditionary Spain or Great Britain as it had promised Congress. Jefferson’s “Corps of Discovery” was composed of the military, but was distinctly un-militaristic. In 1799, only four years before the expedition launched, Jefferson advocated against Westward expansion and the very existence of a federal military system. He believed that the army posed tremendous risk without real benefit to the populace. However, when Jefferson perceived a net benefit to the peacetime populace, he was content to abandon his approach to pacifism in favor of pragmatism. He had the option to commission civilians or frontiersmen, as he would experiment with in later expeditions, but the army was the fastest tool available to populate and supply his expeditions at the expense of normal military readiness.

A second expedition used military resources once again exclusively for public service. On April 12, 1804, Jefferson wrote to Dr. William Dunbar of Natchez, Mississippi. The president asked Dunbar to lead a second major expedition into the Southwest — near present-day Louisiana. The president secured a further $3,000 in funding from Congress, the same amount allotted to Lewis and Clark. With a prior Congressional approval already in place, Jefferson abandoned his pretense of military goals in his second proposal to Congress. He even publically referenced the Lewis and Clark Expedition — which was still underway and purportedly confidential — in his justification to Congress. Jefferson solely cited the civil benefits of exploration. 

intended this second expedition to explore the same distance as Lewis and Clark’s, with an equal eye towards discovery, botany, biology, etc. One key difference was that Dunbar’s would travel nearer known and unknown Spanish borders and garrisons as he went through the Southerly Red, Ouchita, and Black rivers. In spite of the obvious military advantage of knowing the strength and position of the Spanish forces in a time of high international tensions over Spanish Florida, there was no indication that strategy was even a contributing factor towards the expedition, despite its military value for scouting.

Jefferson became more overt and ambitious with military appropriation towards civil pursuit in the second expedition. He worked with Secretary of War to collect supplies from army storehouses and contractors to supply the fledgling expedition. Jefferson distributed supplies at the expense of readiness supplies, and the same with the staffing for the expedition. Jefferson pragmatically cited his justification for military employment because an expedition was “so laborious, & hazardous, that men of science, used to the temperature & inactivity of their closet, cannot be induced to undertake them.”

William Dunbar and George Hunter led the science of the expedition, but Jefferson established a sixteen-man military expedition to direct its movements. The president strictly ordered the team to avoid foreign governments in their exploration; there can be little doubt that the exploration served neither a tactical nor a strategic purpose. In fact, the expedition fell apart in weeks after the team encountered a Spanish outpost. The Dunbar-Hunter Expedition further increased the involvement of the military

in the expedition process. Pioneers became an army product and exploration became an official mission of Jefferson’s War Department.271

In the third expedition, Jefferson procured finances with ease. By this point, the army routinely explored the West, allowing Jefferson to easily secure $5,000 from Congress, a figure almost double than the previous and larger expeditions. 272 Military support was more readily coordinated, and expeditionary organization had become habitual within the upper echelons of the War Department. In 1805, Jefferson dispatched the third expedition as the Freeman-Custis Expedition as his third expedition. This expedition targeted still further in the Southwest to explore the Arkansas and Red Rivers. Jefferson asked former expeditionary scientist William Dunbar to assist the coordination of the third Western exploration. After the pattern of the Dunbar-Hunter expedition, Dunbar coordinated directly with the commander of the New Orleans federal garrison to assemble supplies and personnel for the third expeditionary team. Jefferson and Dunbar again chose scientists to lead the expedition; neither Thomas Freeman nor Peter Custis were commissioned officers. However, the administration repeated its decision from earlier expeditions in the selection of a military contingent to provide practical resources and direction to the dispatched scientists. Jefferson hand-selected and commissioned Captain Richard Sparks alongside Second Lieutenant Enoch Humphreys to lead all other aspects of the expedition. Additionally, two non-commissioned officers and seventeen privates formed the remainder of the military team in what would be the largest military

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contingent of the expeditions thus far. The War Office and the Secretary of War managed all supplies, communications, and coordination. The president no longer intervened in the particulars of the expedition; he delegated the details to the adapted peacetime army. In three years, the function of the army in the West underwent a minor metamorphosis towards peacetime service over wartime preparation.

Military expeditions became a standard army practice in light of executive policy. After the Lewis-Clark, Hunter-Dunbar, and Freeman-Custis expeditions, General James Wilkinson contributed in his own way to Jefferson’s scientific ambitions. Wilkinson, the appointed commander in charge of the Western army, commissioned his own expeditions and only sought concurrence from the president from that point forward. He sent Captain Zebulon Pike into the Mississippi territory with the same goals as the previous Southwest expeditions and only sought Jefferson’s approval *ex post facto*. This first expedition was small and began in 1804, heading into the Mississippi Territory, while the second followed in 1806 with an extensive probe into the Colorado Territory.\(^{273}\) Jefferson approved Pike’s missions after they occurred and highlighted their successes. Before Pike returned from his Mississippi expedition, Jefferson praised the army’s efforts in his annual address.\(^{274}\) The Pike Expedition signified a change from a presidential-directed, scientific agenda to an army-driven attempt to support their new mission.

Each expedition was undoubtedly a military operation, if only because it used men and resources from the army. Jefferson personally appointed the military members of the first three expeditions and set a precedent that gave the army a new, White House-


sanctioned, non-military focus.\textsuperscript{275} Under the early guise of reconnaissance, Jefferson fulfilled his goals and promoted peacetime development of the force. His expeditionary appointments do not reveal partisanship, but an attempt to put a peacetime army to use for peacetime purposes.\textsuperscript{276} The public benefits provided cartography, botany, and biology. Jefferson emphasized science and discovery above all in his communication with expedition leadership; avoid actual conflict, his instructing them to sidestep Spanish borders and unfriendly Native territory.\textsuperscript{277} The army Jefferson wanted to destroy in 1799 acted in a “more than military” way to explore the West and aid the populace.\textsuperscript{278} These expeditions gave the army regulars a peacetime mission; rather than serve the public through national defense, they would serve through civic works to benefit and develop the young American society.

In addition to these expeditions, Jefferson innovated other army roles in the West for non-militaristic purposes. Jefferson stationed soldiers in the Mississippi Territory in 1802 as a precautionary measure against French and Spanish forces along the Gulf Coast. However, their mission and their employment differed. They largely conducted engineering projects and government administration. A frontier military crisis occurred the next year in 1803 with the Burr Conspiracy. Aaron Burr raised an army on the Southwestern Frontier to conquer Mexico and break away parts of the Western United States. As this rumored threat materialized, Jefferson directed the Governor of Louisiana to prepare a defense exclusively with militia forces. He neglected to activate or position

\textsuperscript{275} Walter Lafeber, “Jefferson and American Foreign Policy”, in Peter S Onuf, Jeffersonian Legacies. (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 379.
\textsuperscript{276} Flores, Southern Counterpart to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 61.
\textsuperscript{277} Flores, Southern Counterpart to Lewis and Clark Expedition, 323.
\textsuperscript{278} Weigley, History of the United States Army, 105.
the only regulars in the Southwest, who were stationed at the nearby Fort Adams in the Mississippi Territory. Jefferson appointed governor Claiborne to the Louisiana Territory and advocated his use of regulars to aide in the administration of civil affairs. The President saw no military use for his regulars and their battlefield capabilities to combat Burr. In fact, he took the opportunity to malign the idea of regulars to Charles Clay. Jefferson stated that Burr’s use of veteran and warfighters was as threat to the Republic and was a “discouragement of all arguments for standing armies.”

Simultaneously, Jefferson’s army contingent on the Mississippi River was a civic hub for the frontier. As of 1804, the army in the South put the soldiers to work improving the Bayou Road and parts of the Natchez Trace. The road allowed engineers to train and developed travel and trade avenues for the local populace. However, the roadways did not fulfill a military need as much as a trade route, as the Mississippi River remained the optimal mode for large movements in the interior. Aaron Burr’s forces demonstrated the utility of developed waterways in his aborted riverine invasion attempts. In addition to roadwork, Fort Adams became the central tax hub for maritime traffic through the Mississippi River. The fort functioned as a secure trading post that enabled continued civil development in the unsettled South. The tax agents began and operating a federal hospital in New Orleans for U.S. sailors. One of Jefferson’s key initiatives at Fort Adams was the transition of the naval officer into a tax collection role. As of 1802, all sailors

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passing New Orleans were legally obligated to stop at Fort Adams, find the leading naval officer, and pay a duty to him in order to fund Jefferson’s maritime hospital.\textsuperscript{283} Jefferson played an active role in shaping the marine hospital project and the regional taxation from a military garrison. Without his active participation in military affairs, the War Department could not have pursued a peacetime construct in such a way.\textsuperscript{284} Soldiers in the Southwestern Frontier became avenues for civil development in lieu of defensive operations under Jefferson.

Jefferson’s selection of army leadership further demonstrates how policy directly hampered martial capability. Jefferson authored and pushed a controversial bill through Congress that allowed him to choose who would govern the Louisiana District. In December of 1803, Jefferson reassigned the generals with the highest rank to a position that shared governorship in the disorganized Louisiana Territory alongside Governor Claiborne. General Wilkinson acted as a civil leader to the chagrin of Claiborne, but he governed with the advantage of federal enforcement by army soldiers until spring of 1804. After which time, Jefferson signed a bill to Congress that split the Louisiana Territory and the southerly District of Louisiana. However, Jefferson betrayed his intentions when he secretly authored edits to the bill to increase his own executive power before the bill went to Congress. His changes expanded executive powers to include appointment authority and allow further militarization under the new government.\textsuperscript{285}


After the bill passed, Jefferson appointed General Wilkinson again to perform a civil function. Wilkinson acted as both military and civil governor of the organized District of Louisiana. He became the primary leader of a large civil government while still head of the entire United States army. His military subordinates became governors and administrators. This was not Jefferson’s only military appointment in the Southwest.

The bill apportioned five judges to govern in concert with Jefferson’s gubernatorial appointee. Four out of the five judges Jefferson selected were officers from the army.\textsuperscript{286} Jefferson personally expanded his own powers of appointment to give his military leadership a greater presence in civil organization to execute the policies he deemed would fulfill his revolutionary mandate.

The Louisiana Territory was the first of many areas where Jefferson installed military leaders in civil roles. After Captains Lewis and Clark returned from their expedition to the West, their rewards were civil appointments. Both received gubernatorial appointments in the West, in territory subdivided after the Louisiana Purchase.\textsuperscript{287} Jefferson was aware that his use of military leadership to govern civil positions was contrary to his stated claims and actions in previous communications with Western government. He defended his decision to use the regular army in such a capacity and “did not think myself departing from my principle, because I consider it not as a civil government, but merely a military station.”\textsuperscript{288} The governmental system he designed in the West remained a military and not civil station in Jefferson’s mind,

\textsuperscript{286} James Ripley Jacobs, \textit{Tarnished Warrior}, 227.
\textsuperscript{288} Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 10: 165.
thereby justifying his use of officers in those roles. The development of the armed forces in a civil capacity shaped the military’s limited roles in the early 1800s. In 1799, Jefferson had opposed standing armies because he believed that they threatened liberty. In 1804, he decried regular folly in the Southwest while aggressively employed them to further civic development.

War Department reform was not limited to the frontier, but manifested in structural transformations to military forces as well. The army maintained two outposts on the Eastern Coast after Jefferson’s appointment, one of which was at West Point, New York. This outpost became the epicenter of a seismic shift in military policy under the Jefferson administration when the president established the United States Military Academy at there in 1801. Jefferson was a staunch opponent of professional military academies prior to his ascension to office. In the 1790s, threats of an academy were among the military outrages that motivated Jefferson to resign from his position as Secretary of State under Washington. In 1793, one of Jefferson’s last official letters to Washington warned that an academy was unconstitutional and in opposition to the spirit of the American Revolution. He stated, “none of the specified powers given by the [Constitution] to Congress would authorize [an academy].”

Jefferson’s apprehension carried into his criticisms of Adams’ own administration when the second president pursued his military academy plan. As an observer to the government, Jefferson was a critic of any military school; however, as president, his opposition crumbled as he saw the civic benefit of using a military school to educate the populace in the sciences. Jefferson adopted the pragmatic Republican mindset that allowed him to preserve the

military for peacetime value. His academy would create engineers and well-rounded, useful citizens out of the soldiers before military defense was the primary concern.

After a year in office, President Jefferson approved the United States Military Academy in his first War Department bill. He used Adams’ plans and location (that he had opposed as Vice President) as a blueprint for the new academy. Significantly, the Corps of Engineers – a compliment of the army under Washington and Adams – was converted to fulfill the role of the military school. The Corps of Engineers usually augmented larger forces and mobilized to build up defenses alongside infantry regiments, but Jefferson permanently garrisoned the regiment at West Point. The first army Chief of Engineers after the Revolutionary War was appointed head of the new academy. The army traded engineering as a military organization for teaching engineering at West Point to a force that the president could easily mobilize for civil projects. Jefferson structured the academy to provide a basis for educated citizens who could then been used to build the United States’ first substantial “canals, roads, and colleges.”

The Academy’s curriculum was rigorous, but useful as a model for liberal education far above its function in a military role. In March 1803, after a year of discussion with the West Point superintendent, Jefferson commissioned four faculty beyond the military leader: two musicians, one artist, and a French teacher. These helped improve the individuals and their contribution to American society, but did little

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292 Crackel, Mr. Jefferson’s Army, 60.
for the nation’s ability to go to war. Joseph G. Totten, an 1805 graduate who later
became the Chief Engineer of the U.S. army, praised the advanced French he had learned
in his years at the academy. He claimed that cadets first learned the French language, and
then trained in French engineering. This had limited military application for an
increasingly reserved and garrisoned peacetime army. Their education was not
exclusively scientific, but also provided a classical education unrelated to the martial arts.
Public education manifested itself in Jefferson’s efforts throughout his life, and especially
his presidency. It is no wonder that even the thrust of his military efforts were meant to
improve society. Jefferson created the military academy, chose its leaders, its teachers,
and its curriculum. Its function proved Jefferson’s motivation to create an institution to
promote knowledge of the sciences in the populace, rather that to train future fighting
forces.

The academy lived up to Jefferson’s expectations as it produced officers who
often quickly resigned their commissions and became civilians, engineers, artillerists, and
little else. The Academy produced two lieutenants in 1802, both of whom were
engineers. While artillerists were the predominant career field of the officers who
remained, their actual role in the army was that of engineers, surveyors, and
mathematicians. Though their education was undoubtedly effective, as artillerists they
were ineffective and unnecessary except for limited use at coastal defenses. Early
artillerists could fairly be categorized as replacements for the Corps of Engineers. Their
performance in the coming War of 1812 with Britain would reveal their inability to

294 Todd Shallat, “Building Waterways, 1802-1861: Science and the United States Army in Early
Public Works,” Technology and Culture 31 (Jun 1990), 27.
provide aid in a wartime situation. Between 1802 and 1809, the Academy produced 48 cadets, the majority of whom left service shortly after their educations were completed. Only eight West Point graduates under Jefferson specialized in a function specific to warfare like that of the infantry. Even after the *Chesapeake-Leopard* Affair (1807) convinced the government that war was on the horizon, the academy did not adjust its goals or curriculum. It would take active war for West Point to change their focus to military strategy and education. By comparison, President James Madison’s administration (1809-1817) developed a significantly larger variety and number in capabilities at West Point to include Marine Officers, Light Artillerists, and Dragoons. The majority of Jefferson’s academy graduates pursued civilian careers and never pursued a military position in a combat role. Unsurprisingly, no cadets specialized in the practical field of cavalry until President Madison, Jefferson’s successor, took office.

The U.S. Navy suffered to the point of near disbandment under Jefferson’s reform program. Jefferson had once fought Washington’s construction of the U.S. Navy fleet, but the nation’s first president had still ordered six large frigates. President John Adams followed this pattern and continued the development of the Navy with thirteen large frigates and the *George Washington* as flagship. Throughout these expansions, Jefferson opposed the deep-water, traditional Navy that he believed continually implicated nations in diplomatic trade crises that could lead to war. Moreover, they were

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expensive, which motivated him to advocate “such a naval force only as may protect our
coasts and harbors from such depredations as we have experienced” – in other words, a
shallow-water Navy. He believed that retaining a traditional navy was too expensive, and
“by its own expenses and the eternal wars in which it will implicate us, grind us with
public burthens, & sink us under them.” Madison and Gallatin joined Jefferson’s
efforts to prevent naval growth even before his election to the presidency, but little
progress occurred until 1802. Federalists under President Adams had limited the Navy
through a defensive political action mere days before Jefferson took office, but the new
Commander in Chief reduced the Navy significantly from that smaller point of its upward
growth. Jefferson effectively halted Navy expansion and reduced its number and breadth
of power by a large margin. Alexander Hamilton, alarmed by his assessment of
Jefferson’s naval policies, publically accused the President of a secret agenda to disband
the Navy entirely – an accusation Jefferson deliberately chose to leave ambiguous.

Whether or not he would publically admit to an agenda of entire naval
disbandment, Jefferson vigorously pursued reforms within the navy. President Adams’
final military bill in office was a defensive reduction of the Navy to lower its value
thereby reduce it as a target for reform under the newly elected Republicans. The bill
directed the suspension of six naval frigates, but only under the president’s direction.
Jefferson used his dissolution authority to direct the docking and dissolution of the fleet.

In an admitted failure of Jefferson’s attempts to dissolve the military, the only exception

were three ships retained to protect commerce in Northern Africa. In 1802, he signed *An Act for the Navy* to limit maritime capabilities. One deleterious effect of the bill was a collapse of the naval budget. In 1801, the Navy received a $3.1 million annual budget to support the limited fleet left in service after the Quasi-War. Jefferson’s 1802 budget cut the Navy’s budget by over 60% from the previous year. Only $900,000 remained to operate the Navy after one year of Jefferson’s reforms. By 1803, that number was reduced a further 10% to less than $800,000. The presidential cuts were a dramatic and sudden loss for the Navy, and a guarantee that sub-par maintenance would be the only option under Jefferson’s administration. Jefferson’s first reform also brought with it a drastic reduction in U.S. Navy personnel. Washington and Adams had reduced the corps of sailors and Marines, and docked vessels lost all of their crew, leaving only a single officer and overseer of each vessel to provide ship upkeep. Jefferson’s Navy receded and lost any semblance of readiness on the Eastern Seaboard. The skill of sailors was exceptional in Jefferson’s mind, as was the impregnability of the American coast. To Jefferson, there was no need for a Navy to patrol the Atlantic in peacetime if their only function was to attack vessels and risk a war. He believed that the nation faced no danger from foreign vessels even if they reached American shores. Fiscal policy trumped legitimate military concerns. During Jefferson’s presidency, economy and peace trumped

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301 Gardner, *Our Naval War with France*, 256.
303 Allen, *Our Naval war with France*, 257.
military defense.  Thus, the Navy was unable to operate or supply its small deep-water fleet under Jefferson as construction ended on new vessels. In short, the Navy docked most of the fleet and received almost no budget to train or staff the harbors of the few remaining ships. These conditions vastly deteriorated naval readiness.

Three frigates escaped the fate of the Navy when Jefferson and his Secretary of State, James Madison, intervened in North Africa during the Barbary War. After a series of national embarrassments in which Tripoli threatened American commerce, Jefferson allowed an exception to his military minimalism in order to protect commerce. These frigates escaped dry dock exclusively to police Northern African trade routes. This would appear as though Jefferson had conceded the necessity of a military force even at cost to the government and populace. However, Jefferson only approved the operation to protect commerce only after privately confirming that the expedition to North Africa would be cost-neutral to the government as an alternative to dry-docking the fleet. Madison and Jefferson both referred to this military campaign as an “experiment” rather than a military venture. Intervention appeared to cost the same as maintenance in-harbor for these last frigates, and it achieved the goal of trade protection when the budget was paramount. The Navy trained and functioned under Jefferson only because the trade dispute was an apparent “necessity.” Within the parameters of his private correspondence, Jefferson indicates that he would not have approved military action in North Africa had the operation come at any real cost to the U.S. Treasury. Jefferson’s

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305 Henry Adams, History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson, 164.
concerted attempts at martial reform reduced the traditional Navy to a small paper force to be dissolved at the conclusion of the campaign in North Africa. The reductions of 1802 and 1803, viewed independently, indicate Jefferson’s policies were indeed economic, pacifistic, or as some historians have labelled his military enterprises “criminal folly.” 307

Jefferson’s early naval reforms illustrate only their conservative thrust, rather than delineate the complete, economical restructure he ultimately desired. His changes were not merely reductive; they rebuilt the military into a peacetime orientation centered on civil support. A summary of early Executive correspondence with the Navy indicates that Jefferson was actively involved in the new naval paradigm. The amount of bills passed in his presidency in regards to naval budgets and reforms confirms this assessment. In total, Jefferson passed 17 bills in regards to the Navy during his time in office, versus thirteen for both Washington and Adams’ presidencies combined. Madison only passed four naval bills from his first term to 1812. 308 Any inclination Jefferson had to remove the navy in the 1790s transformed into a thrust towards a new Republic-friendly structure. Even President Adams’ direct interference with naval policy appear less frequent and directive than that under Jefferson the Republican. Jefferson in 1801 was confident that the nation was secure from foreign incursions, and the geography provided natural haven from European incursions. The only threat of war with a real power involved conflict on the frontier – a minor concern – or ships that engaged with belligerent nations on the Atlantic. A smaller, localized Navy could not draw America

308 Peters, Ed. Public Statutes at Large.
into war or threaten public liberty through debt and increased taxation. Thus, Jefferson overhauled the Navy in two significant ways; he created a local defense system and reduced capabilities.

President Jefferson maligned the frigate-based Navy that had grown under Washington and Adams. He admitted that the frigates were “formerly much used,” but recognized this as a flaw of an overgrown government unable to adapt to a vision of defense that benefited the populace. When frigates were on the open sea, they enforced American policy with impunity. The conflicts in the Quasi-War, and even Jefferson’s later Chesapeake-Leopard Affair seemed to validate Jefferson’s discomfort as they concerned foreign entanglements by naval assets on the ocean. Jefferson believed they were not only a risk to security, but also to prosperity. Madison and Jefferson agreed that a shallow-water handicap would “protect us from the ruinous folly of a navy.”

Thus, President Jefferson exercised the new powers over the Navy Adams had signed into law to dry-dock the entire Naval fleet. He sold the auxiliary vessels constructed under Adams a mere three weeks after he took office. This left thirteen frigates and a single schooner in operation in 1802. By the end of 1803, Jefferson docked all of the frigates that remained and, with the exception of three, left them unserviceable without crew or maintenance.

Jefferson advocated a for radically revised Navy system when he deliberately handicapped the nation’s deep-water capabilities in favor of shallow-water gunboats. A chief aim of this goal was to promote local industry and economies across the seaboard

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310 Peters, Ed. Public Statutes at Large, 223.
through construction and garrison of vessels in small ports across the coast. Instead of centralized construction and maintenance in New England, the entire nation could develop its industry. This was never possible with frigates, which required construction and maintenance in three major U.S. ports. With almost no recorded discussion or planning with the Secretary of the Navy, and excess correspondence with his Secretary of State and Treasury, Jefferson launched his program in 1805.\textsuperscript{312} Jefferson defended his gunboat program to Congress and praised its military shortcomings as deliberate attempts at a restrained navy. He claimed his navy had a fiscal quality in that it offered, “little effect toward protecting our commerce in the open seas even on our coast; and still less can it become an excitement to engage in offensive maritime war, toward which it would furnish no means.”\textsuperscript{313} He was not against defense or a navy, but a shallow water navy was a safeguard from foreign intrigue, good for local economies, and had the potential for extensive savings.

Jefferson believed savings from his program precluded other considerations for a system of defense. By his own estimates, he could maintain the Navy at a cost less than 10\% of his predecessors.\textsuperscript{314} He calculated that the shallow gunboats would cost a paltry $10,000 per vessel, even less if he could enhance the procurement process. The total price to create hundreds of these boats-as-economic boons was proposed to cost less than one year of Adams’ Quasi-War budget. As a testament of how economic considerations outweighed military needs, Jefferson and his cabinet seriously considered the idea of burning all excess ships and gunboats and only reconstructing them in the event of a

\textsuperscript{312} Richard Peters ed. \textit{Public Statutes at Large}, 330.
declared war by Congress. Albert Gallatin, then Secretary of Treasury, reasoned that such a construct would be more cost-effective than even militia maintenance of the gunboats.\textsuperscript{315} This approach to defense spared no consideration for battlefield efficacy, but only peacetime efficiency.

At the Navy’s peak, the President authorized a fleet of 174 shallow-water gunboats dispersed across the Eastern and Southeastern seaboard.\textsuperscript{316} As a rule, they only carried a few canons, some less than one, and most remained dry-docked in their patrol areas and out of service. Jefferson knew his fleet had few uses. It was “merely for defensive operation[s]”; in a letter to Thomas Paine, he argued that limited-use gunboats were the “only water defense which can be useful to us.”\textsuperscript{317} Such a defense was optimistic in the best of circumstances.

Jefferson continued the formation of the gunboat Navy by a reduction in personnel. After the budget decrease of 1803, only nine-hundred people comprised the Naval Department.\textsuperscript{318} With this number of personnel, Jefferson’s impractical defense was limited to six to eight seaborne ships at a time, an application that defeated the purpose of Jefferson’s ambitious quantities. They also exceeded initial cost estimates and eventually became more expensive than the Federalist frigates. Jefferson’s gunboat navy promoted “peace and defense” by sheer impracticality for open conflict, but their savings provided the public benefit of “a return to the progress of improvement.”\textsuperscript{319}

\textsuperscript{316} Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 10: 204.
\textsuperscript{318} Jefferson, \textit{The Works}, vol 1: 190.
The final change in Jefferson’s Navy was a militia program that departed from naval precedent. It shared its mission with the gunboat program, with equally dubious results. In December of 1806, Jefferson signed a *Bill for the Establishment of the Naval Militia* that, true to its name, built a naval system to match the U.S. army scheme for land-based militia. The Naval Militia was almost a necessary corollary to Jefferson’s fleet because of local harbors. Jefferson’s bill mandated that the entire white male populace aged twenty-one to forty-five register in a reserve system for what Jefferson called a Naval Militia.\(^{320}\) They required capable crew in their various ports, but the federal government would not employ or pay the needed quantity of sailors until war was already underway. Such was the confidence Jefferson had in the gunboat Navy, he hoped to minimize the national budget by and bring local communities into the defense scheme. The obvious drawback is the presumption that -like the army- the naval militia would not consist of professionals. Furthermore, a militia organization could rally around the framework of the small federal Navy. Though skilled seamen were available in port cities, professionally trained, drilled, and combat-ready crews were difficult to fabricate without experience. There was little opportunity for the naval militia to be effective against the ships that might cross the Atlantic to wage war, but Jefferson contentedly saved money and divested resources to the citizenry.

Theodore Roosevelt called Jefferson’s Navy “very worthless,” in his assessment of executive naval policies.\(^{321}\) This description only takes into account the military merits of Jefferson’s Navy. Jefferson’s ambitions met defensive needs while he invested

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military resources into national improvements. If Jefferson had not believed in the relative security of the North American continent, such a policy would have been untenable. Jefferson was not ignorant of traditional naval policies; he merely rejected them. His shallow-water Navy and his naval militia were innovations intended to rebuke the maritime plans of his Federalist predecessors in favor of the public benefits of peace, security, and prosperity.

Jefferson ended his presidency on the brink of war with Great Britain. After two ships engaged in conflict on the ocean in the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair in 1807, the United States and Great Britain were in a period of extreme tension, each poised to go to war.\textsuperscript{322} Jefferson declared an embargo against Great Britain to halt trade and provide political collateral for post-diplomacy negotiations. He quickly sought to increase the size of the army, but its officers were largely political appointments, and the lack of pay or morale crippled its ability to attract recruits.\textsuperscript{323} The addition of manpower billets did not indicate an increase of army capabilities. The functional reforms Jefferson had pushed through limited military effectiveness even when its numbers returned to a favorable growth trajectory. The officer corps were largely political appointments that allowed little levity for expertise.\textsuperscript{324} Whereas, the force collectively lacked critical capabilities such as a trained cavalry corps, quartermaster, and supply system. When tested in 1808, the army under General Wilkinson could not even support itself and a majority of the soldiers died of starvation within their own encampment, due to lack of strategic planning and logistical capabilities. Jefferson left office with a military that cost

\textsuperscript{322} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812}, 7.
\textsuperscript{323} Skelton, \textit{An American Profession of Arms}, 5.
\textsuperscript{324} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812}, 3.
almost the same as the one he inherited, but remained poised only to improve the nation, not to conduct or prevent war.

Jefferson’s apprehensions of the regular military began before the American Revolution, but threats of war and financial constraints under the Federalists radicalized his desire to reform the military. His ‘Revolution of 1800’ signified the beginnings of these reforms, but its civil restructurings were carried out in earnest throughout both of his terms. Jefferson did not administer these changes singlehandedly, nor were his designs against the military sinister. His flaw was a reliance on American exceptionalism as a form of national security, an oversight that led to inferior military cultivation. With the nation secured in his mind, he put the peacetime military to a useful purpose of civil support. The populace had military governorships, educated engineers, a complete abolition of taxation, frontier knowledge, scientific discovery, new roads, bridges, and marine hospitals, as well as a litany of requisite infrastructural improvements. Troops did not train for war; they garrisoned. The logistical functions of the military ceased to exist, as did the cavalry. Officers became engineers and civil servants, rather than battlefield managers; and naval development reformed to favor economy over practicality. Jefferson rejected the gradual military development scheme of his predecessors and substituted his own policies of a functioning peacetime force for civil improvements. His reformation devastated continuity in the military and diminished combat readiness. Jefferson’s revolution saved the government from the dangers of a traditional federal military, but left it exposed to the menaces of British forces in 1812.
In James Madison’s first term as president, he continued the civilian-centered military system established under his predecessor - Thomas Jefferson. Elected in 1808, Madison held many of the same beliefs and values he shared with Jefferson as the former Secretary of State. President Madison even maintained a U.S. army and naval system as Jefferson envisioned, even though he also feared that war was inevitable. This confidence informed his decision to declare war on Great Britain in June of 1812, without having prepared a military force for the task. The British defeated the American forces consistently, which prompted the final reversion to the central, regular army and navy designed specifically for war. The need to stop the British motivated a new officer corps development plan, and introduced or reformed the quartermasters, cavalry, navy, naval militia, training, recruitment, leadership, and mission of the military. After two years of army and naval adaptation to fielded enemies, the rebuilt army won against a British force on equal terms for the first time at the Battle of Chippewa, and the professional American Army began in earnest. In peace, Madison sought to continue Jefferson’s civil-centric military policies, but consistent battlefield defeats in the War of 1812 made it necessary to have “swept away” the former system.

The War of 1812 has generated a modest historiography, though historians are justified in their continued descriptions of the conflict as America’s “most obscure war.” Within the historiography it is important to understand two emerging consensus:

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that the invasion of Canada was a major strategic goal from the start, and that the United
Stated military failed in most attempts to achieve national objectives.328 The belief that
Madison had at the start of the war was one that overvalued his ability to take Canada, a
fact Alan Taylor has shown was not unrealistic with the varying levels of local
support.329 The ongoing discussion of American losses, now emphasized by Jon
Latimer, is part of a story of that shifts the story from a draw to a loss. The fault of
American performance can no longer be thought of as a weakness of politics or budget
alone, but one where the military system was at least equally responsible. However, the
lack of readiness and structure in the American forces was at the core of the war’s
campaign failures. Missed opportunities for American victory are a focus of the modern
historiography of the war, and the gravity of military performance must be examined
through this lens.

President Madison was not averse to Federalist ideas; in his early political career
he was a contributing author to the Federalist Papers alongside the staunch Federalist
Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. When Madison entered office in 1809, few of his
Federalist proclivities remained apparent in his writings. As Jefferson espoused his own
brand of republicanism from the 1790s onwards, Madison shared these ideas each year.
President Madison shared the popular belief in a small or nonexistent regular army
balanced by a large militia. He also believed that it was his duty as Jefferson’s
diplomatic successor to Europe. Though Madison shared the popular Republican view
that American territory was virtually impregnable because of the militia system, he was

328 Black, Rethinking Military History, 9.
329 Taylor, The Civil War of 1812.
cautious of European political developments that he had seen deteriorate in the previous Chesapeake-Leopard Affair. Jefferson’s Nonimportation Act and later embargo had reversed the nation’s economic prosperity, depressed the economy, and increased the national debt. Madison worked with reduced trade embargoes, and was challenged with a debt he did not believe in and a crisis of budget. Madison was not the face of a political revolution in 1809, the distaste for the national debt and taxation was equally common in the populace and congress. The economic and political situation combined to minimize Madison’s options for raising taxes, much less an army.

Diplomatic circumstances of the day heightened military tensions, and the Napoleonic War stifled Madison’s drive for army or navy development. The United States’ ability to be a direct trade partner to Europe with abundant natural resources made the nation an important target for both sides of an international conflict. Madison desired to “maintain a sincere neutrality.” Madison feared military development would lead the France or Great Britain to produce further trade restrictions or to treat the United States as a belligerent. His fears here were not unfounded, incursions on American trade by European powers increased in frequency throughout his first term. With fear of conflict, Madison averted any military build-up in order to “avoid an appeal to arms.” Madison’s first term was fraught with these economic challenges to trade, the political unpopularity of a regular army system, and an excess of diplomatic obstacles. Were it to become a goal, he had few options to develop the regular military. He hoped to continue

333 Madison, Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States, 24.
Jefferson’s policies, the Republican tack more consistent with his own values and reinforced militia as “the firmest bulwark of republics.” Therefore, at the conclusion of his inauguration, Madison flagged a clear intention to simply sustain his limited military in spite his belief that war was inevitable.

Historian Russel F. Weigley has characterized Madison’s inaction as “nostalgic ambivalence.” Madison’s conscious decision to stagnate the military is often left out of the historical narrative due to an apparent ambivalence. Weigley’s term captures the thrust of Madison’s actions, but does not capture the deliberate nature of Madison’s inaction. Ideology and confidence in the militia system shaped Madison’s confidence in national security and freed him to not be concerned about the system he inherited. His confidence was rooted in his belief that an offensive operation could be sustained by the same defensive system he helped Jefferson create. Madison believed the approach of 1809, as a continuation of Jefferson’s ideals, was the safest answer to address the “present situation in the world.” The result was a president and administration that appeared “casual and indifferent” to military development at the same time he was planning an invasion of British Canada.

Figure 3. War Department Budget, 1809-1815.

The above figure demonstrates War Department expenditures under the Madison administration.
The War Department budget again provides an illustration of the broader contours of military resource allocation during the Madison Administration. When Madison took office, he executed a Congressional allotment of $2,764,011 to the War Department. In peacetime, there was negligible variation of the military and little deviation from Jefferson’s final budgets. From 1809 until the war began in 1812, the War Department budget remained essentially static for the first time in its short history. As a percentage of change, this represented the most stable budget of a thirty-year period, a notable feat in light of the Napoleonic conflict and state of American forces. An inconsiderable contraction of the budget even occurred from 1809 to 1811, but those figures crept upwards by early 1812 as emergency bills attempted to reconstitute the army on the eve of the Canadian invasion. In March of 1812, the budget had grown less than 2% to $2,812,071, only three months before Madison intended to declare war on Great Britain as efforts were underway to invade Canada.\footnote{Richard Peters ed., \textit{Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America: From the Organization of the Government in 1789 to March 3 1845, vol II}, (Boston; Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1845), 695.} The remarkable stability demonstrated Madison’s ideological confidence in the military system he had helped Jefferson create.

Though the overall military budget reflected stability, the specific allocation of funds within the War Department shows a more nuanced direction for the armed forces at this time. Entire categories of expenditure were eliminated from the budget. The necessity of these eliminated functions was made apparent by their subsequent reintroduction immediately after the war began. One of the eliminated requirements was for the cavalry, a force embedded with the regular army. The mounted units were a
unique capability, with a demonstrated value as scouts and to break enemy lines. The study of cavalry in the War of 1812 remains absent from literature, as in military history as a whole. 341 If the utility of federal cavalry was debatable, the value of cavalry as a function of an army was clearly demonstrated by the mounted militia on more than one occasion in the subsequent war.342 In 1809, the budget allocated a combined total of $64,646 for mounted units. A portion of these funds retained a single temporary cavalry unit, while the remainder went to light dragoons and light artillery embedded in the regiment.343 In the next year, Madison’s War Department oversaw the disbandment of the mounted units. Trained mounted troops later proved difficult to replace on short notice, required specialized equipment, and lacked the horses and forage formerly allocated to these units. The funds had been shifted to the Indian Department, a sub-organization still managed by the War Department, to accommodate further treaty negotiations and land acquisition in the Southwest.344 Though this was an example of the Madison Administration’s continuation of Jefferson’s peacetime preference over military readiness, it would be presumptive to entirely dismiss the military application of the Indian Department on the frontier on the eve of war. Tactical challenges during of the war demonstrated the value of mounted units, but the pre-war damage was done. Under Madison’s deliberate ambivalence in his first term, military effectiveness stagnated and declined.

341 Black, Rethinking Military History, 70.
342 Adams, War of 1812, 75.
343 Peters, Ed. Public Statutes at Large, 560.
The Naval Department met the same pattern of stagnation and decline in the four years before the war. Jefferson’s economic decisions and trade embargoes were keenly felt in the expensive Naval Department. In spite of the republican efforts to stave off national debt, the government’s debt obligations approached $11,000,000 worth of debt by the end of Jefferson’s term.\textsuperscript{345} The anti-Federalist political climate and sensitivity to naval expansion was compounded by the legacy of the \textit{Chesapeake-Leopard Affair}.\textsuperscript{346} Naval development, in light of its’ inability to quarter or abuse citizens on land, was more palatable to Republicans than the army. Yet, the diplomatic risks during the Napoleonic Wars had the power to thrust multiple nations into a war through a single Captain’s brash actions. British had continued to seize suspected British sailors from American vessels, and the French continued to threaten American merchant ships. Thus, from 1809 to 1812, the United States fleet did not expand its number of ships and the budget barely grew by $198,755 by the start of the war.

In 1812, the Naval budget increased 7% to $2,904,669. This total reflected a much smaller figure than even Adams had used in preparation for the undeclared Quasi-War with France. Madison had a larger economic basis to draw from fifteen years later, and a clear threat, but pressed for no additional financial resources for oceanic defense. In late 1811, the naval status quo nearly changed when a few War Hawks proposed an increase to the budget and navy. The new plan involved building dozens of new ships to augment the deep-water fleet. However, the proposed budgetary updates died on the

\textsuperscript{345} Hickey, \textit{The Forgotten War of 1812}, 253.

\textsuperscript{346} Spencer C. Tucker and Frank T. Reuter, \textit{The Chesapeake-Leopard Affair} (Annapolis; Naval Institute Press, 1996), 190.
floor of the Senate in February 1812, before Madison even had a chance to approve these measures. Republicans had blocked this measure in Congress but with only a three-vote difference.\textsuperscript{347} Madison indicated support for this naval expansion, which may have swayed the outcome on the floor of Congress. However, his support was tepid at best and the bill died before the question could be settled. Instead, the Navy only retained nine frigates from the Federalist administrations, and still produced no larger additions to the fleet. Financial conservatism and a political party averse to war inhibited Madison’s fervor to execute war preparations, and his “neglect became wanton.”\textsuperscript{348}

The deep-water Navy had deteriorated to its nine frigates in 1809, but only six of those remained seaworthy by 1812. Were the Navy to refit and commission its entire fleet, it would have mustered no more than 16 seafaring vessels.\textsuperscript{349} A direct comparison to the British Navy must consider the Empire’s unique need to maintain a strong navy across the globe. Yet, the raw numbers and capabilities of the British illustrate how minimally the American vessels fared against a European opponent. Britain possessed nearly 900 warships in 1812, a fleet over three times what it commanded at the start of the American Revolution. The British ships included 600 frigates, the majority of which outclassed their American equivalents. Britain also possessed 130 ships-of-the-line, all of which outclassed the American frigates in tonnage and guns.\textsuperscript{350} Madison’s Navy was quantitatively and qualitatively outmatched many times over. Isolated to only those ships assigned to the American coastline before the war, British warships still outnumbered the

\textsuperscript{347} Tucker, The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy, 34.
\textsuperscript{348} Adams, The War of 1812, 1072.
\textsuperscript{349} Stagg, Conflict for a Continent, 3.
\textsuperscript{350} Spencer C. Tucker, Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy, 103.
Americans forces by a factor of four. Madison knew the state of the United States Navy but continued to believe shortage of deep-water ships was not dire as long as he felt secure in Jefferson’s Naval Militia.\footnote{Latimer, \textit{1812: War With America}, 54.}

The gunboat program was allowed to fall into disrepair throughout Madison’s first term. Madison and his first Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, entered their respective offices with 174 shallow-water gunboats.\footnote{Smith, “For the Purpose of Defense: The Politics of the Jeffersonian Gunboat Program,” 87.} These ships were clustered in various ports and outfitted to the standards of local leadership with occasional inputs from the Naval Department. In this decentralized environment, and without deliberate efforts, the gunboats fell into a state of disrepair. No accountable standards also caused a loss trained crew and experienced officers that proved ruinous to their development.\footnote{Tucker, \textit{Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy}, 108.}

The Naval Department formally retired only nine ships in Madison’s first term. This officially left the gunboat compliment at one-hundred sixty-five. However, by late 1811, the maintenance and manning challenges revealed the small value of the ships that remained. Only sixty-three gunboats remained fit to launch from their respective ports of debarkation in 1812.\footnote{Tucker, \textit{Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy}, 33.} Maintenance was limited and far more expensive than Jefferson or his cabinet had predicted, and the value in shallow-water gunboats was not universally valued by naval practitioners. Local commanders had few options except to retire or cannibalize inferior vessels in their command to keep their more reliable ships afloat. Madison’s unwillingness to develop his naval forces would leave the nation vulnerable during the upcoming war.

\footnote{Latimer, \textit{1812: War With America}, 54.}
\footnote{Smith, “For the Purpose of Defense: The Politics of the Jeffersonian Gunboat Program,” 87.}
\footnote{Tucker, \textit{Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy}, 108.}
\footnote{Tucker, \textit{Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy}, 33.
Madison’s perspective on naval defense remained ardently opposed to the idea of any wartime preparations. Paul Hamilton made limited progress in his attempts to develop the fleet on the eve of war, but only succeeded in procuring stores of timbers. Nevertheless, Madison’s shared insistence of Jefferson’s view that the Atlantic changed the nature of warfare with Europe made him confident in the nation’s security. Were the Navy to fail, Madison believed he could always rely to the militia as “the great bulwark of [American] security.”

The Army stagnated in equal or greater measure to their seafaring counterparts. Historian’s note with near-uniformity that Madison entered the war with ground forces that were unformed and nearly unemployable. The first stages of conflict support this conclusion. In this period just before the war, the army remained below its authorized end-strength, and little was done in the years prior to mitigate the inherent weakness in force development. In 1809, the U.S. army had recovered some of its Federalist size as a response to the defense crisis brought on by the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair. When Madison took office, his regular force was composed of 6,977 soldiers. Congressional allocation allowed this force to grow to over 10,000, but this goal was not reached. Socioeconomic conditions undoubtedly contributed to poor army and navy recruitment. In a highly mobile society, incentives were inconsequential as pay was not competitive with the commercial world. Militia sometimes paid more than the army, and the civilian economy often surpassed both. Factors that might otherwise have offset the army’s

357 Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 566.
financial disincentives such as *esprit de corps*, professionalism, and advancement were been expunged under the Jefferson Administration. Although Madison expressed his fear that war was inevitable in his first administration, Madison did not advocate recruitment incentives until 1813.\(^{358}\) To the contrary, with his Secretary of War’s recommendation, Madison allowed a reduction to the effective strength of army officers. He rolled back the temporary growth of the officer corps, and contributed to the instability of the prewar military. Officer totals declined once more under Madison, this time from 533 to 299.\(^{359}\) The army as a whole remained moderately stable, with a minor decline to a combined total of 6,688 men in 1812.

While the American army stagnated, British forces grew. Napoleon had fueled a British military response that grew into a force of 250,000 redcoats by 1812. Even without augmentation by Native American or Canadian allied forces, the British army could theoretically support and deploy a force larger than Madison’s most optimistic coalition of militia and regulars.\(^{360}\) Though recruitment challenges proved decisive in the war, American army mismanagement also damaged its efficiency. Jefferson’s military system had changed the army’s functional capabilities, as such the command structure was not clear within the force. Company grade officers, particularly from the academy, proved inconsequential to the outcome of any major battles or campaigns. Command during Madison’s first administration fell to individuals trusted by the Jefferson administration such as Henry Dearborn and James Wilkinson. A confidant of Jefferson

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\(^{359}\) Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 566.  
\(^{360}\) Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War*, 150.
and Madison, Major General Wilkinson was in charge of the peacetime army. He had escaped charges for his participation in the Burr Conspiracy under the previous administration, but he was covertly paid as an informant for the Spanish government in these years. Their incapacity to manage the army nearly destroyed the peacetime force in 1809.

Many critical offices remained unestablished or vacant – such as the quartermaster, paymaster, or ordnance officer – crippling the military capabilities through lack of logistical preparation. The Quartermaster’s Department had been dissolved under Jefferson, and remained defunct until 1812.\(^{361}\) In this department’s absence, there was no practical solution to supply or equip the military at all of its frontiers -a problem made worse by recruitment surges before the war. The nonexistence of contracting and ordnance officers aggravated the procurement challenges and left the army without means to provide arms and weaponry. Jefferson’s civil-centric ideal had replaced the practical functions of the army, but even when facing war, Madison remained unconcerned by the military’s functional shortcomings. The army’s serviceable deterioration became blatantly evident in 1809 when it nearly destroyed itself through a short march to a new outpost.

Madison was in-office for almost three months when, in April of 1809, he ordered General Wilkinson to reposition the Southern army away from the city of New Orleans. Its new destination was less than one hundred and fifty miles north, towards Natchez, Mississippi at Fort Adams. Wilkinson was familiar with the territory, as his forces had

\(^{361}\) Peters, ed., *Public Statutes at Large*, 696.
transited between New Orleans and Fort Adams for over a decade. At 2,063 personnel, Wilkinson’s army constituted nearly a third of the entire regular forces. The march would not be an inconsiderable distance, but it was in friendly territory during peacetime and navigable by river if necessary. Wilkinson had used the army to administer civil affairs in New Orleans shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, and his interests were firmly entrenched in the city. The march would test his ability to administer the basic functions of a military force.

Wilkinson received the order to march from the War Department in April, but neglected to act for six months. His personal holdings in the city needed to be released before he would move his force. He directed his forces to remain in place during the summer while he closed his business holdings. Soldiers were employed in the movement and security of Wilkinson’s warehoused goods within the city. Between April and September, Wilkinson’s only progress in preparation for the march was the gradual shift of forces to an encampment outside of the city.

Maladies and starvation ran their course through the encampment for months outside of New Orleans. The majority of their wait rested on Wilkinson’s decision to close his private affairs in the city and march north. Treatment of the sick was rudimentary without medical supplies. The encampment also suffered from inadequate medical staff for treatment and triage of sick soldiers, with only one civilian doctor brought in from the city of New Orleans. Even before the encampment began to march, Wilkinson had lost 127 men to disease and desertion, and 553 were infirm due to disease.

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362 Ripley, Tarnished Warrior, 259.
363 Ripley, Tarnished Warrior, 252.
It is worth reiterating that these deaths occurred at a time of peace when Wilkinson’s personal stores remained on military guard within the city. When the army arrived at Fort Adams after the march through the wetlands, the supply line remained inadequate and more soldiers died upon arrival. The desertion epidemic matched the deaths for one additional reason; the office of Paymaster General remained shuttered in Madison’s first term. Thus, Wilkinson’s inability to pay vendors matched the limitations he faced in his attempts to pay his men. Including those who died on arrival, the army lost nine-hundred and thirty-one personnel – approximately half of the Southern army – from death and desertion to accomplish peacetime march of under one hundred and fifty miles.

The march to Fort Adams constituted the worst loss for the American army since the Battle of the Wabash two decades earlier. The scale of the army’s collapse was surpassed only by the worst defeats of the War of 1812. Wilkinson’s only enemy at this time was his inability to act, an ill-begotten logistical structure, corrupt leadership, and an insurmountable gulf in military experience throughout his force. Wilkinson was brought up on charges again for this incident 1810, the second time in his career. He was cleared of all charges in his second courts-martial, though Madison’s faith in his abilities never recovered fully from this event. The Congressional Committee could not find sufficient evidence to indict Wilkinson. Yet, when the 11th Congress Adjourned, they left without plans to investigate a solution.\footnote{U.S. Congress, Abridgment of the Debates of Congress, from 1789 to 1856, Vol 4: 248.} Nor did this event change Madison’s rhetorical proclivity for a militia force.
West Point demonstrated once more that the army did not prepare for war under Madison. At the start of his term, the Military Academy maintained a limited emphasis on artillery and engineering – the latter as a product of Jefferson’s system. The majority of cadets devoted their time to the liberal arts, which had become more central to officer training curriculum. In 1808, the Academy produced fifteen officers in their various capacities. This figure steadily declined each year until only seven cadets were commissioned in 1812. Commissions steadily increased in the wartime years that followed, but the prewar preparation was insufficient to fill the nearly three-hundred officer positions retained in the army of 1812. Madison and Jefferson knew the martial weakness of their officer corps as early as 1807. In their correspondence, Jefferson agreed with Madison’s assessment of the officer corps and labelled them unfit for war.365 Later, and after corresponding with Jefferson, President Madison changed the West Point administration and curriculum.366 His intention was to educate private citizens as a means to put the academy’s academic rigors towards a republican end. In 1810, Madison made a proposal before Congress to consider an increase in the breadth of curriculum to include more professors teaching military subjects to repair what he described as a “decayed” military state.367 The effort was ineffectual, and the continued budget shortfall prevented the commission of any officers in 1810. Madison did interact through promotion of the sciences in his new curriculum as patron of its philosophical society, an

effort the echoed Jefferson’s participation with the cadet community. One further, drastic, change to the academy Madison considered was the near-dissolution of the school entirely. Together with William Eustis, his Secretary of War, Madison considered recommendation for its dissolution to Congress. President Madison’s West Point Academy was plagued by his political dilemma, and his inconsistent approach to officer training meant that no method existed to produce professional soldiers in quantity before the War of 1812.

In October of 1811, Madison resolved to wage war against Great Britain. This prior-planning makes his decision not to prepare a military force all the more conspicuous. Eustis was challenged by the uncertainty of what forces would deploy to execute the executive strategy Madison coordinated. In late 1811, the army remained less than half of the force Washington had used against Western Pennsylvania insurrectionists 18 years earlier. This recruitment dilemma continued even though the American population had grown to nearly 8 million by 1811. The composition of the force remained small and disjointed, the cause of Wilkinson’s failed march had neither been identified nor corrected by Congress. New recruits were incentivized more by local pay than federal incentives.

Madison addressed Congress each year from 1809 to 1811, and always mentioned the probability of war with either Great Britain or France. He knew of the federal military’s deterioration and mentioned it within these address, in 1811 this message

\[ \text{Wagoner, Mr. Jefferson’s Academy, “An Educational Interpretation,” 145.} \]
\[ \text{Wagoner, Mr. Jefferson’s Academy, “An Educational Interpretation,” 145.} \]
\[ \text{Weigley, History of the United States Army, 566.} \]
\[ \text{Tucker, The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy, 103.} \]
began to recommend action suggested Congress increase munitions stockpiles. In November of 1811, and for the first time, Madison recommended to Congress they begin “filling the ranks” through recruitment incentives.\(^{372}\) This did not signal his acquiescence towards regulars as the basis of national security he still pushed for the readiness of the “great body” of militia he hoped to employ.\(^{373}\) In October of 1811, Madison’s war plans to surprise Great Britain still developed around a force that did not exist.\(^{374}\) Madison spent the next nine months pushing for additional funds to prepare his invasion force.

Madison and Eustis’ shared plans for the invasion of Canada were crucial to their strategic vision of a rapid war. Canada was the only credible target against the British Empire with its vastly superior naval force. Madison’s strategy was delineated after its failure. At the start of the war, he hoped to “intercept the hostile influence of Great Britain over the savages, obtain the command of the lake on which that part of Canada borders, and maintain cooperating relations with such forces as might be most conveniently employed against other parts.”\(^{375}\) Possession of the North American continent would be a strong diplomatic leverage against Great Britain. Through conquest, Madison might have created a reverse embargo on Great Britain akin to Napoleon’s Continental System. However, the first step was to intercept the forces of Great Britain in Canada, an optimistic goal given the state of army readiness in 1811.

\(^{374}\) J.C.A. Stagg, \textit{Mr. Madison’s War}, 79.
Canada’s forces in 1812 were, as Madison believed, susceptible to the inertia of an American invasion. The region had a population of only 500,000—a fraction of the 8 million in the United States.\textsuperscript{376} Canada could not bring her entire population to battle at once, and the British did not retain a large Canadian defense force. The United States army had a single northern theater to concentrate their invasion. Whereas, the British were forced to defend the entire border. The cultural climate in Canada provided another exploitable weakness American forces. Madison’s assessment of an easy conquest of local populations was not unfounded. Canada shared a population with the United States that included “settlers from America of dubious loyalty.”\textsuperscript{377} As Alan Taylor demonstrates in his \textit{Civil War of 1812}, both regions had similar populations, interests, and systems of trade. The local populace was expected to rally behind the American force as liberators.\textsuperscript{378} British leadership acknowledged that the local Canadian governments were “better disposed to the enemy.”\textsuperscript{379} Defection of Canadian militia units and civilian insurgency left British garrisons incapable of movement even in friendly territories. Native Tribes in the Northwest were hesitant to immediately support the British forces. The majority of Native tribes were officially allied with Great Britain, but initially refused to heed Tecumseh’s call for support.\textsuperscript{380} Their alliance was a decisive part of the strategy for both nations in the conflict.

\textsuperscript{376} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 67.  
\textsuperscript{377} Taylor, \textit{The Civil War of 1812}, 171.  
\textsuperscript{378} Taylor, \textit{The Civil War of 1812}, 9.  
\textsuperscript{379} Adams, \textit{The War of 1812}, 16.  
\textsuperscript{380} Stagg, \textit{Mr. Madison’s War}, 205.
The circumstances of Canadian conquest were described by Jefferson in his assurances to Madison as a “mere matter of marching.” Madison was confident that he could draw upon his regular force and an additional 100,000 militia troops. Madison and Jefferson both failed to realize that the military assembled in 1812 lacked the requisite competence and infrastructure to seize the opportunity presented by a mere northern march. Confident in his military circumstances, Madison had Congress declare war on Great Britain on June 12, 1812. This measure passed the Senate by only six votes.

Madison and the War Department moved forward with their strategic plan to surprise and overwhelm British forces in Western Canada the moment war was declared. The Campaign of 1812 was designed to take place at three junctures along the northern border of Ontario. The first invasion point was planned to move from Detroit into the Northwest, the second would more from New York to take the Niagara Peninsula, and in the East, the thrust of the invasion would seize Montreal. Success at any of the three invasion points promised to alienate and isolate the others from either supply, trade, or reinforcements.

Critical to the success of these plans, the United States needed three separate invasion forces assembled and ready to strike before the British cold mount a defense. Madison underestimated the “logistical, military, and administrative problems” caused by the triangulation of expeditionary forces. On each front, recruitment goals remained unattained, and the assembled armies relied on militia and state volunteers for the bulk of

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382 Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War*, 114.
their soldiers. Congress restored the Quartermaster General’s Office on the eve of the war with Great Britain, and the new office scrambled to understand their role while building supply lines across more than one-thousand miles of uncontrolled frontiers.\footnote{Adams, The War of 1812, 50.}

The War Department began the complex development of a regular force, while the Western army was ordered to march from Detroit into Western Canada. Madison had chosen Brigadier General William Hull to lead this initial thrust in April of 1812. Upon appointment, Hull doubted that the promised two-thousand soldiers would be sufficient for his assignment.\footnote{Stagg, Mr. Madison’s War, 191.} By July, Hull’s army was only four-hundred regulars strong. By necessity, the remainder of his army was assembled from militia volunteers and augmentees from the local governor. Inexperience permeated the ranks of the militia, and the new force was untrained when they began their march. The ratio of regulars to militia mirrored Harmar’s army before the Battle of the Wabash twenty years prior, and its haphazard assemblage predicted the outcome. Madison confidently expected Hull’s force in particular to make “easy and victorious progress” through Western Canada.\footnote{Madison, “1814 Annual Address.” accessed on 3 Mar 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29454.} This was not to be the case.

General Hull dedicated his initial command efforts to the development of a supply train for his march. Soldiers in his unit lacked uniforms and supplies from the beginning. Others in his force arrived without weapons.\footnote{Latimer, 1812: War with America, 63.} As he attempted to rectify his forces’ shortfalls, he subdivided his force into various garrisons, to include Detroit, and made
attempts to train the new force. When faced with his first favorable opportunity to March North, he instead continued road construction in a frontier project he had envisioned since 1808.388 This road project served as little more than a distraction and perhaps a return to what Jefferson had inculcated in his military system of public projects. Hull was ordered to take Fort Malden from British General Isaac Brock. He abandoned the road project, made a brief incursion into Canada, and retreated to the safety of Detroit without a fight with the British forces. Hull had demonstrated American weakness, and neither the Natives nor locals rallied behind the retreating American forces. This allowed Brock to mobilize his forces and pursue Hull back to Detroit with a force of 700 British regulars and militia and six-hundred Natives.389 The British had little ability to sustain a siege against Detroit, and Hull expected four-hundred American reinforcements. Nevertheless, General Hull surrendered his entire force to the British. Although it is probable that his surrender was a nervous breakdown caused by his fear of a Native massacre. The fact remains that he surrendered Madison’s main hope for conquest. General Brock burned Detroit and kept most of the Michigan Territory detached from the United States for the remainder of the war.

Hull’s defeat indicated the level of inexperience that plagued the army. Hull himself had limited experience as a military leader, and less as a politician for militia forces. Personally unqualified, his appointment alone is evidence that the army of 1812 was not prepared for the contracted war ahead. The War Department kept no formal organizational structure, and as such the roles and responsibilities of commanders were

388 Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War*, 196.
not clear between militia, volunteers, and regulars. In May of 1812 Henry Dearborn began to develop a formal establishment of the army command structure, but it was not implemented in time for the campaign. In June, the same month war was declared, an organizational concept was outlined to be implemented at a later date. Hull believed his army’s discordant command structure was allowed by the War Department in a way to “create distrust.” In his one-month campaign, Brock struggled to exert control over state forces and militia officers. The militia knew their role was critical to the success of the campaign, a symptom of the undermanned regular structure, and negotiated leadership roles within the system. Disquiet forced Hull to yield to militia requests and appoint three militia Colonels in his command. He also lost the loyalty of his younger regular officers, such as Winfield Scott, who resented Hull’s decisions on campaign. The Western army was destroyed because of systemic failures that ranged from logistics and training, to leadership and composition.

The loss of Hull’s force was detrimental to the invasion of Canada, but not fatal. Henry Dearborn, Jefferson’s Secretary of War, was placed in charge of the Northwestern army on 27 January, 1812. Dearborn was a veteran of the Revolution. Though credentialed, Dearborn’s failure to provide promised reinforcements and direction contributed to the loss of the first campaign. When Hull began his offensive, he did so under assurances that Dearborn would provide relief via concurrent campaigns and reinforcements. Prior to Hull’s loss, Dearborn elected to halt his reinforcements. Dearborn’s defense of his actions to President Madison was that he did not know he was

390 Stagg, Mr. Madison’s War, 198.
391 Latimer, 1812: War with America, 55.
in charge of the Northern campaigns.\textsuperscript{392} Jefferson’s Secretary of War had become a liability for the Madison administration after the first conflict with the enemy.

The administration still anticipated successes against Niagara and Montreal. Generals Van Rensselear and Henry Dearborn were charged to lead the next campaigns. Political and military leadership attempted to rebuild battlefield capabilities.\textsuperscript{393} In his attempt at Western reclamation, General William Henry Harrison achieved the United States’ only major land victory against Britain in 1812. At the Battle of the Thames, Harrison expected a pitched conflict but could not form lines with his regulars. In the midst of his regulars’ deterioration, Harrison’s mounted militia charged the field without orders and routed the Native and British forces. The militia proved capable when appropriately motivated; it was the uncontrollable nature of these forces that continued to challenge the regulars. Eleven years after Jefferson had first disbanded cavalry units, and three years after Madison had completed the elimination of the dragoons, it was mounted forces that proved their worth on the battlefield.

The second thrust of the American army into Canada occurred two months after Hull’s defeat, this invasion was at the Niagara frontier. Unlike the fall of Detroit, Major General Steven Van Rensselear trained his forces with two additional months to prepare his forces for the campaign. Madison and Eustis were anxious to retake the initiative and continue their assault before winter. Van Rensselear commanded a larger force from Fort Erie that totaled sixty-four hundred soldiers, a figure nearly triple that of the British and

\textsuperscript{392} Adams, \textit{The War of 1812}, 11, 24.  
\textsuperscript{393} Adams, \textit{The War of 1812}, 80.
Indian forces nearby. Van Rensselear’s campaign culminated in his initial attempt to cross into Canada in the Battle of Queenstown Heights. As with Hull’s campaign, logistical shortfalls handicapped Van Rensselear’s army. When the battle began, American regulars crossed the river and seized the garrison at Queenstown Heights. Early success became later catastrophe when the remainder of American forces refused to cross into the Canadian side of the river, this was compounded by the shortage of boats that delayed the army’s crossing. Rensselear’s militia refused to obey his commands out of loyalty to their function as defenders of the state, rather than offensive federal forces. He was powerless to provide aide to his advance forces. The initial British rout became a rally that resulted in a brutal British counterattack. Over 250 soldiers were killed, to include Captain Zebulon Pike, before the American army succumbed and surrendered to British forces. For the American forces in the Niagara region, the defeat was total. Van Rensselear was transferred and resigned from service shortly after the event of Queenstown Heights. His successor, Brigadier General Alexander Smyth, remained in charge of a force large enough to continue the campaign in November. Yet his forces were also unwilling to cross outside of New York in support of offensive operations. The assault on Queenstown Heights proved that American battlefield success was possible with a superior force and surprise, but organizational inexperience across all levels of command blunted the outcome. As Washington had claimed at the end of his administration, militia (with their common disciplinary lapses) proved wholly unsuitable as the central force of a military campaign. After the Niagara campaign, Madison

acknowledged that the regulars in the North were “unexperienced soldiers” who “must daily improve in the duties of the field.”

The final hope for American success against Great Britain in 1812 was the invasion in the Northeast at the British City of Montreal. The Western army had been captured at Detroit, the Niagara force immobilized and mostly destroyed, the campaign victory rested on success in the Eastern Theater. Major General Henry Dearborn personally led this third and final thrust of the army. Dearborn’s attempt was the last force available, and not prepared to march until the beginning of winter. Though the plan against Montreal was well-defined, Dearborn hesitated to move his forces without explicit direction from the Secretary of War in each instance. The delays caused by this approach had inhibited adjustments and reinforcements to Hull and Van Rensselear. Dearborn marched North with thirty-five hundred regulars and twenty-five hundred militia. This constituted the strongest concentration of federal forces in 1812. The capture of Montreal was the chief war aim of the War Department. This would control the St. Lawrence River and negate the victories in the West as the British supply system withered. However, after a few weeks without conflict, Dearborn abandoned his campaign and retreated to winter quarters in the United States. This was the last opportunity the United States had to seize the offensive in 1812, and Dearborn earned near-universal condemnation for his decision to end the campaign without a battle. The

former leader of Jefferson’s “essentially unmilitary” War Department had proven himself unable to delegate or execute a successful offense.\textsuperscript{399}

Albert Gallatin, Madison’s Secretary of Treasury, blamed “inexperienced officers and undisciplined men” for the collapse of the 1812 campaign.\textsuperscript{400} Gallatin’s statement was rational in light of the year’s defeats. Taken individually, there is little to praise about the performance of the federal army in the 1812 invasion. General Hull possessed a military advantage at the start of his campaign in the Northwest, but his poor leadership abilities caused the army to fragment and surrender. General Van Rensselaer and Smyth were political appointees at best, not professional soldiers or militaristic enough to force militia compliance. The “undisciplined men” of the militia system turned victory on the field into defeat because the army lacked a method of command and control.\textsuperscript{401} The attempt at Queenstown Heights, the only major battle on Canadian soil, failed at the hands of its military leaders and the soldiers.

Madison complained at the news of the army’s defeats that “the reputation of our arms has been thrown under clouds.”\textsuperscript{402} Dearborn’s personal leadership shortfalls demonstrated the dire straits of army readiness. Moreover, Madison’s admission of army failure acknowledged the lack of “discipline and habits” that he anticipated would improve “daily” in 1813.\textsuperscript{403} Forced to confront the failures of the militia, Madison realized by the end of 1812 that reversion to a Federalist-style, the army would be

\textsuperscript{399} Mahan, \textit{Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812}, 281.
\textsuperscript{400} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 89.
\textsuperscript{401} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 89.
\textsuperscript{402} Madison, \textit{Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States}, 28.
\textsuperscript{403} Madison, \textit{Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States}, 28.
necessary. He stated “public safety may have no other resource than in those large and permanent military establishments which are forbidden by the principles of our free government, and against the necessity of which the militia were meant to be a constitutional bulwark.” Army leadership failures, attrition, and winter, forced them to conclude campaigns into Canada for the remainder of 1812.

In 1813, the War Department attempted to regain momentum without the material advantages of local sympathy or surprise. American forces were stopped in equal measure to the year prior, but army reforms and transformations began to create results not wholly calamitous. The war in 1813 extended beyond the Canadian border. It grew to a new front in the South as conflict arose with the British-allied Creek tribes near the Mississippi Territory and in West Florida. The two-front war created a challenge, but augmentation by the British Navy in the South present another. The British mobilized more resources in the winter of 1812-1813, and began to blockade American shipments in a number of regions. This extended to many of the frigates which were blocked into their respective harbors. The American war effort also suffered as the British first confronted the American military within the states themselves. This year tested the militia-centric defense scheme.

The first signs that the army had begun to constitute the centralized military system envisioned by the Federalists was in its ability to increase recruitment and retention. Political will and public support enabled the first rounds of changes to the recruitment system. A 20-month enlistment with a moderate $16 enlistment incentive

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improved recruitment figures in the war. The army nearly doubled the personnel it
mustered in 1812 to approximately 22,000 men assembled by spring.\textsuperscript{405} This figure was
below the figures requested by Congress and signed into law by Madison. Nevertheless,
it demonstrated much improved effort to form regiments suited to the martial purpose at
hand.

Winter allowed the War Department to reorganize under its new commanding
officer, Major General John Armstrong. The officer corps had developed competent
officers separate from the Academy cadets, the conspicuous example can be found in
Winfield Scott.\textsuperscript{406} As manpower improved, the army began to train new recruits.

Madison approved of and implemented a plan to create additional regiments. Armstrong
further subdivided his command into branches that allowed a clear efficient command
and control structure. The Quartermaster and Commissary Corps, established less than a
year prior, were allowed to develop further in 1813 to meet the reorganized army’s needs.
Congress increased the uniform clothing allowance increased to $2,015,884 in 1813, over
10-fold the previous year. The amount allocated to the Quartermaster General and his
staff increased 3-fold to $2,300,000. The funds given to the new department were
matched only by the amount provided for army subsistence. These types of reforms
brought the military closer to Washington’s army, and the functionally distinct
Jeffersonian military system was slowly replaced.

\textsuperscript{405} J.C.A. Stagg, “Enlisted Men in the United States Army: 1812-1815, a preliminary survey”,
\textit{The William and Mary Quarterly} 43, No. 4, (1986), 621.
\textsuperscript{406} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812 A Forgotten Conflict}, 123.
The Battles of 1813 illustrates persistent weaknesses of the army structure as it adjusted to a real war. Only, a few moderate successes were achieved in 1813. The campaign for Canada began with successful counterattacks to British assaults in the western forts Stephenson and Miegs. In both instances, the forts were unassailable to the British forces and the British occupation of Detroit and the surrounding region was minimized. In the case of Fort Meigs, in Ohio, British victory was denied only because twelve-hundred American militia reinforcements prevented the siege through a pyrrhic frontline charge. With support from the Navy, the Americans were able to take British outposts at Fort George and York with ground forces four and two times as large as their respective opponents. In the Battle of the Thames, William Henry Harrison brought a force of twelve-hundred Kentucky volunteer cavalry. The militia’s “impetuous” actions broke the British lines in a frontline that saw the death of Tecumseh and earned high-praise from Madison. These major victories for the army in the northern theater of 1813 proved that it could win if it had lucrative advantages, but is still could not control the militia.

The remainder of 1813 was marked by the same type of mismanagement that tainted the previous year. The continued push into Canada via the Niagara was thwarted by a British force of 750 versus the American invasion of 2,500 soldiers. At the Battle of Stoney Creek, the British gained access to the unguarded encampment and massacred the superior American force. Both Generals in charge of the invasion, Winder and Chandler,

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were dismissed.\textsuperscript{410} The remainder of the army retreated to Fort George, by then the Northern army was almost entirely militia. Fort George was the lynchpin for the Niagara region. As pay and supply failures began to mount, most of the force dissolved. A major detachment of six-hundred was destroyed by an Indian force, the final move that forced the Americans to abandon Canada West of Montreal. The force that abandoned Fort George, left the facility intact but burned the nearby town of Newark. This gave the British a foothold and allowed a basis for British raids into the United States. The subsequent counterattack by British forces thrust into the United States. Fort Niagara was taken, and the disheartened militia forces refused to mount resistance to British incursions. Among the towns the British destroyed in 1813 were Buffalo, Black Rock, and Lewiston.\textsuperscript{411}

The collective abandonment and depopulation of the army in the Niagara region left only Montreal as a target of invasion in 1813. Armstrong and Dearborn directed Wilkinson and Brigadier General Wade Hampton to lead the eastern assault with almost 12,000 soldiers. The British knew that Wilkinson was a questionable leader for the American forces, but he had been accused of controlling Jefferson, therefore he never fully lost his favor.\textsuperscript{412} Even the British commander Isaac Brock noted reports that Wilkinson’s Louisiana Militia refused to work under his command. These reasons, though unlisted, likely revolved around his failed peacetime march, his contested oversight of New Orleans, or his association with the Burr Conspiracy. Regardless of

\textsuperscript{410} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 137
\textsuperscript{411} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 139.
motive, General Wade Hampton also refused to work alongside General Wilkinson. Hampton complained about the inexperience of his regulars. Nearly all of the recruits in 1813 were new additions to the force. At the Battle of Chateauguay, Hampton probed an encampment of eighteen-hundred British and retreated with minimal losses. Wilkinson’s campaign fared far worse. In his own march, he brought a force of seven-thousand towards Montreal. He engaged three-thousand against twelve-hundred British at Crysler’s Farm and was defeated with disproportionately high casualties, Wilkinson abandoned the campaign, retreated to winter quarters.\textsuperscript{413} The American force under Wilkinson was once again thoroughly destroyed and the campaign for Montreal in 1813 concluded.

In the South, the war against the Creeks began with a massacre of Fort Mims, in Southwest Florida Territory. A small encampment and the regular forces of the United States Army were destroyed by the Red Sticks connected to the Creek. This left the local militia for defense and offense. The local militia, and eventually much of Tennessee would stage successful invasion and wage victorious war without the assistance of regulars in 1813. In the Chesapeake region, the British Navy had almost doubled off the eastern coastline. The British successfully sailed into waterways and began to destroy towns and cities in Maryland and Virginia. The militia proved ineffective against the incursions of the British forces. The principles of massed militia were less-effective than predicted by republican defense schemes because the militia were un wholly regulated.

\textsuperscript{413} Stagg, \textit{Mr. Madison’s War}, 209.
In December of 1813, Madison recognized that losses in the war required military reforms on the United States. The British had demonstrated “increased spoliations” and “predatory incursions” that challenged American military weakness. Madison continued to reorient his laissez-faire approach to the military profession to one of advocacy. He stated that “military discipline and instruction” were required for the army to survive the war. Madison’s speech marked a republican acceptance of military pragmatism and a rejection of Jefferson’s military system. Richard Kohn describes a metamorphosis of republican ideals that allowed a federal military to exist in 1801. It was 1813 that the Federalists began to truly win the case for a permanent and capable institution. Madison advocated for developments in “warlike preparations applicable to future use.” Faced with abysmal defeats and squandered opportunities of two years, Madison sought a military legacy that would secure a “permanent safety” to the Republic.

The war in 1814 did not bring the sea-change Madison had finally reconciled with, or that he hoped the reforms would produce. The strategic picture worsened with each month, and together with the political establishment, he became anxious for an amicable peace. The ambitions of the government, were curtailed by the reality of two

[418] Stagg, Mr. Madison’s War, 348.
years of steady losses.\textsuperscript{419} The military’s options were limited, and several states formed an independent Confederacy to overcome federal discrepancies.\textsuperscript{420} Worse still for Madison, Great Britain effectively won the Napoleonic Wars in 1814. Madison risked exposure to a large force of European veterans against his already-unsuccessful American frontline.

In the midst of these strategic failures, the reforms of previous years proved fruitful for the army on the battlefield. American forces achieved parity with British during several individual engagements. American offensive operations in were isolated to the unique Southern region and an attempt in the Niagara region. In the Niagara, Madison tasked a new leader for the final invasion attempt. Major General Brown was unbridled by civil policy, focused only on the invasion from the start of his post in early 1814. The preparation alone demonstrates that the army learned valuable lessons from previous defeats. The army spent the summer months maintaining and augmenting recruits under Captain Winfield Scott.\textsuperscript{421} Scott was one of many cadre of new, young officers rising in the ranks to replace the embarrassed officers of Jeffersonian retinue. No longer focused on public works, the military was focused solely on battlefield. When the orders came to march, Brown kept a careful eye towards his supply system, but he did not let it halt his movements. The supply and contracting system had developed to a level of independence wherein the army of 1814 could support a mobile force. The composition of Brown’s army matched the successful structures of the Federalist Armies in the 1790s.

\textsuperscript{419} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 231-253.

\textsuperscript{420} Adams, \textit{The War of 1812}, 279.

\textsuperscript{421} Stagg, \textit{Mr. Madison’s War}, 400.
He had twenty-four hundred trained regulars augmented by one-thousand militia troops. Brown’s army successfully seized a small British outpost near Fort Erie without significant resistance. He met the bulk of the British army in the region on July 5 at the Battle of Chippewa.\textsuperscript{422} The Battle was short, evenly matched, and ended with the British receiving nearly twice the casualties of the Americans.\textsuperscript{423} Under new leadership, the adequately structured and supplied U.S. army was able to defeat the British for the first time. This Battle was followed by a series of engagements wherein two separate British Armies under Generals Izard and Drummond attempted to throw back Brown’s forces. They succeeded only in forcing Brown to halt his invasion, while he retained control of Fort Erie after two assaults. A professional federal army stood as a threat to equal British forces for the first time.

Apart from the Niagara Campaign, there were no other major American offensives in the North. Mounted militia in the far West performed successful raids, but these were limited in effectiveness and scope. Conversely, the British began raids into the American interior. They grew more successfully devastating on the American coastline. With the collapse of political support for war in the Northeast, the British moved with into Northern Maine mostly unopposed.\textsuperscript{424} Where the British army encountered militia, it quickly swept through to include New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. In Maryland, Baltimore was preserved from the British conquest due to enemy choice of targets rather than by American defenses.\textsuperscript{425} A larger force of barely

\textsuperscript{422} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 284.
\textsuperscript{423} Hickey, \textit{The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict}, 290.
\textsuperscript{424} Latimer, \textit{1812: War with America}, 347.
\textsuperscript{425} Latimer, \textit{1812: War with America}, 328.
trained regulars and militia was quickly broken outside of the city. In this instance, a professional military was necessary but was not large enough to concentrate beyond the Niagara. The most notorious British advance was the conquest of Washington D.C. and the surrounding areas. With an army of four-thousand, the British crushed the seven and a half thousand-man militia army that formed to defend the capitol. The Battle of Bladensburg was a crushing defeat, parodied locally as the Bladensburg Races due to the speed of the militia retreat. Militia and an untrained military proved incapable of fielding the defensive response Jefferson and Madison had previously envisioned. British incursions on American soil ended the myth of American impregnability and caused a paradigm shift in Madison’s concept of national security. The failure of the gunboats to stop invading forces was made far worse when the state militias proved completely ineffectual in the majority of their encounters.

In the South, a far different story had developed from the end of 1813 to 1814. Instead of a series of unconnected defeats, General Andrew Jackson defeated the Creeks in Florida and expanded American territory through conquest. Without corps of regulars, his militia forces proved adequate to invade and repel the forces, perhaps because of the personal incentive of land conquest afforded to his troops. Of note, approach to militia discipline involved the public execution of disobedient soldiers and a heightened expectation of performance, but he also commanded militia with more personal motivations and no expectation of a federal core. Thus, the militia in the South had been adapted to overcome the enemy with their current system.

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426 Latimer, 1812: War with America, 193.
It is worth reflecting on the sum of militia actions on the battlefield. Militia were successful when well-led and under the control of competent leader as in Jackson, they might have been a reliable defense force as Jefferson and Madison envisioned. Many militia bills had tried and failed to formalize militia training for this purpose from President Washington onwards. However, neither competency nor control were abundant at war. When the regulars were trained, they fought with more success than amassed militia. Militia cavalry also proved a useful augmentation to the wartime army, for they filled a role unestablished in the regular army. The regulars rebuilt this function too in the war. In the Northeast, the militia participated in the local politics and their support waivered with the war itself. Some regions became a soft target for British incursions with conscientious objectors and restriction on interstate support.\footnote{Taylor, War with America,193.} Jefferson’s theory of defense, that the militia would be the heart of protection was based on a fallacy that the theoretical militia force would be centralized and under full disciplined control of federal forces. This never played out as either he or Jefferson had envisioned.

Jefferson’s gunboat militia was not an effective defense at all in the war. It is doubtful even the mass numbers of smaller ships could have dissuaded the British fleet. The regular navy proved incapable of success in 1813. The navy had no recourse to the vast number of British ships. Thus, they remained consigned to attacking British merchant vessels across the world. In these instances, the Navy was successful but outmatched in efficacy by private raiders. In ship duels, American frigates continued to outperform their British counterparts. Historians have minimized these victories due to
the deceptive underclassification and overcrewed American ship system. In the case of the *Enterprise*, three British ships coordinated a successful attack to destroy the American vessel.

Each encounter with the British in the War of 1812 shaped the next. Though Madison had avoided the development of a profession of arms, the war forced his hand. Each battle and campaign revised the idea of what the military needed to function. No longer was the army’s focus on scientific explorations or the common education of American engineers. After the burning of Washington D.C., fear of a standing army was replaced by a popular fear of a foreign standing army. The American inability to penetrate Canada despite numerous advantages in 1812 taught the administration that preparedness of the regular force was needed before the war began. Supply shortages and recruitment demonstrated the value of the support offices Jefferson eliminated. The cavalry and artillery were reinstated as vital components of a healthy regular force. Overall, the British had tested and shattered the theory of defense brought into practice by Thomas Jefferson. After the Treaty of Ghent was ratified in 1815, the army was reformed into a traditional, regular force. Winfield Scott inadvertently described the military metamorphosis when he claimed that his training in 1814 was designed “to turn civilians into soldiers.” Nearly ruinous defeat at the hands of the British energized the force to reinvent itself and develop “for half a century” with its newfound political support.

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428 Smith, *For the Purposes of Defense.*
CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

James Monroe was elected in 1816 as the fifth President of the United States. His election signified the end of the continued reforms of the military system in the Early Republic. He was a cabinet member under Madison, but deviated and disagreed with his predecessor’s trust in the militia system. In Monroe’s case, he had served under Madison as both Secretary of State and Secretary of War, but took a different tack in his inaugural address on March 4, 1817. His recommendation to congress was a bold rejection of the previous military system and a return to the Federalist vision envisioned by Washington. Like his predecessors, the President acknowledged that distance from Europe and the Atlantic Ocean provided protection—but he minimized its value after the War of 1812. Monroe now recommended the army and Navy “be kept in perfect order,” and where possible the militia be kept on a “practicable footing.”432 His priorities were clearly described. He developed the professional military in its wartime capacity. He did not do this as a rejection of the pragmatic Jeffersonian internal developments. In fact, when he called these projects unconstitutional for the military, he simultaneously requested that Congress take action to legalize a department or means to improve the nation via federal roads and canals.433 Thus, the military was separated from the job of interior developments and allowed to continue to develop its capacities as a martial force under Monroe. Monroe’s system reestablished the traditional military envisioned by the

433 Monroe, First Inaugural Address, 1.
Federalists and made room for Jefferson’s civic goals. Thus, Monroe hoped to install a system of defense that he envisioned: “when finished … will be permanent.”\textsuperscript{434}

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