

Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps: Progress and Prospects

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From its earliest beginnings in 1819, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) has prepared citizen soldiers for leadership in the Army, and later in the other branches of the US military. In this paper I survey the conflicts in which the Army participated from the early 19th century to the present day and the concomitant changes in training provided to Army ROTC cadets. I then examine the current threat landscape and the challenges the Army will face in the next few decades, and propose modifications to the current ROTC curriculum that will better prepare cadets to face these challenges both as junior and senior officers.

The instruction that ROTC provided to cadets did not evolve in a vacuum. The very existence of the program was the result of a particular set of sociopolitical circumstances. **The events of military historical significance that shaped curriculum included not only wars, but also the structuring of institutions responsible for training officers, the passage of legislation, and the allocation of funding to support instruction.** Furthermore, ROTC is not a traditional academic department, and its curriculum has always been more than what is taught in classrooms. Curriculum includes instruction in military science as well as practical elements such as mentorship, training exercises, and unit organization.

Due to organizational issues Army ROTC struggled to train cadets according to curriculum and meet quality control standards through the 1950s. As I discuss below, the program initially produced officers that did not measure up to Officer Candidate School or military academy standards. However, these issues were mitigated by a series of major reforms implemented in the mid-1980s. **In my assessment, the most substantive development thus far was the establishment by Gens. Richardson and Wagner of a central organizational structure for ROTC, Cadet Command, which ultimately raised and standardized commissioning standards.** This transformed ROTC into the source of competent officers for the active army that had been desired since the 1950s.

I also argue that if the Army is to remain an effective fighting force in the years to come, the most significant changes in ROTC curriculum lie ahead. There is an old saying that "generals always fight the last war." However, officer training today needs to address emerging challenges in an dynamic and increasingly high-dimensional battlespace. Specifically, **greater emphasis must be placed on strategic thinking, including building long-term relationships with communities and cooperating with civilian organizations around the world.**

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1 The historical context of the American military tradition and the development of ROTC

1.1 The Westphalian order and “conventional warfare”

The year 1648 marked the end of the Thirty Years’ War in Europe. During this war, and for well over a millenium before, nations were not the primary entities that raised and used armies to fight wars. Instead, conflicts were largely the domain of organizations like the church, and more often, individuals with the means to hire and supply soldiers. Fighting forces were often not constituted entirely of citizens who always fought under the same flag; they consisted in large part of mercenary soldiers led by captains who would fight for different sides as they pleased. At the end of the Thirty Years’ war, the Treaty of Westphalia established the primacy of nation-states in the business of waging war (McFate, 2019). Since then, interstate wars, i.e. conflicts where forces from different nations engage each other with roughly comparable weapons to fight over control of territory, have become what we consider “conventional war.” The conflicts that the United States engaged in from the Revolutionary War through the middle of the 20th century were largely conventional wars, and this is reflected in the structure of the American armed forces and the training of its officers.

1.2 Pre-ROTC: the Revolutionary War through the War of 1812

The early United States had a strong and justifiable distrust of large standing armies. During the Revolutionary War, Americans were faced with the challenge of using a military consisting largely of nonprofessional soldiers to provide for the national defense. Though the Continental army emerged victorious from the Revolutionary War, traditional antimilitary sentiment and suspicion of professional soldiers meant that the position of the military was not elevated in the new government and its leader, Gen. George Washington, assumed a civilian position rather than that of military governor or monarch. Many American civilian and military leaders were British-educated and trained, and the United States shared with Britain the feature of civilian control of the military. The parameters within which the military could be used to achieve specific political and economic goals were decided in relatively narrow terms (as compared to contemporaneous European rivals) by civilian leaders at strategic and even tactical levels (Neiberg, 2009). It was thought that officers who were essentially civilians with some military training would temper anti-democratic sentiments potentially harbored by career officers, safeguarding against any totalitarian urges of the latter (Cress, 2017; Neiberg, 2009).¹ Though the militia system was responsible for some key successes during the War of 1812, such as at New Orleans, several critical military failures including an inability to protect Washington, D.C. showed that the disorganized, nonprofessional military left a great deal to be desired. However, Americans were still reluctant to

support a large federal army.

1.3 Beginnings: 1819 through the Civil War

In 1819, Alden Partridge, formerly the head of the US Military Academy at West Point, established the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy in Norwich, VT to train effective citizen-soldiers. Partridge proposed a model for training capable leaders, wherein able-bodied men would attend academic institutions and study civilian subjects while also receiving military training. He envisioned students who were civilians at their core but possessed the military knowledge and leadership ability necessary to serve as soldiers on short notice if and when the need arose. Several other institutions were created in this mold between 1819 and 1861: Lafayette College, PA; Oak Ridge Military Academy, NC; Kemper Military School and College, MO; and Marion Military Institute, AL. Indiana University and the University of Tennessee introduced mandatory military training as well in 1840, as did the Virginia Military Institute and The Citadel (SC) (Gainey, n.d.). The majority of these institutions were in the South rather than the North. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Union Army found its officer corps woefully understaffed. It needed roughly 20,000 officers to lead units in the initial stages of the war, but could muster only 1,500 West Point and Norwich-trained cadets loyal to the Union. This meant that the vast majority of leadership positions passed to relatively inexperienced civilian officers whose only qualification was that they led local militias. These men had little to no formal military training, and their battlefield performance was inconsistent. A select few, such as Robert Gould Shaw, led their troops with admirable skill, but most were unaccustomed to the discharging the many duties of a commanding officer in a battlefield environment (Neiberg, 2009).

Disappointingly, the performance of most West Pointers was similarly poor. Union leadership changed hands several times, but armies were often bested by numerically inferior Confederate forces. Career officers were inexperienced in leading large numbers of troops, as the situation demanded. Their tactical training in accordance with the writings of Jomini, a prevailing military theorist of the late 1830s, proved of little use on the contemporaneous battlefield. Technological innovations such as rifled arms and Minie projectiles changed the infantry-cavalry dynamic, and the railroad and the telegraph facilitated faster flow of men, materiel, and information than ever before, rendering their training nearly obsolete. This would be the first of many examples in which officer training failed to keep pace with the changing nature of warfare, hindering effective leadership. Furthermore, the insularity and elitism that developed among the West Point- and Annapolis-trained professional officer corps led them to distance themselves from the civilian world, nonprofessional soldiers, and their enlisted men, whom they viewed with distrust and suspicion (Karsten, 2017; Neiberg, 2009; Skelton, 1986). The most effective Union leaders, Gens. Grant and Sherman, did not fit in with West Point's military aristocracy, but were instead markedly more comfortable with the civilian world and

their enlisted troops.

Though the war ended in Union victory, the abundance of tactical failures prompted discussion of military reform. The aloofness and contempt that careerists felt towards all other groups, combined with their lackluster performance during the Civil War did not endear them to the American people, and so expansion of the military academies was not a popular proposal. Instead, there was a renewed interest in promoting military education and training at civilian institutions. In December 1861, Rep. Justin Morill (R-VT), particularly impressed with the performance of Norwich-trained officers in the Union Army, had introduced legislation known as the *Land-Grant Agricultural and Mechanical College Act*. A friend of Alden Partridge, Morill proposed the sale of public land in each state to fund the establishment of public educational institutions that provided instruction in both classical subjects and tactics. This military training was a new addition to a Whig bill that had failed several years previously, and enabled its passage by Congress in July 1862 (Neiberg, 2009). Previously, only West Point and a small number of colleges produced engineers, but land-grant colleges came to be centers of engineering education in the United States, producing far more graduates each year (Williams, 2009).

Morill hoped his plan would facilitate the military training of men who were at their core civilians rather than aristocratic career officers. Students did not incur a military service obligation, the land-grant institutions remained civilian in nature, and all training decisions were made locally, consistent with American conception of military service at the time. However, decentralization was ultimately to its detriment: there was no concrete mission or organization, material support from the army, or required coursework. Training was performed in an ad-hoc fashion according to the preferences of the instructor. In the early days this was typically a professor of another subject who had served in the Civil War. Training was often merely the simplest drill and ceremony, i.e. basic marching, and included no instruction in tactics, arguably the most important part of practical military training. Despite the poor quality of the curriculum – or the lack thereof – there was no tangible impact on the Union army because programs were established too late to contribute enough officers for the war effort (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

1.4 Postbellum reforms, the First World War, and the establishment of modern ROTC

Immediately following the war, Congress took steps to improve the quality of training offered through colleges. In 1866, an allowance of twenty officers to teach military science at land-grant colleges was provided; in 1870 equipment and small arms were authorized for issue to the programs; and a decade later, retired officers were permitted to serve as instructors. In 1893, the allowance of officers to serve as instructors was increased to 100, promoting the growth of training programs. By 1900, more than forty private and public institutions offered instruction in military science, with the most support at land-grant colleges, where a year of training was often mandatory. However, despite this

marginal increase in the Army's involvement in these programs (which provided instructors and equipment), the main issue of the lack of curriculum standardization persisted. The excessive emphasis on drill and ceremony continued to hinder real progress in training capable leaders. Furthermore, the officers assigned to these posts were frequently unfit to teach, often due to inexperience; most were only lieutenants, as the Army wished to keep more experienced officers in positions where they could serve in wars against Native American populations. The Army had permission and was accorded limited resources by the War Department to support these programs, but did not view their administration as part of its responsibilities. This was largely because these programs had not been designed as a pathway to a commission in the state militias or the Regular Army, which was understandable due to inconsistent instructional standards.² This lack of opportunity demotivated students, thus the often mediocre quality of these programs, permitted by a lack of standardization, trapped nascent citizen-soldier training programs in a vicious cycle (Neiberg, 2009).

In the years preceding American involvement in the First World War, the Army began to display an increased interest in drawing upon college students to populate the officer ranks. Studies by the general staff assessed the main issue to be standardization, which could be addressed only through centralized control. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Leonard Wood tested summer camp training models that would ultimately form the basis for ROTC. The first five-week trial in 1913 involved training high school and college students in tactically relevant subjects, including squad patrolling, drill, and marksmanship. These were ultimately expanded in 1915 to a series of camps, training men aged 20-40 in groups of up to 16,000, and ultimately produced 90,000 officers (Coumbe & Harford, 1996; Vollmar, 1976; "World War I and II," n.d.). On the civilian side, the president and dean of the Ohio State University pushed for a national minimum standard for military training in colleges, on which continued funding to land-grant colleges would be predicated. This standard included two years of disciplined drill, three weekly sessions of instruction in military science (including small unit tactics) and annual field training each year. Cadets completing this program were to receive commissions as reserve officers. The reforms of the postwar era culminated in the the creation of the ROTC in its current form (called "ROTC" for the first time) by the ROTC bill. This bill, drafted largely on the Ohio State proposal, became a part of the National Defense Act of 1916, which also established the three-component model of the Army (active duty, reserves, and National Guard) that we know today (Neiberg, 2009; Vollmar, 1976).

By March 1917 ROTC units were established at thirty-eight colleges, twenty-eight of which were land-grant, with a total enrollment nearing 40,000. In 1918, however, with an urgent need for more manpower, the Army effectively replaced ROTC programs temporarily with the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) in order to quickly train commissioned and non-commissioned officers. This experiment in accelerated training drew to a close with the end of WWI, and renewed interest in the longer-term training provided by ROTC. ROTC was for the first time adequately staffed with trained officers and supplied with proper equipment. The National Defense Act of 1920 provided a further guarantee of material and personnel support, and the number of institutions hosting units increased rapidly (Vollmar, 1976).

College administrators petitioned the Office of the Army Adjutant General to establish a unit at their institution, agreeing to hold a four-year military science course. The first two years would be a basic course (three hours/week) and the latter two constituted an advanced course (five hours/week), available to cadets who wished to commission. Each unit was assigned a senior and a junior officer, course materials, uniforms, equipment, and stipends for senior cadets. The military science curriculum for the basic and advanced course was divided into theoretical and practical subjects. Units were associated with a particular branch (e.g. infantry, artillery, engineer), with some colleges sponsoring several unit types. All units, regardless of branch, studied a set of basic subjects including military history and law, drill, marksmanship, map reading, tactics, and other essentials. Each branch type had additional courses; for example, the infantry basic course offered current military policy and military organization (theoretical), as well as drill and ceremony and orienteering (practical). Interestingly, 40% of officers commissioned through ROTC did so through infantry branch units (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

Despite improvements in standardization and overall curriculum quality, ROTC programs suffered from a number of shortcomings. Facilities and equipment for training were often in short supply, and student-instructor ratios were too high to provide effective training. Growing isolationist and pacifist sentiments in the 1930s produced an environment of apathy and sometimes open hostility towards ROTC programs (Coumbe & Harford, 1996; Neiberg, 2009; Vollmar, 1976). Finally, a lack of motivation and urgency (because the stated goal was training reserve rather than active duty officers) was emblematic of programs of this era; instruction focused on the theoretical rather than the practical, and training proceeded at a pace too leisurely to be effective. Taken together, these forces produced officers who lacked core competencies in military skills, were unfamiliar with the rigors of military life, and ultimately were uninspiring leaders.

The root cause of these issues were that the increase in standardization relative to the early years was still a far cry from the central command structure needed to mass-produce capable lieutenants. Army leadership was still not completely invested in the task of training officers through ROTC, as evidenced by issues at every level. The officer assigned to oversee national-level ROTC matters was rotated out too frequently to gain and draw upon his experience in the position. The country was divided into nine corps (intermediate-level divisions) responsible for overall operations of each unit under its purview. The leadership of each corps was to inspect each unit and conduct annual training camps. Unfortunately, corps leadership was typically understaffed and could not discharge these duties fully. Furthermore, since units were associated with specific branches, the heads of fifteen basic branches were also responsible for the curricular and summer camp aspects of the program. The division of duties between branch and corps leadership was often unclear, and elements of the program fell through the gaps. Clearly, a nominally uniform curriculum did not ensure uniform training and commissioning standards – a minimum of administrative structure was still needed for curriculum to be useful (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Marshall created a special office to oversee reserve and ROTC affairs, but this office lacked significant authority to implement changes, leading to little improvement. The 1935 Thomason Act attempted an ad-hoc extension of the ROTC curriculum, which took the form of post-commissioning training in an environment that forced participants to gain experience rapidly. 1,000 ROTC-trained officers were assigned a year of active duty, and at the end fifty of them would receive commissions in the regular Army. This improved the situation only marginally since 1,000 was only a small percentage of the total number of ROTC graduates each year (Coumbe & Harford, 1996; Neiberg, 2009).

1.5 The Second World War and Korea: ROTC's trial by fire

World War II was the first conflict that drew heavily upon ROTC-trained officers. Most reserve officers had been commissioned through ROTC units. Gen. Marshall assembled the Army around 80,000 reserve officers (from a pool of more than 100,000 trained in the interwar years), which enabled the rapid expansion from a peacetime to wartime force. A sample of five combat divisions showed that 34% of all officers, 50% of battalion commanders, and 69% of company commanders were reservists. Importantly, having a large number of reserve officers was not enough to ensure that units had sufficient and effective leadership; not all ROTC-trained officers were equally capable. Those who proved effective battlefield commanders had gained valuable experience in the field after they commissioned, rather than during military science classes (Lyons & Masland, 1959). Coumbe and Harford (1996) note that in general, fresh ROTC graduates were “qualitatively inferior” to graduates of Officer Candidate School (OCS); an Army Ground Forces (AGF) staff communication noted that “the three months of intensive training undergone in an officer candidate school under war conditions [were] far superior to the full ROTC course” (p.19). AGF studies abounded with less-than-stellar reports of ROTC graduates’ tactical and troop-leading abilities. In their assessment, the much lower-intensity training, diluted over four years, was insufficient preparation. Enlisted men tended to receive more training than the ROTC graduates who were to lead them, which was unacceptable. Consequently, the advanced course was suspended for the last three years of the war in favor of OCS. The basic course was not halted in order to permit rapid postwar resumption of ROTC programs (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

At the end of WWII, attempts to restore the full ROTC program were met with limited success. By fall 1945, units were fully reactivated at 129 colleges. However, ROTC was not immune to the cutbacks associated with demobilization in the immediate wake of the war. Its unregimented command structure (no single staff that oversaw the national program) and connection to the reserves rather than the active Army reduced access to training resources and experienced officers who could serve as capable cadre, thus deteriorating its effectiveness (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).³

Furthermore, the tremendous administrative burden placed on instructors at the unit level, despite taking away valuable

teaching time, did not translate to effective organization. There was no formal process for screening and selecting cadets to enroll in the ROTC Advanced Course or train at camp in the summer (“Advanced Camp”).⁴ Metrics used to evaluate cadets’ leadership abilities and officer potential were subjective. The training curriculum was only as good as methods to measure cadets’ officer potential, and ROTC left a lot to be desired in this regard.

The passage of the Selective Service Act in 1948 increased ROTC enrollment significantly. That same year, two events broadened the goal of ROTC beyond the reserves. The first was the inception of the Distinguished Military Graduate Program, which offered commissions in the active Army to select ROTC-trained officers. The second was the conclusion (by the Assistant Secretary of the Army Gordon Gray) that ROTC should become the primary means of producing regular Army officers. The Gray committee’s assessment was based on the facts that college-educated officers were thought to be essential in an increasingly dynamic battlefield that required the use of advanced technology, and were cheaper to produce than those commissioned through the service academies. The Service Academy Board agreed with this proposal. They also suggested that the entire ROTC training model be reevaluated: rather than providing cadets with narrow instruction relating to a particular branch, they should receive a broader education in military science. After graduating from college and commissioning, lieutenants would attend a branch-specific Officer Basic Course (OBC) where they would learn specific skills for their position in the Army. This was a noteworthy departure from prewar programs (Coumbe & Harford, 1996). As discussed previously, 40% of cadets in the interwar years graduated from infantry ROTC units, but this was inconsistent with the tooth-to-tail ratio (combat arms vs. support arms distribution) even for WWII, let alone later conflicts. McGrath (2007) shows how in general the percentage of combat troops typically remained between 30 and 40% from WWII to 2005 (p.66). Thus, training so many cadets to perform the duties of an infantry officer (an even more specific category than combat arms, which in total did not reach 40%) made little sense.

1.6 The Korean War through the early 1960s

At the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, the government opted to declare only partial mobilization, and thus the Army used ROTC rather than OCS to provide officers. Because students enrolled in ROTC could avoid conscription, enrollment spiked from 98,000 in 1948-9 to 153,000 by 1952-3. Many colleges requested units in the hope that their students could defer the draft.

But the events of the Korean War and the performance of ROTC graduates during it did not spur any significant developments. Rather, the momentum of prewar studies fueled continued reform efforts. A civilian-military partnership in the form of the Army Advisory Panel on ROTC affairs laid out a plan for broader military education consistent with recommendations of the Service Academy Board. This curriculum, known as the General Military Science Program

(GMSP), was aimed at ensuring a minimum common standard of military knowledge for all cadets irrespective of branch. The GMSP focused primarily on small unit tactics and required 480 hours of on-campus military science instruction, 180 in the Basic Course and 300 in the Advanced Course. The Basic Course emphasized introducing cadets to the basics elements of the Army, institutional organization, and drill fundamentals. The Advanced Course covered practical elements of military tactics. Summer training camp between the junior and senior years of college (“Advanced Camp”) provided more tactical training and an opportunity to practice individual skills. The GMSP was trialed in 1952-3 and offered as a second curriculum option (alongside the traditional curriculum) in 1953-4. More than 80% of units had opted to use it by 1960, and branch-irrespective education slowly supplanted the remaining branch-specific summer training. However, civilian leadership at universities expressed concerns that ROTC instruction required too significant a time commitment for a college student and was not academically rigorous. Lyons and Masland, two professors from the Army Advisory Panel, recommended course substitution, wherein students would take civilian equivalents of ROTC courses that were not explicitly military in nature, such as management. Many felt that the military-specific training mission of ROTC would be better served by intensive summer training camps modeled after the Marine Corps Platoon Leader’s Course (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

Though the Army felt that course substitution was acceptable, they believed that an extended relationship with the Army before commissioning was a key part of professional mentorship. Ultimately, a third curriculum alternative, known as the Modified General Military Science Program (MGMSPP), was developed. The MGMSPP designated the officer in charge of a ROTC unit as Professor of Military Science (PMS) to facilitate their inclusion as a member of the university faculty, and reduced the number of on-campus training hours in the Advanced Course by 30%. However, this did not satisfy critics’ complaints that the program was inflexible and not up to par academically. Meanwhile, activists’ efforts to eliminate compulsory ROTC participation at land-grant colleges began to take its toll. Since 1948, the Distinguished Military Graduate Program had allowed select ROTC cadets to receive commissions in the regular Army rather than the reserves. Since the mid-1950s, however, this program had begun to produce twice as many as West Point, and 75% of new lieutenants were commissioned through ROTC. However, the issue of competence of ROTC graduates still loomed large, and production fell 3-4,000 short of the target of 14-15,000 new lieutenants per year.

As had happened several times in the past, the fragmentation of ROTC organization and management, and the strong effect of localism on unit training and standards, were highlighted in a study by Army leaders. A reorganization that placed ROTC under the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) looked on paper like it would solve problems, but ultimately did little. In the meantime, the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964 instituted stipends for Advanced Course cadets as well as scholarships to entice students to enroll, and required Advanced Course cadets to enlist in the reserves and serve 6-24 months in active duty after commissioning. It also created Basic Camp, a six-week training in the

summer before the junior year, which allowed students who did not complete the two-year Basic Course to enter the program and commission with their peers (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

1.7 Curricular and organizational effects of Vietnam and the aftermath

ROTC bore the brunt of civilian opposition to the draft and the morality of American involvement in Vietnam in general. Vandalism and violence against ROTC and its personnel had effects on individual units; many institutions' decision to sever ties with the Army had effects on a large scale. However, total enrollment did not decline due to the establishment of new units at state schools in the Southern and Western US.

In 1969, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird established a committee to revise ROTC curriculum to temper opposition to the program. The Army introduced yet another curriculum, known as Military Science Core Curriculum / Option C which incorporated suggestions from Lyons and Masland. Option C further reduced the amount of on-campus instruction for the Advanced course to 120 hours, and allowed students to fulfill 46% of the total hour requirement with regular academic courses. Purely military subjects would become the domain of summer camp alone. Given that many ROTC graduates were already not performing satisfactorily with previous instructional models, the creation of Option C was clearly a grave mistake. Nevertheless, the Army pushed ahead with this plan, which was widely adopted by universities. This reduction in training only exacerbated existing problems of ROTC graduates' lack of command ability and proficiency in military skills (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

The early 1970s were challenging for all services due to the transition from conscription to an all-volunteer force. The motivation to join ROTC before was often the desire to avoid the draft, but that no longer weighed on students' minds. After Vietnam, this problem was brought into sharp relief: enrollment decreased by 75% from 165,000 (in 1967-8) to 41,000 (in 1972-3). Increased recruiting efforts did little to stem the flow. The problems of "adequate procurement" vs. "adequate military training" that Army ROTC faced during Vietnam were tackled by an open preference for quantity over quality. The thought was that the Army needed to have recruits before they could train them.

This crisis motivated the Army to introduce a new command structure to oversee ROTC as part of the "Steadfast" reorganization following the US departure from Vietnam in 1973. ROTC became part of the newly created Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and was subdivided into four regions, each broken down into further areas. A major issue that the reorganization hoped to address was the fragmented nature of Advanced Camp. Each region operated independently and inconsistently, leading to varying standards of preparation across camps and even within the same camp. It is important to note that ROTC was administered by the Deputy Chief of Staff of ROTC (DCSROTC), a staff officer within TRADOC – this meant that the DCSROTC did not exercise material authority over all ROTC units as the head of a *bona fide* command would. The authority of DCSROTC was too limited to truly overhaul the program,

and decentralized operation would continue for several years to come (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

Additional measures were taken to entice more capable students to join the program. Increased stipend and scholarship payments were authorized, and a number of optional training elements were introduced to the ROTC curriculum. Cadets were permitted to attend Airborne School (starting 1970); a Reconnaissance and Commando Doughboy (RECONDO) course as part of Advanced Camp (starting 1971); Ranger School (instead of Advanced Camp; also from 1970); the Army Orientation Training Program, later Cadet Troop Leader Training, in which cadets apprenticed as junior officers in the regular Army (starting 1971); and Air Assault and Northern Warfare Schools (starting 1979) (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).⁵

1.8 Cause for concern and attempts at curricular reform

In late 1973, the Arab-Israeli War brought to the fore concerns that newly commissioned ROTC graduates were not prepared for modern conflicts. Since the US had not directly fought a conventional war (massed force vs. massed force) in some time, the Arab-Israeli War demonstrated for the first time how modern weapons affected battlefield dynamics. Faster vehicles and more destructive weapons increased operational tempo and the degree to which units spread out on the battlefield. Consequently, even junior officers had to be both technically proficient (to work with complex weapons) and capable of leading effectively with minimal guidance from their chain of command. There simply was not time to consult commanders several levels up before making tactical decisions. The new and greater demands placed on young officers were a source of grave concern for the Army because ROTC – the main source of officers for the regular Army – was struggling to produce consistent results.

Thus, in the wake of American withdrawal from Vietnam, Army leadership resolved to address the issue of ROTC graduates' often-substandard performance. This led to the phasing-out of the old training format of lecture-demonstration-practice in favor of *performance-based instruction*. Each concept was subdivided into a series of individual tasks, each of which the student had to complete satisfactorily. The emphasis on codifying the hands-on, practical element of training was novel, and it was hoped this would ensure that each student was held to the same standard. In 1978 the Review of Education and Training for Officers (RETO) Board developed the Military Qualification Standards (MQS) system which became the universal curriculum for all four commissioning sources (West Point, OCS, National Guard OCS, and ROTC).

MQS set out a series of knowledge- and skill-based standards that officers were to meet at each point in their careers. The first standard, MQS I, specified the requirements for precommissioning training, and broadly resembled an amalgamation of the GMSP, the MGMSP, and the Option C curriculum. Coumbe and Harford (1996) describe the three parts of MQS I: military skills, professional knowledge subjects, and professional military education. Military

skills, of which there were 73, included all the basic tasks in which all lieutenants were to be proficient before they received branch-specific training. These tasks were divided into eleven categories: “drill and ceremonies; written and oral communications; inspections; operations and tactics; land navigation; first aid; physical fitness; weapons; nuclear, chemical, and biological defense training; arms training; and radio and wire communications” (p.93). Professional knowledge included information about Army organization, command structure, and doctrine, and was likewise divided into subject areas: “airland battle doctrine; combat service support; intelligence; command and control; leadership; low-intensity conflict; military history; mobility and survivability; soldier support systems; the total Army concept; and training” (p.93). Professional military education was just that: a series of courses designed to promote cadets’ professional development beyond the junior officer ranks by giving them a broader perspective. These courses were often in management or national security studies, and were taken (when possible) in civilian academic departments. For the military skills and professional knowledge subjects, the Basic Course consisted of a minimum of 90 hours of on campus training; for the Advanced Course, 120 hours were required.

In the early 1980s, TRADOC developed the Precommissioning Assessment System (PAS) as a means of objectively estimating leadership ability from the time of selection to commissioning. A critical part of PAS was the Leadership Assessment Program (LAP), designed to measure twelve elements of leadership ability: “oral communication; oral presentation; written communication; initiative; sensitivity; influence; planning and organizing; delegation; administrative control; problem analysis; judgment; and decisiveness” (Coumbe & Harford, 1996, p.96). LAP evaluated cadets’ responses to scenarios they were likely to encounter as officers in leadership positions. While the reforms embodied by MQS and LAP were significant, these curricular modifications initially had a limited impact on ROTC’s effectiveness because they were applied inconsistently. This was largely because the program still lacked a coherent command structure (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

1.9 Groundbreaking reforms of the 1980s and the holding pattern from the 1980s to the present day

ROTC, like other officer-commissioning systems, was a slow-moving institution. The effects of any changes that were made in a given year would typically be felt two to six years later. At the beginning of the 1980s, production numbers did not meet goals, and perhaps even more dismayingly, the quality of graduates was still not up to par. Coumbe and Harford (1996) note that the increased focus on defense under the Carter and especially the Reagan administration led to enlargement and restructuring of the Army, which resulted in increased demand for new 2LTs. ROTC, which already had to contend with decreased interest in the post-Vietnam era, the shift to an all-volunteer force, and the decreasing rate of college enrollment, was placed under further strain. TRADOC’s forecast of short-term production fell far short of the goal of 10,500 by 1985, and this crisis led to a series of critical changes in organization and leadership which

would ultimately save ROTC.

The first of these was the appointment of Gen. William Richardson to the position of TRADOC commander. He decreased the production mission to more realistic levels (alleviating some of the pressure to prefer quantity over quality in commissioning new lieutenants) and changed the performance metric for ROTC units to their graduates' performance at their Officer Basic Course. He instructed the former PMSs of those graduates who failed to examine their records of how those graduates had performed as cadets, and determine whether they should have been commissioned at all. This encouraged unit-level leadership to better prepare their cadets so that failures down the road would not reflect poorly upon them. Richardson also understood that "the presence of a suitable role model counted for far more than curriculum content in the development of aspiring officers" (Coumbe & Harford, 1996, p.49). He focused on placing officers with strong records as instructors in ROTC units, rather than relegating underperforming or uncommitted officers to instructional duty. As occurred several times in the past, however, the diffuse structure of ROTC inhibited the efficacy of these reforms. After much disagreement by various entities about which command should oversee ROTC, Gen. Richardson made a unilateral decision to establish ROTC as a provisional command of TRADOC. Though a radical move, this was the long-needed first step to a truly effective command structure for ROTC.

A second major change was the appointment of Brig. Gen. Robert Wagner to the position of Fourth Region Commander, where he oversaw units across much of the western half of the country. Working closely with Gen. Richardson (several levels above him in the chain of command), Wagner ultimately introduced measures in the 4th region and eventually across the country that would replace the casual "reserve flavor" (regionalism, informality, and nonstandardized operation) with a more consistent and regular Army-type ethos.

Wagner discovered that many fourth-year cadets (about to commission) and many new officers both had poor grade point averages and performed poorly on tests of basic adult education. Furthermore, many even had civil convictions for felonies. He also found that Advanced Camp was highly nonuniform; while one region might focus on small unit operations, another region would focus on individual military skills. Moreover, the order in which two cadets within the same camp attended training was variable (e.g. one would train in individual skills first and then move on to small unit operations while another cadet would follow the opposite order, which did not make pedagogical sense). Additionally, standard evaluation mechanisms for leadership existed, but were not being used. Wagner called for increased funding for ROTC, which at the time received less than a quarter of the funds per student than West Point did for its cadets (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

Wagner began by improving recruiting efforts within his region using a new system he called Operation Goldstrike, which focused on redistributing recruiting funds to improve the quality of recruits. He further sought to reintegrate ROTC cadre into the mainstream of their respective university campuses, a position they had left during the anti-ROTC hostilities during Vietnam some fifteen years previously. Wagner realized that this, along with publicizing scholarship

opportunities, was crucial to attracting more capable and talented “scholar-leader” students (Coumbe & Harford, 1996, p.62). He then strictly enforced standards preventing students with low academic ability and criminal histories from joining the program. The success of Operation Goldstrike led to its implementation across the country.

Wagner then moved on to revamp training and assessment at Advanced Camp to make it more leadership-focused, replacing training in individual military skills with tactical training. Cadets were scored on their performance in the latter, enabling evaluation of their command potential. To eliminate the inconsistent order of training, Wagner introduced the staggered training schedule that Advanced Camp retains to this day.⁶ Cadets were randomly divided into ten regiments, each of which was further subdivided into two companies consisting of four platoons each. Each regiment’s start date for camp was two to three days after the previous regiment’s start date. Over the course of the six-week camp, training progressed steadily from basic skills to more and more complex tasks and tactics. The first phase tested basic military skills, and required cadets to demonstrate their land navigation abilities, identify and employ obstacles on the battlefield, respond to a simulated chemical attack, operate radio equipment at the company level, complete a combat water survival test, and complete a leader’s reaction course. The second phase was designed to build familiarity with various small arms, including the M-16 rifle, the M-60 machine gun, hand grenades, fire support systems (indirect artillery fire), armor, and anti-armor weaponry (LAW, Dragon, TOW assembly, use, and disarmament). A more advanced training exercise consisted of a confidence course with rappelling, a rope drop into water, and a slide-for-life into water and enabled instructors to test how cadets responded to stress; successful completion was rewarded with a RECONDO tab. The third and fourth phases served as a leadership laboratory where cadets were confronted with realistic combat scenarios and instructors could assess their command potential in various leadership roles under stressful conditions. The fifth and final phase involved company-level patrolling and allowed cadets to observe a simulated battle including many different elements, such as parachute-inserted and helicopter-inserted reconnaissance teams, helicopter air assault, and a combined tank and helicopter attack, among others. Each regiment concluded training with a capstone exercise that required cadets to utilize the skills they had developed over the course of camp. This took the form of a platoon field training exercise spanning four whole days that consisted of preparation, offensive and defensive operations, a raid, and a company-level fighting march. The success of this modified Advanced Camp prompted its implementation in the other three regions. Additionally, the rigors of Advanced Camp motivated ROTC cadre to hold additional field exercises beyond the one required each semester in order to better prepare their cadets. Wagner made similar improvements to Basic Camp, which was intended as a substitute for the Basic Course if cadets joined the program late. The phases of Basic Camp (general military skills, weapons training, a rope-based confidence course, combined arms tactics, and squad tactics) were similar in content to the corresponding phases of Advanced Camp (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

One of the most important (but also overlooked) elements of Wagner’s reforms was his creation of a unique ROTC

identity to increase *esprit de corps* among units under his purview in the Fourth Region. To forge this identity, he introduced martial language more reminiscent of the regular Army than the reserves, renaming detachments as battalions and areas as brigades. This served to simultaneously give ROTC a place within a larger organization and distance itself from its disorganized past. He developed unit names, patches, and slogans, and “instant traditions” that aimed to give cadets a sense of belonging to a much larger organization than the small units they saw at their schools.⁷ He also established a command structure for each unit with a cadre and cadet staff. The organization of the cadet staff replicated that of a battalion in the regular army, with a battalion commander, executive officer, and S-1 through S-5 staff officers. Battalions were divided into companies and companies into platoons, as appropriate to the size of the battalion. This gave cadets experience with the chain of command they would encounter in the regular Army. This structure has been retained in today’s ROTC units. Another mechanism Wagner used to emphasize unit identity was the establishment of the Ranger Challenge competition, another element of ROTC still present today. Each unit had a team of cadets who participated in a rigorous competition involving physical endurance and military skills such as marksmanship, orienteering, patrolling, and a road march (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

In 1986, ROTC was established as an independent command under TRADOC, providing it the command structure it had so desperately needed for seven decades. Wagner was appointed as its head, and it became today’s Cadet Command. Wagner continued his earlier efforts to establish traditions and a sense of identity for the nascent command, extending his reforms in the Fourth Region across the country, and adopted the customs of the Army’s regimental mess. Non-commissioned officers became the valued and respected stewards of the customs and traditions of the Army, which they passed on to cadets by enforcing standards in military bearing, drill, and other non-academic arenas. Wagner took special care to recruit as PMSs and Assistant PMSs only officers with sterling records and high chances for promotion. PMSs were instructed to participate in faculty duties (e.g. serve on committees) alongside their colleagues from traditional academic departments to soften attitudes towards ROTC on campus. Wagner also expanded upon his policies of recruiting and selecting better students as Fourth Region Commander, and implemented these throughout Cadet Command. He also crucially changed the Army’s approach to retaining cadets. Before his time as commander, the strategy to keep cadets in the program was to make the curriculum flexible and reduce requirements, including uniform standards. Wagner did an about-face, increasing time commitments and requirements, and insisting on strict discipline and adherence to training standards. He reasoned that only those cadets who remained in the program were truly officer material. The LAP from ~10 years before was expanded to sixteen dimensions (new dimensions: physical stamina, technical/tactical competence, mission outcome, and followership) and was for the first time used consistently to evaluate cadet leadership ability in the process of selecting cadets eligible to continue in the program. Cadet command easily met officer production quotas in the latter half of the 1980s. Taken together, the reforms of the 1980s made for an effective corps of officers by the time of the Gulf War in 1990 (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

Cadet command took advantage of the drawdown at the end of the Cold War to focus on further improving the quality of the lieutenants it commissioned; with reduced enrollment targets it could focus on quality rather than quantity. Officer production during the early 1990s fell short of production goals. Enrollment plummeted from 63,000 in 1986-87 to 30,000 in 1993-94 (Coumbe & Harford, 1996). Little data has been released about ROTC programs since the mid-1990s. Policies such as Don't Ask, Don't Tell affected enrollment on college campuses in the 1990s and 2000s, and numbers spiked in the wake of September 11, 2001, but non-DoD sources reveal that since 1997, ROTC has had relatively constant officer production rates of 2700-3500 commissions/year. Importantly, the curriculum and indeed the program overall has remained relatively constant from the mid-1980s to the present day (Moore & Swick, 2018).

2 The future of ROTC: preparing officers for a world in flux

It took until the mid-1980s for ROTC to develop an organizational structure that allowed effective instruction. Previously, improvements in curriculum did not materially affect the quality of ROTC graduates' skills. The command structure that enabled effective training of cadets has matured and grown stronger for 35 years, and we must now consider how to modify ROTC curriculum to ensure that graduates are prepared to lead the Army in modern conflicts.

2.1 The new threat landscape faced by the army

The primacy of Westphalian order spanned the vast majority of the globe and defined most conflicts from the mid-1600s through the 1990s. In the past few decades, it has been slowly but surely crumbling (Mattis, 2018). Starting in earnest with anti-colonial movements in the mid-20th century (e.g. Algeria), and increasingly often since the 1980s (e.g. mujahideen vs. Soviets in Afghanistan) non-state actors have begun to take the stage. This is not to say that nation-states will cease to exist; those such as the United States, many of our allies, and some of our rivals are here to stay. However, some countries are already dominated by powerful individuals, warlords, or criminal organizations; government control does not reach far beyond cities, if even that. Soon, many of these smaller countries may exist only on government letterhead. This means that our dealings with non-state actors will necessarily increase (McFate, 2019). To understand where the Army is heading, we must examine the **two types of conflicts the United States could potentially be involved in over the next couple of decades.**

The first – that which seems to have captured the imagination of the public and political leaders – **is a conflict with a peer- or near-peer-level force, most likely a state actor.** When I refer to this type of adversary as a peer-level force, I mean that their armament in the form of small arms, land fighting vehicles, naval vessels, aircraft, missiles, and other “conventional” weapons are of a caliber approaching those of our own. Experts believe that such wars, despite

their portrayal otherwise by movies and novels, will not simply look like WWII with modern technology (McFate, 2019). There will of course continue to be a certain fraction of engagements that proceed in the “traditional” way – large-scale assaults by infantry, armor, air and naval power – and these will be characterized by an increased need for rapid decision-making in the field. Much as the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 showed that more advanced technology gave rise to a more dynamic battlefield (Coumbe & Harford, 1996), we will find that more and more decisions need to be made rapidly in the field by junior officers rather than going up the chain of command to get tactical guidance. However, swapping out P-51s for F-35s, Jeeps for Strykers, and primitive bombs for drones and guided missiles does not provide a complete picture of a modern state-on-state war. Instead, if recent events are anything to go by, interstate wars will increasingly be fought in other dimensions of the battlespace as well (McFate, 2019). Vulnerabilities in computer systems will be exploited. Special forces’ use in covert operations will form a much more significant fraction of total operations than before. The support of the public for a war (or lack thereof), especially in democratic societies like the US, will be weaponized by enemies. In this internet-centric era information spreads like wildfire; whoever gets their message out most effectively often manages to convince the public of the veracity of *their* version of the story. Verifiability of enemy operations and plausible deniability of one’s own involvement in a region will become exhibits in the court of public opinion, which will ultimately do more to decide strategic outcomes than international courts. Will the public be stirred up by accounts of an event, real or otherwise, that shows their country under attack? Will they be willing to devote more troops to an unpopular war, or will they pressure their leaders to withdraw? We will have to engage in defensive and offensive information warfare to an unprecedented extent.

The second type of conflict is that involving non-state actors, who will exhibit tremendous variation in their military capabilities. Some will have less sophisticated weapons than us but may have the support of local populations (willing or unwilling); as we have seen, civilians are often not off-limits for these sorts of groups. Others, owing to the rapid pace at which technology is becoming commercially available, will have capabilities approaching that of a peer-level force.⁸ These adversaries may include groups fighting along religious or ideological lines, as well as those fighting for profit, territorial authority, or control of limited natural resources (Beebe & Kaldor, 2010).⁹

That our involvements in Vietnam, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq have not ended in strategic success, but arguably in bloody stalemate, is a clear indication that we cannot ignore this type of conflict, and must adopt a new cohesive strategy to tackle these problems. Special operations forces and information warfare (as discussed above in the context of conflicts with state actors above) will be essential parts of wars with non-state actors, but crucially, our involvement must also include elements that are not explicitly military – a concept that some strategic experts have dubbed “human security.” As described by Beebe and Kaldor (2010),

[T]he distinction between “battle space” and “humanitarian space” [is] dissolving rapidly and silently. Violence [is] deliberately directed against civilians and not against opposing forces [...] Human security is

about the everyday security of individuals and the communities in which they live rather than the security of states and borders. (p.3-5)

Social unrest brought on by conditions such as poverty, disease, crime, and the threat of violence can create breeding grounds for instability. This is different from traditional conflict in that these are “creeping vulnerabilities” rather than the sort of “kinetic threats” that our current forces are designed to handle (Lopez, 2008). Coalition involvement in Iraq, for example, sought to tackle some of these conditions. Take Basra, for example – we now know nearly two decades into the war that this effort was unsuccessful, partially because the number of troops was too small for this sort of peacekeeping operation (Beebe & Kaldor, 2010; McGrath, 2006). The military did not have long-standing partnerships with communities in the region to rely upon when they arrived, and the limited-commitment strategy followed by a surge of troops has been shown repeatedly to be ineffective. Perhaps more importantly, it is both impractical and inefficient to rely solely upon a US/coalition military force to perform such a diverse set of humanitarian/military missions as protecting children on their way to school from militants and criminals¹⁰; building relationships with local leaders at every level, from village-level to national; and engaging in public works projects to improve sanitation, commerce, and employment. There is a growing consensus that establishment of local security forces and especially civil-military partnerships are key elements in restoring stability to regions in crisis. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and companies often have inroads with local communities. Working collaboratively with NGOs and community leaders, as well as establishing direct relationships between Army personnel and community leaders around the world (in the spirit of T.E. Lawrence in the early 20th century Middle East¹¹), have been identified as an effective method for addressing human security issues.

2.2 Changes coming to the Army

Taken together, these projections for the nature of future conflicts suggest that the following major changes to Army organization, training, and operations may be in the pipeline (roughly in order of increasing importance):

1. **A focus on special forces skills.** Special forces (SF) are currently overdeployed because they are extremely effective, and they owe their efficacy to the fact that they are unconventional forces. However, they currently receive less than 2% of the national defense budget (McFate, 2019). Their increasing importance on the modern battlefield and high value-to-cost ratio (relative to fighter jets and aircraft carriers, for example) suggest that the military would do well to increase their size and perhaps invest in training “conventional” units to equip them with some subset of the skills possessed by SF units, e.g. survival skills, operating independently behind enemy lines with limited support.
2. **Establishing domestic security forces: training the trainers.** Another key skill of special forces units is

instruction. The Green Berets are known for their role in training foreign soldiers. This ability to act as “force multipliers” is valuable because it empowers local people to provide for their own national defense, ensuring there is not a security vacuum when US forces leave an area, and also alleviating the burden on American troops. It will be important to have a large number of American troops available to perform this duty (not just a small number of SF operators).

3. **Emphasis on tactical autonomy.** The increasingly rapid pace of events on the battlefield means that decisions must be made on-the-spot. The concept of “commander’s intent” – making decisions and adapting to changes in a manner consistent with overall strategy – is central to military decision making. The increasing importance of humanitarian-military operations will continue to put soldiers in close contact with noncombatants and require them to work with civilians in general. It is important for junior leaders to be capable of quickly assessing situations and making choices in accordance with commander’s intent that might affect the overall relationship the Army has with the community.
4. **Closer and longer-term relationships with NGOs and local communities** The Army has regional specialists, known as Foreign Area Officers (FAOs), who serve as attaches and political-military experts in particular areas of the world, and officers and soldiers who work in Civil Affairs (CA). Recruiting and training more FAOs and CA officers will be critical to developing trust with local communities and establishing close working relationships with NGOs.¹²

This is the direction that experts see our army heading in the future. The question now is how best to prepare officers to lead such an army.

The first two items are in my opinion better addressed by post-commissioning training because they are much more branch-specific. ROTC is a four-year program and will be limited in scope because it needs to provide officers of all branches with a suitably broad foundation. Improvements in the curriculum are therefore likely to have a greater impact on the last two items, so I focus on these.

2.3 Proposed revision to the ROTC training model

Cadets are currently taught only what they need to lead their troops as second lieutenants; current ROTC curriculum uses light infantry tactics as an instructional medium to teach leadership and tactics. Consequently, transitioning to senior positions requires officers to rapidly increase their ability to think critically about the bigger picture, which involves more than just tactics. This may be a contributing factor to the strategic atrophy Gen. Mattis refers to in his summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy (Mattis, 2018). I therefore **propose introducing newer elements**

of military strategy into the curriculum at the ROTC stage. The goal is to teach cadets how to understand and work within the parameters of commander's intent, to include elements of overall strategy such as (1) building *lasting* relationships with civilians around the world, and (2) cooperation with civilian organizations in regions of interest.

I propose a three-point plan to address this goal:

2.3.1 Broader education in military history

The military history class that is currently a part of the ROTC curriculum focuses on American military history, with roughly equal consideration given to each major conflict. We spend a lot of time on the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and other conventional wars. In contrast, the wars we fight today, and many of those we will fight tomorrow, will not be conventional. It is vitally important that we understand how our institution developed through time, but equally critical that we learn more about conflicts similar to those in which we will be involved.

I propose two modifications. We need to spend more time covering recent military history, including conflicts not involving the United States, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We would also benefit from extended discussions of our strategies during the Global War on Terror. We must also study conflicts predating the US, such as those in pre-Westphalian Europe as well as non-European conflicts, because these may offer insights into wars that were not waged between nation-states. Detractors of this approach may argue that these are irrelevant because modern technology has drastically changed the way we wage war, but war is about more than technology and materiel; it is fundamentally about people.

2.3.2 Grand strategy: from Clausewitz and Sun Tzu to Galula and Petraeus

Military theory is not currently a significant component of the ROTC curriculum. While older works' technical details may be specific to weapons and technology of the period, their ideas about grand strategy are timeless. We should consider non-Western works to gain a better understanding of other schools of thought. Two examples are Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and the Chinese essay *Thirty-six Stratagems*, which present tactics that can be applied to politics and civil affairs in addition to war. Study of these treatises will stand us in good stead during long-term, low-intensity wars where conflicts are not out in the open. Critical discussion of modern strategies is also essential. For example, cadets can analyze counterinsurgency strategies employed by Gen. David Petraeus. This might include proposing metrics to evaluate the efficacy of the strategy or alternative elements that might improve the performance of such a program. These discussions will ultimately help cadets understand the concept of commander's intent.

A major theme throughout the development of ROTC was the necessity of tools to measure cadets' learning and

command abilities, without which curriculum improvements were ineffective. Therefore, it will be important to evaluate cadets' understanding of commander's intent at Advanced Camp by observing their responses to open-ended scenarios. For example, cadets may perform platoon operations in an area with several different civilian communities (all played by actors), who may be hostile towards one another. They may be able to rely on a number of NGOs (other actors) who have existing relationships with the local people in order to work with these communities. Based on their understanding of commander's intent, cadets will have to choose which civilian communities to form alliances with at the risk of alienating rival communities. It is critical that officers become increasingly adept at leveraging the resources and expertise of allies and neutral parties alike in order to bring conflicts to a successful conclusion.

2.3.3 Civil-military operations: practical skills for building alliances

Gen. James Mattis insisted on cultural awareness training for his Marines before they deployed (Dickerson, 2010). Giving cadets a sample training for any region where the Army currently operates may be a good opportunity to demonstrate the components of such training and discuss how it helps soldiers and officers work effectively with local populations.

Secondly, since peacekeeping operations may be an important part of an officer's humanitarian-military duties, cadets may benefit from ride-alongs with law enforcement in areas where police have a healthy relationship with the communities they serve. This could provide cadets with excellent models of military/law enforcement-civilian interaction.

These elements could be incorporated into assessments at Advanced Camp by incorporating into each mission involving civilian communities a set of rules and customs (varying from one community to another) which must be followed in order to demonstrate good will and respect. This can be used to gauge cadets' ability to quickly learn elements of local culture, fit comfortably into a new environment, and set the stage for long-term partnerships with a community.

3 Lessons learned and a path forward

We have to train officers to lead in tomorrow's wars, not yesterday's. Examining the history of ROTC as an institution, I find that the core of the curriculum (drill and small unit tactics) has remained largely the same since the First World War, although standards were another matter. Reforms through the mid-1980s brought ROTC graduates' performance in line with West Point- and OCS-trained officers, ensuring a uniform commissioning standard. This was achieved through centralization of command and the institution of systems to measure curriculum retention/command ability and pinpoint issues for improvement. Now that ROTC has an effective command system in place to ensure performance, we must focus on how to make the curriculum more relevant to modern conflicts. I propose a three-step plan to

improve cadets' ability to make decisions within the parameters of commander's intent, which involves considerations such as civilian-military relationships. The increasing importance of interfacing with non-military organizations and communities means that ROTC, historically a program designed to train citizen-soldiers, is ideally positioned to make a significant impact on the operational readiness of the armed forces.

4 Notes

¹Those fearful of overreach by a large standing army and the influence of the military were vindicated by news of the Newburgh conspiracy in 1783 (Neiberg, 2009). Gen. Horatio Gates and a group of veteran officers from the Revolutionary War were disenchanted with Washington's civilian government, which they felt was excessively moderate and unconcerned with their financial problems. They plotted to take control of the government from civilians and build a more centralized and aristocratic political system, and were stopped only by Washington's personal intervention at their meeting in Newburgh, New York. Americans' fears of a junta and suspicion of a large standing army as the most significant threat to civil liberties intensified. Many civilians, including Thomas Jefferson, believed that civilian control was the only barrier that prevented totalitarianism from infringing on hard-won liberties (Cress, 2017; Neiberg, 2009). Constitutional controls to prevent military overreach were enshrined in the Articles of Confederation and all state constitutions, and eventually featured prominently in the US Constitution.

²Some units, however, performed admirably. The first Nebraska Cavalry, for example, served with distinction in the Phillipines during the Spanish-American war.

³In contrast, Navy ROTC was much more successful as it was no longer restricted to the reserves alone and produced active-duty officers (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

⁴Many units, already stretched thin, expended limited time and resources on cadets who would never commission; some found out three years in that they were ineligible for service due to medical reasons.

⁵Additional opportunities included Flight Orientation and Training (1982) and Russian Language (1983) (Coumbe & Harford, 1996). The Early Commissioning Program (ECP), Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP), and Guaranteed Reserve Forces Duty (GRFD) contracts also increased options available to cadets.

⁶The specific timings have changed but a staggered structure has been maintained.

⁷Wagner's renaming of units earned him the ire of traditionalists who felt such designations were reserved only for the Army proper. His efforts to instill esprit de corps were not positively received by many cadre, who did not see the purpose in these changes, which had an intangible but critical effect on cadets (Coumbe & Harford, 1996).

⁸(e.g. biotechnology tools like CRISPR, manufacturing using 3d printing of advanced materials)

⁹ (e.g. drug cartels)

¹⁰This was major point of discussion during the Bush Administration. Secretary of State Colin Powell and later Condoleezza Rice both expressed misgivings about having the military engaged primarily in police-like duties (Beebe & Kaldor, 2010). This is an important point: the Army then (and now) is not designed for such varied duties, but needs to become more flexible in the years to come by learning to work effectively with individuals and organizations with expertise in such operations.

¹¹Also known as Lawrence of Arabia.

¹²A noteworthy suggestion by McFate (2019) is moving these support arms (often relegated to the reserves) into active duty, and moving selected combat arms units (such as tank units who will perform their primary mission of engaging enemy tanks in open warfare only occasionally) to the reserves, i.e. changing the active component tooth-to-tail ratio.

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