

THE FORMATIVE YEARS 1783–1812

On September 24, 1783, four days after the signing of the Treaty of Paris formally ended the war, Congress directed General George Washington to discharge “such parts of the Federal Army now in Service as he shall deem proper and expedient.” For the time being, Washington retained the force facing the British at New York and discharged the rest of the continentals. After the British quit New York, he kept only one infantry regiment and a battalion of artillery, 600 men in all, to guard the military supplies at West Point and other posts.

The period leading up to this demobilization was a stormy one for the Congress. During the winter of 1782 the Army had grown impatient, and rumors that it would take matters into its own hands gained credence when several anonymous addresses were circulated among the officers at Newburgh, urging them not to fight if the war continued or not to lay down their arms if peace were declared and their pay accounts left unsettled. In an emotional speech to his old comrades, Washington disarmed this threat. He promised to intercede for them; in the end, Congress gave in to the officers’ demands, agreeing to award the men their back pay and to grant the officers full pay for five years instead of half pay for life. Demobilization then proceeded peacefully, but it was against the background of these demands and threats that Congress wrestled with a major postwar problem, the size and character of the peacetime military establishment. In the way of most governments, Congress turned the problem over to a committee, this one under Alexander Hamilton, to study the facts and make recommendations for a military establishment.

The Question of a Peacetime Army

Congress subscribed to the prevailing view that the first line of national defense should be a “well-regulated and disciplined militia suffi-

ciently armed and accoutered.” Its reluctance to create a standing army was understandable; a permanent army would be a heavy expense, and it would complicate the struggle between those who wanted a strong national government and those who preferred the existing loose federation of states. Further, the recent threats of the Continental officers strengthened the popular fear that a standing army might be used to coerce the states or become an instrument of despotism. The English experience with General Oliver Cromwell and his military dictatorship in the mid-seventeenth century still exerted a powerful influence over the political ideas of the mother country and the former colonies.

General Washington, to whom Hamilton’s committee turned first for advice, echoed some of these fears. He pointed out that a large standing army in time of peace had always been considered “dangerous to the liberties of a country” and that the nation was “too poor to maintain a standing army adequate to our defense.” The question might also be considered, he continued, whether any surplus funds that became available should not better be applied to “building and equipping a Navy without which, in case of War we could neither protect our Commerce, nor yield that assistance to each other which, on such an extent of seacoast, our mutual safety would require.” He believed that America should rely ultimately on an improved version of the historic citizens’ militia, a force enrolling all males between eighteen and fifty liable for service to the nation in emergencies. He also recommended a volunteer militia, recruited in units, periodically trained, and subject to national rather than state control. At the same time Washington did suggest the creation of a small Regular Army “to awe the Indians, protect our Trade, prevent the encroachment of our Neighbors of Canada and the Floridas, and guard us at least from surprises; also for security of our magazines.” He recommended a force of four regiments of infantry and one of artillery, totaling 2,630 officers and men.

Hamilton’s committee also listened to suggestions made by General Friedrich von Steuben; Maj. Gen. Louis le Bègue du Portail, Chief Engineer of the Army; and Benjamin Lincoln, Secretary at War. On June 18, 1783, the committee submitted a plan to Congress similar to Washington’s but with a more ambitious militia program. Congress, however, rejected the proposal. Sectional rivalries, constitutional ques-

THE NEWBURGH “CONSPIRACY”

Mutiny was in the air on March 15, 1783. Having suffered through years of deprivation, many soldiers were angry that the Continental Congress seemed unwilling to pay them their salaries or to fulfill pledges for postwar pensions. When Washington learned that the Army’s officers planned to meet to threaten the Congress, he decided to crash the party. Just as the meeting was about to begin, Washington entered the room and made a speech urging the officers to remain loyal. Seeing that many remained unswayed, he took out a letter, hesitated, and then reached into his pocket to produce a pair of glasses, explaining, “Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray but almost blind in the service of my country.” This simple act accomplished what his oratory had not. Ashamed and teary eyed, the assembled officers immediately pledged their loyalty to Congress. Mutiny had been avoided.

tions, and, above all, economic objections were too strong to be overcome. The new republic lacked even a rudimentary administrative and revenue base.

The committee thereupon revised its plan, recommending an even larger army that it hoped to provide at less expense by decreasing the pay of the regimental staff officers and subalterns. When asked, Washington admitted that detached service along the frontiers and coasts would probably require more men than he had proposed, but he disagreed that a larger establishment could be provided more economically than the one he had recommended. A considerable number of the delegates to Congress had similar misgivings; and when the committee presented its revised report on October 23, Congress refused to accept it. During the winter of 1783 the matter rested. Under the Articles of Confederation an affirmative vote of the representatives of nine states was required for the exercise of certain important powers, including military matters, and on few occasions during this winter were enough states represented for Congress to renew the debate.

In the spring of 1784 the question of a permanent peacetime army became involved in the politics of state claims to western lands. The majority of men in the remaining infantry regiment and artillery battalion were from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and those states wanted to be rid of the financial burden of providing the extra pay they had promised the men on enlistment. Congress refused to assume the responsibility unless the New England states would vote for a permanent military establishment. The New England representatives, led by Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, insisted that Congress had no authority to maintain a standing army, but at the same time they wanted the existing troops to occupy the western forts situated in land claimed by the New England states. New York vigorously contested the New England claims to western lands, particularly in the region around Oswego and Niagara, and refused to vote for any permanent military establishment unless Congress gave it permission to garrison the western forts with its own forces.

The posts that had been the object of most concern and discussion dominated the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. (*See Map 13.*) Located on American territory south of the boundary established by the peace treaty of 1783, the posts were in the hands of British troops when the war ended; but by the terms of the treaty they were to be turned over to the United States as speedily as possible. Congress agreed that a force should be retained to occupy the posts as soon as the British left. The problem was how and by whom the troops were to be raised. A decision was all the more urgent because the government was in the midst of negotiating a treaty with the Indians of the Northwest. As Washington had suggested, a sizable force “to awe the Indians” would facilitate the negotiations. But the deadlock between the New England states and New York continued until early June 1784.

Finally, on the last two days of the session, Congress rushed through a compromise. It ordered the existing infantry regiment and battalion of artillery disbanded, except for eighty artillerymen retained to guard military stores at West Point and Fort Pitt. It tied this discharge to a measure providing for the immediate recruitment of a new force of 700 men, a regiment of eight infantry and two artillery companies, which

Image
Not Available
in
Internet
Version

Alexander Hamilton
John Trumbull, 1792



Map 13

was to become the nucleus of a new Regular Army. By not making requisitions on the states for troops, but merely recommending that the states provide them from their militia, Congress got rid of most of the New England opposition on this score; by not assigning a quota for Massachusetts and New Hampshire, Congress satisfied the objections of most of the other states.

Four states were called upon to furnish troops: Pennsylvania (260), Connecticut (165), New York (165), and New Jersey (110). Lt. Col. Josiah Harmar of Pennsylvania was appointed commanding officer. By the end of September 1784 only New Jersey and Pennsylvania had filled their quotas by enlisting volunteers from their militia.

Congress had meanwhile learned that there was little immediate prospect that the British would evacuate the frontier posts. Canadian fur traders and the settlers in Upper Canada had objected so violently to this provision of the peace treaty that the British government secretly directed the Governor-General of Canada not to evacuate the posts without further orders. The failure of the United States to comply with

a stipulation in the treaty regarding the recovery of debts owed to loyalists provided the British an excuse to postpone the evacuation of the posts for twelve more years. So the New Jersey contingent of Colonel Harmar's force was sent to Fort Stanwix, in upstate New York, to assist in persuading the Iroquois to part with their lands. The remainder of the force moved to Fort McIntosh, thirty miles down the Ohio River from Fort Pitt, where similar negotiations were carried on with the Indians of the upper Ohio.

Toward a More Perfect Union

Postwar problems revealed a number of serious defects in the Articles of Confederation. The federal government lacked a separate executive branch and a judiciary. Although Congress exercised a certain amount of executive as well as legislative power, it lacked the power to tax. To some of the delegates the conflicts and dissension between the states over the western lands seemed to carry the seeds of civil war. Rioting and disturbances in Massachusetts throughout the fall and winter of 1786 strengthened the pessimism of those who feared the collapse of the new nation. A severe commercial depression following on the heels of an immediate postwar boom was causing particular distress among the back-country farmers. Angry mobs gathered in the Massachusetts hills, broke up the meetings of the courts, harried lawyers and magistrates out of the villages, and began to threaten the government arsenal in Springfield.

On October 20, 1786, Congress responded to the threat by calling on several states to raise a 1,340-man force to serve for three years. This time the New England states did not object to congressional action; but before any of the soldiers voted by Congress could reach the scene, local militiamen repulsed an attack on the Springfield Arsenal led by Daniel Shays in late January 1787. A few days later a large reinforcement from the eastern part of the state arrived at Springfield and put an end to the disorders. Recruiting for the force authorized by Congress continued until the following April. By then about 550 men had been enlisted, and the question of expense was becoming bothersome. Congress therefore directed the states to stop recruiting and to discharge the

CONGRESS AND CIVILIAN CONTROL

The framers of the Constitution were deeply concerned over the potential danger of military power. Hence, they carefully crafted a separation of the powers concerning national security issues between the executive and legislative branches. The framers designated the President as "Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual service of the United States." To balance this executive authority, they stipulated that Congress would "raise and support Armies ... provide and maintain a Navy ... make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces," and "provide for calling forth the Militia." Consequently, the founding fathers effectively precluded either the executive or the legislature from having sole power over the military while ensuring that civilian control over the military was a basic principle of the new United States.

troops already raised, except those in two artillery companies retained to guard West Point and the Springfield Arsenal. Shays' Rebellion was thus responsible for the first augmentation of the federal Army. More important, it was one of the incidents that helped persuade Americans that they needed a stronger government.

Rising concern over the ineffectiveness of the federal government, particularly in matters of finance and commercial regulation, finally led to the convening of a Constitutional Convention in the spring of 1787. To strengthen the military powers of the government was one of the principal tasks of the convention, a task no less important than establishing its financial and commercial authority. The general problem facing the convention, that of power and the control of power, came into sharp focus in the debates on military matters, since the widespread suspicion of a strong central government and the equally widespread fear of a standing army were merged in the issue of the government's military powers. Those who mistrusted a powerful government argued against a broad grant of authority not only in the fields of taxation and commercial regulation, but, and with especial force, in military matters as well. Even those like Hamilton who wanted to give the central government wide latitude in handling both purse and sword were also somewhat wary of standing armies. They too were concerned over the possible usurpation of political power by a military force or its use by officeholders as an instrument for perpetuating their personal power. Hamilton and his supporters nevertheless were willing to have the country run the risk of sacrificing some freedom for safety's sake. In the final compromise the problem of the military powers of the central government was resolved through the system of checks and balances built into the new Constitution.

Central to the system of checks and balances was the idea of specified and reserved powers. The states were to have all the powers not specifically granted to the central government. The Constitution clothed the central government with adequate authority to raise and maintain an army without calling on the states. By giving Congress power to levy taxes, the Constitution provided the central government with the necessary financial means; by creating a separate executive branch, the Constitution made it possible for the government to conduct its daily business without constant reference to the states. The Constitution gave Congress the exclusive power to declare war, raise armies, and provide for a navy. It also empowered Congress to call forth the militia "to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions." But authority over the militia was a shared power. Congress could provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia and governing "such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States," but the Constitution specifically reserved to the states the authority to appoint militia officers and to train the militia "according to the discipline prescribed by Congress."

The militia issue was also central to the shaping of the Second Amendment to the Constitution: the right to keep and bear arms. If the founding fathers recognized the centrality of freedom of speech, the press, and assembly, they also made clear those freedoms would only remain secure if the people could keep and bear arms as an ultimate check on the power of the government. The Second Amendment has

In the final compromise the problem of the military powers of the central government was resolved through the system of checks and balances built into the new Constitution.

been much politicized since its adoption as part of the Bill of Rights, but there is no question that the architects of our government believed that the people in arms—the militia—were the final guarantors of our freedom. Any subsequent reinterpretations of that amendment must start with the fact that our leaders, fresh from their experiences in the Revolutionary War, relied on the militia as the centerpiece of our national military establishment. The concept of the militia and the right to bear arms are inextricably joined.

The new Constitution introduced an important innovation by assigning all executive power to the President. The Secretary of War, therefore, became directly responsible to the President and not to Congress. The Constitution specifically provided that the President should be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy. As such, his powers were exclusive, limited only “by their nature and by the principles of our institutions.” The President had the right to assume personal command of forces in the field, but he could also delegate that right. As Commander in Chief, he was responsible for the employment and disposition of the armed forces in time of peace and for the general direction of military and naval operations in time of war.

In April 1789 Washington became the first President under the new Constitution; on August 7 Congress created the Department of War. There was no change, however, in either the policy or the personnel of the department. General Henry Knox, who had succeeded Washington as commander of the Army and had been handling military affairs under the old form of government, remained in charge. Since there was no navy, a separate department was unnecessary; at first the War Department included naval affairs under its jurisdiction. Harmar, who had been given the rank of brigadier general during the Confederation period, was confirmed in his appointment, as were his officers; and the existing miniscule Army was taken over intact by the new government. In August 1789 this force amounted to about 800 officers and men. All the troops, except the two artillery companies retained after Shays’ Rebellion, were stationed along the Ohio River in a series of forts built after 1785.

So small an Army required no extensive field organization to supply its needs. In keeping with the accepted military theory that the Quartermaster was a staff officer necessary only in time of war, the Confederation Congress had included the Quartermaster General and his assistants among the others discharged in 1783 and had placed the military supply system under civilian control. It had made the civilian Secretary responsible for the transport, safekeeping, and distribution of military supplies and the Board of Treasury responsible for procuring and purchasing all military stores, including food and clothing. Except during a brief period in which the Secretary of War was allowed to execute contracts for Army clothing and subsistence, the new federal government retained the supply system established under the Confederation, adding in 1792 the civilian Office of the Quartermaster General to transport supplies to the frontier posts during the Indian expeditions. In 1794 Congress established the Office of the Purveyor of Public Supplies in the Treasury and the Office of Superintendent of Military Stores in the War Department to continue the same broad supply functions established in the Confederation period. This organi-



Henry Knox
James Harvey Young, 1873

zation of military supply remained in effect with only slight modification until 1812.

The contract system the Office of the Purveyor of Public Supplies used to procure food and equipment operated much as it had in colonial times. Contracts were awarded to the lowest bidder, who agreed to deliver and issue authorized subsistence at a fixed price to troops at a given post. The contractor was obliged to have on hand at all times sufficient rations to feed the troops, providing subsistence for at least six months in advance at the more distant posts. The procurement, storage, and distribution of all other supplies for the Army were centralized in Philadelphia, where the Purveyor contracted for all clothing, camp utensils, military stores, medicines, and hospital stores and the Superintendent of Military Stores collected and issued them when needed by the troops. The contract system was supposed to be more economical and efficient than direct purchase, but its weaknesses were soon apparent. The quality of the supplies and the promptness of their delivery were dictated by the contractor's profit interest and relative degree of corruptness.

The method of arms procurement was a variation of the contract purchase system. Convinced that the development of a domestic arms industry was essential to independence, Hamilton had urged as early as 1783 "the public manufacture of arms, powder, etc." A decade later Secretary Knox reported to Congress that although arms could be purchased more cheaply in Europe, the bargain price was of little significance "compared with the solid advantages which would result from extending and perfecting the means upon which our safety may ultimately depend." Congress responded by expanding the number of U.S. arsenals and magazines for the stockpiling of weapons and by establishing national armories for the manufacture of weapons. The first national armory was established at Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1794 and a second the same year at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Despite these developments the government still purchased most of its armament abroad, and many years would pass before domestic industry could supply the government's needs.

The Militia

Time and again Washington pointed out that the only alternative to a large standing army was an effective militia, yet his efforts and those of Knox and Hamilton to make the militia more effective by applying federal regulation failed. Congress passed the basic militia law in May 1792. It called for the enrollment of "every able-bodied white male citizen" between eighteen and forty-five and the organization of the militia into divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, and companies by the individual states, each militiaman providing his own "arms, munitions, and other accouterments." The law that survived the legislative process bore little resemblance to the one Washington and Knox had proposed. It left compliance with its provisions up to the states and in the end did little more than give federal recognition to the colonial militia organization that had plagued Washington during the Revolution. Despite these limitations, the act did preserve the idea of a citizen soldiery, a concept of profound importance to the future of the country; and it also provided for the creation of special volunteer units to supplement the

Time and again Washington pointed out that the only alternative to a large standing army was an effective militia.

Image Not Available in Internet Version

Washington Reviewing the West Army at Fort Cumberland, Maryland
Frederick Kemmelmeier, ca. 1794

obligatory mass system. The volunteers, organized into companies, met regularly for military training under elected officers. With antecedents in the organized military associations of the colonial era, this volunteer force later became the National Guard.

Training and discipline were the keys to an effective militia, but despite the act of 1792 the militia was to be neither disciplined nor well trained. When permitted to fight in less standardized fashion, either from behind fortifications or as irregulars, militiamen could give a good account of themselves. But only highly trained troops could be expected to successfully employ the complicated, formal linear tactics of the day. Strictly interpreting the constitutional provision that reserved to the states the authority to train the militia, Congress left the extent and thoroughness of training completely to the states and merely prescribed Steuben's system of discipline and field exercises as the rules to be followed.

The limitations placed on the length of tours of duty and the circumstances for which the militia might be called into federal service further impaired its usefulness. No militiamen could be compelled to serve more than three months in any one year, nor could the President order the militia to duty outside the United States. The effect of these limitations would be readily apparent during the War of 1812.

The President first exercised his authority to employ militia for suppressing insurrection and executing the laws of Congress in 1794, when he sent a large force of militia under Maj. Gen. Henry Lee into western Pennsylvania during the Whiskey Rebellion. Lee encountered no resistance. As a show of force, the demonstration was impressive; as an indication of the military value of the militia in an emergency, it was inconclusive.

Military Realities in the Federalist Period

The military policies of the new nation evolved realistically in response to foreign and domestic developments. First, there was little actual military threat to the United States from a foreign nation. Britain had no desire or design to reconquer its lost colonies, although both Britain and Spain sought to curb the United States from expanding beyond the borders established by the treaty of 1783. The military alliance that bound the United States to England's archrival, France, was a potential source of danger, but England and France were at peace until 1793. When the U.S. and France fought an undeclared war from 1798 to 1800, it was almost entirely a naval confrontation. Second, the jealousy of the individual states toward one another and toward the federal government made it difficult to establish a federal army at all and defeated efforts to institute federal regulation of the militia beyond the minimum permitted by the Constitution. Third, the federal government, plagued by financial problems, had to pare expenditures to the bone. Fourth, Americans were extremely reluctant to serve in the Army, either as regulars or as volunteers, for more than a brief period. At no time could the government recruit enough men to bring the Regular Army up to authorized strength. In view of these drawbacks, a large regular military establishment was not feasible. Even a well-trained militia that could augment the regular force was lacking.

The Indian Expeditions

Free of the threat of foreign invasion, the young republic nevertheless faced a serious security problem in the West, where the new settlers demanded protection against the Indians as well as an equitable administration of the vast new territories won in the peace of 1783. The Indian problem was an old one. Under the relentless pressure of the pioneers and because of the grants made to Continental soldiers, the frontier was rapidly receding. The Confederation Congress had tried to cope with the situation by concluding a series of treaties with the various Indian groups, but the treaties failed to keep pace with the expansion of the frontier boundaries. The Indians, supported by British arms and the British presence in the Northwest, ferociously resisted the incursions of the settlers. In the years of the Confederation, they killed or captured over 1,500 settlers in the Kentucky Territory alone.

The Indians fought the settlers all along the frontier, but several factors militated against federal intervention in the Southwest during the first years of Washington's administration. In 1790 the United States concluded a treaty with the Creeks, the most powerful of the Southwest tribes, a treaty that the Spanish in Louisiana, eager to maintain their

Free of the threat of foreign invasion, the young republic nevertheless faced a serious security problem in the West.

ARTHUR ST. CLAIR (1736?–1818)

A Scotsman by birth, Arthur St. Clair came to America as a young officer in the British Army during the French and Indian War. In 1762 he resigned his commission and settled outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When the Revolution began, he joined the Continental Army and served ably throughout the conflict. After the war, he returned to civil life, serving in the Continental Congress before becoming governor of the Northwest Territory. Stubborn and unimaginative, St. Clair was never popular with his troops. He was, however, a true patriot, a brave and generally competent soldier, and a thoroughly honest man.



Arthur St. Clair
Charles Willson Peale, 1782

profitable trade with the Indians, would be likely to support. Georgia and South Carolina introduced a further argument against intervention when they objected to the presence of federal forces within their borders.

The situation was entirely different in the Northwest. There, federal troops had been occupied chiefly in driving squatters out of the public domain and protecting the Indians' treaty rights, a duty that neither endeared them to the settlers nor trained them in the art of war. Since the enactment of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, settlers had been pouring into the Ohio country and were demanding federal protection. Their demands carried a veiled threat: If the government ignored their plight, they would turn to Spain and England for succor. The federal union could be destroyed in its infancy, or at the very least its future expansion could be forestalled by resurgent European influence in the region.

Tardily and somewhat inadequately, the new government groped for a response to the West's challenge. In President Washington's first annual message to Congress, he called for the defense of the frontier against the Indians. Congress responded by raising the authorized strength of regulars to 1,283. Aware that this force was inadequate to protect the entire frontier, Secretary Knox planned to call on the militia to join the regulars in an offensive to chastise the Miami Indian group as a show of force. In June 1790 he ordered General Harmar, in consultation with Arthur St. Clair, Governor of the Northwest Territory, to lead the expedition. Under an authorization given him the preceding fall, St. Clair called on Pennsylvania and Kentucky to send 1,500 militiamen to Harmar at Fort Washington, now Cincinnati. (*See Map 13.*)

The untrained and undisciplined militia was a weak reed on which to lean in a sustained campaign against the Indians, but Knox knew the militia's strengths as well as its weaknesses. Depending on the fast-striking, mounted militiamen to support the regulars, Knox wanted Harmar to conduct a "rapid and decisive" maneuver, taking advantage of the element of surprise, to find and destroy the Indian forces and their food supplies. But the two-phased operation Harmar and St. Clair

“MAD” ANTHONY WAYNE (1745–1796)

Anthony Wayne achieved fame during the Revolution as an aggressive commander with a fiery temper. After the war, he fell hopelessly in debt. Seeking immunity from prosecution, he ran for Congress and was elected, only to be unseated a few months later due to election irregularities. Down and out, Wayne eagerly grasped at the opportunity to take command of the Army after St. Clair’s defeat. The government made the offer with some trepidation, as Washington believed Wayne was “addicted to the bottle.” Thomas Jefferson considered him to be the type of person who would “run his head against a wall where success was both impossible and useless.” He proved, however, to be the right man for the job.



Anthony Wayne
James Shaples, Sr., 1795

concocted bore little resemblance to Knox’s proposed tactics. Harmar planned a long march northward from Fort Washington to the Miami villages concentrated at the headwaters of the Wabash River. A second column under Maj. John Hamtramck would ascend the Wabash from Fort Vincennes, Indiana, destroying villages along the way and finally joining with Harmar’s column after a 150-mile march.

The expedition was a complete failure. Hamtramck left Vincennes with 330 regulars and Virginia militia on September 30; but after an eleven-day march, during which a few Indian villages were burned, the militia refused to advance farther. Harmar also set out on September 30. After struggling through the wilderness for more than two weeks with a force of 1,453 men, including 320 regulars, he reached the neighborhood of the principal Indian village near what is now Fort Wayne, Indiana. Instead of pushing on with his entire strength, Harmar on three successive occasions sent forward unsupported detachments of about 200 to 500 militiamen plus fifty or sixty regulars. The undisciplined militia could not be restrained from scattering in search of Indians and plunder. After two of the detachments suffered heavily in brushes with the Indians, Harmar took the rest of his army back to Fort Washington. His conduct was severely criticized; but a court of inquiry, noting the untrained troops with which Harmar had been provided and the lateness of the season, exonerated him.

Secretary Knox’s injunctions for a rapid and decisive maneuver were again ignored when the government decided to send another expedition against the Northwest Indians in 1791. Congress raised the size of the invasion force, adding a second infantry regiment to the Regular Army and authorizing the President to raise a corps of 2,000 men for a term of six months, either by calling for militia or by enlisting volunteers into the service of the United States. The President commissioned Governor St. Clair a major general and placed him in command of the expedition. So slowly did recruiting and the procuring of supplies proceed that St.

Clair was unable to set out before September 17; only by calling on the neighboring states for militia was he able to bring his force up to strength. When St. Clair's force finally marched out of Fort Washington, it consisted of about 600 regulars, almost all the actual infantry strength of the U.S. Army, in addition to about 800 enlisted "levies" and 600 militiamen.

By November 3, St. Clair had advanced about one hundred miles northward from Cincinnati. Most of his force, now numbering about 1,400 effectives, encamped for the night near the headwaters of the Wabash. Neglecting the principle of security, St. Clair had not sent out scouts; just before dawn a horde of about 1,000 Indians fell upon the unsuspecting troops. Untrained, low in morale as a result of inadequate supplies, and led by a general who was suffering from rheumatism, asthma, and "colic," the army was thrown into confusion by the sudden assault. St. Clair and less than half his force survived unscathed: there were 637 killed and 263 wounded.

The United States was alarmed and outraged over St. Clair's defeat. Some urged that the government abandon the Indian Wars and accept the British proposal for an Indian buffer state in the Northwest, but Washington well understood the strategic implications of such a scheme and decided instead to mount a third expedition. He appointed Maj. Gen. "Mad" Anthony Wayne, the dashing commander of the Pennsylvania Line during the Revolution, to succeed St. Clair. Congress doubled the authorized strength of the Army by providing for three additional regiments, two of which were to be infantry and the other a composite regiment of infantry and light dragoons. It tried to avoid the bad effects of short-term enlistment by adding the new regiments to the Regular Army as a temporary augmentation to be "discharged as soon as the United States shall be at peace with the Indian tribes." Congress also agreed to Secretary of War Knox's proposed reorganization of the Army into a "Legion," a term widely used during the eighteenth century that had come to mean a composite organization of all combat arms under one command. Instead of regiments, the Army was composed of four "sublegions," each commanded by a brigadier general and consisting of 2 battalions of infantry, 1 battalion of riflemen, 1 troop of dragoons (cavalrymen trained to fight either mounted or dismounted), and 1 company of artillery.

Egotistical, blustery, and cordially disliked by many of his contemporaries, General Wayne nevertheless displayed little of his celebrated madness during the expedition. His operation was skillfully planned. Correcting previous mistakes, he insisted on rigid discipline and strict training; conscious of the welfare of his men, he saw to it that supplies were adequate and equipment satisfactory. These military virtues finally won for the United States its elusive victory.

In the spring of 1793 General Wayne took the Legion down the river to Cincinnati, where he tried to persuade the Indians to submit peacefully. When negotiations broke down, the Legion followed the route that Harmar and St. Clair had taken. Wayne was in even poorer health than St. Clair but more determined. Like St. Clair, he moved slowly and methodically, building a series of forts and blockhouses along his line of march. Despite his efforts to improve morale, he found desertion as serious a problem as had his predecessors.

Some urged that the government abandon the Indian Wars and accept the British proposal for an Indian buffer state in the Northwest, but Washington well understood the strategic implications of such a scheme.

Battle of Fallen Timbers

Reinforced by mounted militia in July 1794, Wayne led about 3,000 men to within a few miles of Fort Miami, a post the British had recently established on the site of what is now Toledo. There, on August 20, 1794, almost within sight of the British guns, the Indians attacked. The Americans held their ground and then with a furious bayonet charge drove the enemy out of the cover of fallen trees that gave the Battle of Fallen Timbers its name. In the open prairie, the Indians were at the mercy of Wayne's mounted volunteers; in less than an hour the rout was complete.

Ignoring the protest of the British commander at Fort Miami, Wayne remained for several days, burning the Indian villages and destroying crops before leading the Legion back to Cincinnati. The western tribes, their resistance broken, finally agreed on August 3, 1795, in the Treaty of Greenville to make peace and cede their lands in Ohio to the United States. Their submission had been hastened by news that England was about to evacuate the frontier posts.

In the years following the Battle of Fallen Timbers, settlers pushed rapidly into Ohio and beyond into lands still claimed by the Indians. To resist these encroachments, Tecumseh, chief of the Shawnees, and his brother, the Prophet, organized a tribal confederacy aimed at keeping the settlers out. Urged on by the settlers, Governor William Henry Harrison of the Indiana Territory decided in the summer of 1811 to strike at the Indians before they could descend on the settlements. Secretary of War William Eustis approved Harrison's scheme and placed 300 regulars under his command in addition to his 650 militia including mounted riflemen. Moving north from Vincennes at the end of September, Harrison built a fort on the edge of the Indian country and then continued to the neighborhood of Tecumseh's principal village on Tippecanoe Creek. (*See Map 13.*) On November 6 he halted about a mile west of the village, encamping his force in the form of a trapezoid around the wagons and baggage on a piece of high-wooded ground that rose above the marshy prairies.

The Indians struck just before dawn. Harrison's situation was very similar to that of St. Clair, and for a time his force seemed about to suffer the same fate. Furious hand-to-hand combat followed the Indians' wild charge that carried them into the camp itself. Although taken by surprise, the soldiers rallied and then counterattacked. The end came when the mounted riflemen charged in on the Indians and drove them from the field. Harrison lost 39 men killed and missing and had 151 wounded, of whom 29 died. The engagement by no means solved the frontier problem in the Northwest, but this problem was soon overshadowed by the outbreak of war with England. Its most permanent legacy was a tradition of battlefield courage that helped Harrison win the Presidency in 1841.

The Perils of Neutrality

While the United States was launching a new government and defending the frontier, France had undergone a revolution that within a few years led to a general European war. Britain joined the coalition

against France in 1793 and in the first year of the war instituted a blockade, seizing at least three hundred American merchant vessels. In 1794 Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court John Jay negotiated a treaty with Britain to settle a number of border and trade issues unresolved after the War of Independence. The treaty eased the mounting crisis in Anglo-American relations. Through acquiescing in the British doctrine of contraband, the United States settled some long-standing questions, including evacuation of the frontier posts, but only at the expense of domestic unity and peaceful relations with the French. Regarding Jay's treaty as evidence of a pro-British policy on the part of the United States, France retaliated by seizing American vessels that were trading with the British, by sending secret agents to stir up the Creek Indians along the southern frontier, and by meddling in American politics in an attempt to bring about the defeat of the "pro-British" administration. These were the new and serious problems that President Washington bequeathed to his successor, John Adams, in 1797.

Adams inherited a military establishment with an authorized strength of about 3,300 officers and men. In 1797 Congress dropped the Legion that had served well in the frontier fighting, and the Army returned to a regimental type of organization with four regiments of infantry, a Corps of Artillerists and Engineers, and two companies of light dragoons more appropriate to the duties of border defense. During 1796 and early 1797 there had been some redeployment into the Southwest; by 1797 nine companies of infantry, about two companies of artillery, and the entire force of dragoons were stationed along the southwestern frontier. Up in the old Northwest, there were five infantry companies at Detroit and smaller detachments at a dozen scattered forts elsewhere in the territory. Fort Washington was the major installation. There were also small garrisons at the important seaports that had been fortified after 1794 by French technicians, émigrés of the recent revolution. The rest of the Army was stationed along the Canadian border from the lakes eastward and at the older posts, like West Point, Carlisle, and Fort Pitt.

The Quasi War with France

When the French continued to attack American vessels and refused to receive the newly appointed American Minister, President Adams called Congress into special session to consider national defense. He particularly urged that immediate steps be taken to provide a navy. He also recommended that harbor defenses be improved, that additional cavalry be raised, that the Militia Act of 1792 be revised to provide for better organization and training, and that the President be authorized to call an emergency force, although he saw no immediate need for the last. Congress approved the naval recommendations; but except for a modest appropriation for harbor defenses and an act authorizing the President to call out 80,000 militiamen for a maximum term of three months, it voted down the military recommendations.

By the spring of 1798 France's actions had thoroughly upset the country. President Adams again recommended an expanded defense program, which this time fared somewhat better in Congress. Congress passed the recommended naval increases and created the separate Navy

When the French continued to attack American vessels and refused to receive the newly appointed American Minister, President Adams called Congress into special session to consider national defense.

THE FOUNDING OF WEST POINT

In October 1776 the Continental Congress authorized a committee to begin planning for a military academy, but political support for the idea remained uncertain until the need for domestically trained engineers and artilleryists overcame the fear inspired by the European experience with professional military officers and totalitarianism. Despite the 1794 creation of the rank of cadet in the Corps of Artillerists and Engineers manning the fortifications at West Point, New York, formal instruction of those cadets did not begin until September 21, 1801. By ordering that instruction, President Jefferson reversed his early opposition to a military academy, seeing it as a way of promoting the study of engineering and science in the growing nation. On March 16, 1802, Congress approved the President's action and authorized the creation of the Corps of Engineers and a military academy under its control at West Point. That date marks the official birth of the U.S. Military Academy, but the institution's organization and funding remained uncertain for more than a decade.



West Point, New York
Seth Eastman, 1875

Department. Of the three regiments the administration recommended adding to the Regular Army, Congress authorized the additional artillery but not the cavalry. With respect to the infantry regiment, the Secretary of War proposed to Congress that it might also create a marine infantry unit. Instead, Congress voted the U.S. Marine Corps into existence, making it part of the Army or Navy, according to whether the marines served on land or on shipboard. Congress also increased the number of companies in each of the four regular infantry regiments from eight to ten; voted a sizable sum for harbor defenses and ordnance; and authorized a Provisional Army, the emergency force that Adams had suggested the year before.

Again Congress tried to avoid the defects of short-term enlistments by setting the duration of the “existing differences between the United States and the French Republic” as the term of enlistment for the Provisional Army. Reluctant to abandon its traditional reliance on short-term militia volunteers, Congress turned down another presidential request for an increase in the Regular Army, instead giving him the authority to accept privately armed and equipped volunteer units for short-term service. Adams never made use of this authority but went ahead with the plans to raise the twelve infantry regiments and one cavalry regiment that made up the Provisional Army. He persuaded Washington to come out of retirement to accept command as a lieutenant general and at Washington's request appointed Alexander Hamilton as the senior major general. By the beginning of 1799 the officers had been appointed, and in May 1799 recruiting began. By the time the Provisional Army was disbanded in June 1800, around 4,100 men had been mobilized,

assembled in camps, and given from six to twelve months' training. Hamilton directed the preparation of new drill regulations to replace Steuben's, but before the task was finished the French crisis had ended and the Provisional Army was discharged.

The possibility that the United States might ally itself with Britain helped persuade the French to agree to negotiations. Furthermore, the French had been pressing Spain to return Louisiana as a step toward restoring their colonial empire in America, and for this venture peace with the United States was necessary. On September 30, 1800, the United States and France signed a treaty in which France agreed to recognize American neutrality, thus formally ending the alliance of 1778, and to refrain from seizing American vessels that were not carrying contraband. On the very next day, October 1, 1800, France and Spain signed a secret treaty that turned Louisiana over to France. A few months later England and her allies made peace with France.

Defense under Jefferson

President Thomas Jefferson took office in 1801 committed to a policy of peace and economy. With Europe at peace and American relations with France and England better than they had been for ten years past, Congress proceeded to economize. It sold the Navy that had acquitted itself so well in the quasi war with France, retaining only the frigates and a few of the other larger ships. Instead of ships for the defense of U.S. harbors and coastline, Jefferson touted the idea of building a number of small, armed gunboats as a less expensive alternative. The Army did not feel the effect of the economy drive until March 1802. Until then the military establishment was much as Adams had left it after the Provisional Army troops had been discharged, with an authorized strength of 5,438 officers and men and an actual strength of about 4,000. In the reduction of March 1802 Congress cut back the total strength of the Army to 3,220 men, approximately what it had been in 1797 when Adams took office. It was more than 50 percent stronger in artillery, but the more expensive cavalry was eliminated.

When Congress reduced the size of the Army it also abolished the Office of the Quartermaster General and in its place instituted a system of contract agents. It divided the country into three military departments, each with a military agent. Each agent, with his assistants, was responsible for the movement of supplies and troops within his department. Since the assistant agents were also appointed by the President, the three military agents had no way to enforce accountability on their subordinates. This system soon led to large property losses.

Since the Revolution, the Army had suffered from a lack of trained technicians, particularly in engineering science, and had depended largely upon foreign experts. As a remedy Washington, Knox, Hamilton, and others had recommended the establishment of a military school. During Washington's administration, Congress had added the rank of cadet in the Corps of Artillerists and Engineers with two cadets assigned to each company for instruction. But not until the Army reorganization of 1802 did Congress create the separate Corps of Engineers, consisting of ten cadets and seven officers, assigned to West Point to serve as the staff of a military academy. Within a few years the U.S.

With Europe at peace and American relations with France and England better than they had been for ten years past, Congress proceeded to economize.

Military Academy became a center of study in military science and a source of trained officers. By 1812 it listed eighty-nine graduates, sixty-five of them still serving in the Army and playing an important role in operations and the construction of fortifications.

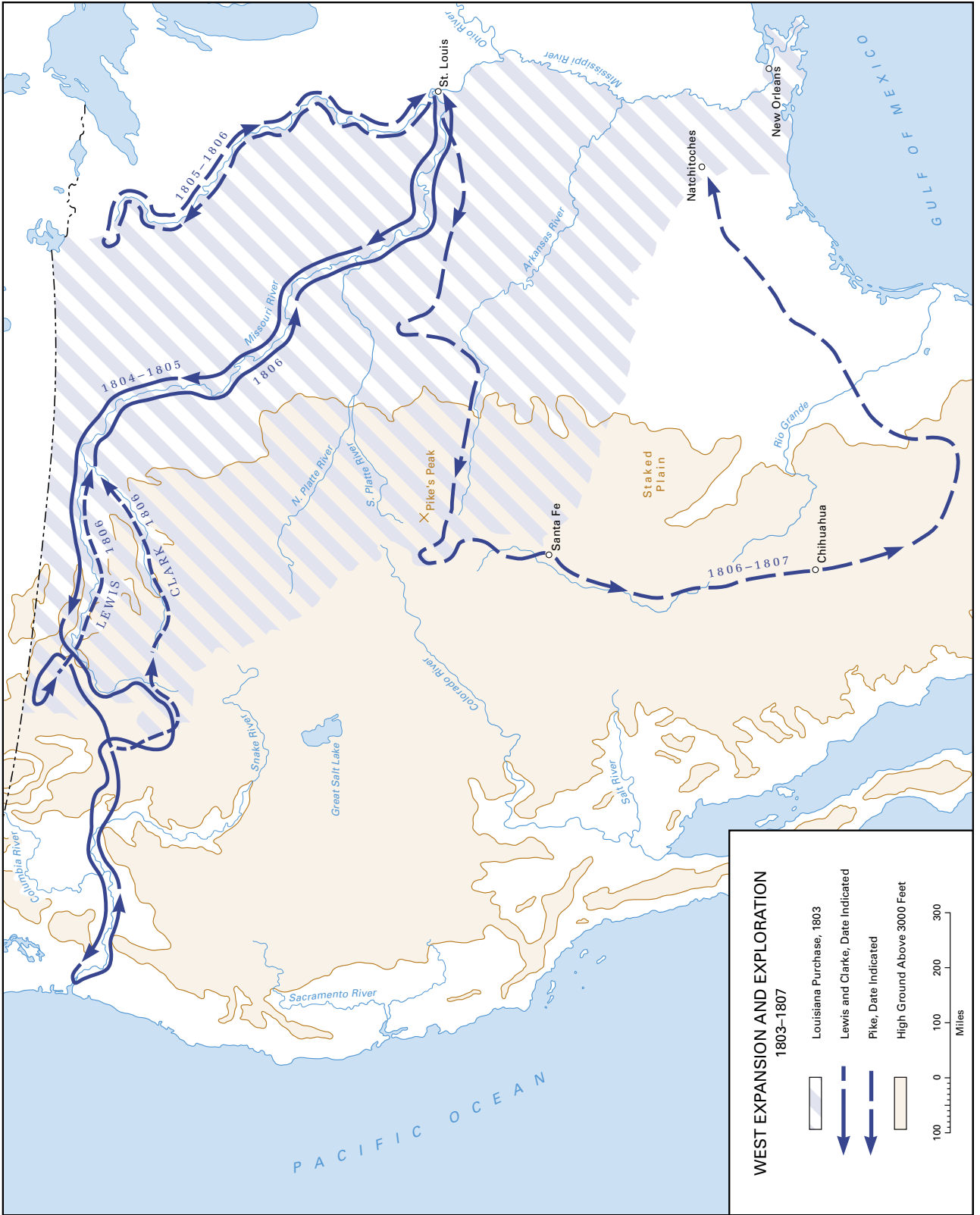
The Army and Westward Expansion

Not long after Thomas Jefferson became President, rumors reached America that France had acquired Louisiana from Spain. The news was upsetting. Many Americans, including Jefferson, had believed that when Spain lost its weak hold on the colonies the United States would automatically fall heir to them. But, with a strong power like France in possession, it was useless to wait for the colonies to fall into the lap of the United States like ripe fruit. The continued presence of France in North America also raised a new security problem. Up to this time the problem of frontier defense had been chiefly pacifying the Indians, keeping the western territories from breaking away, and preventing American settlers from molesting the Spanish. Now, with a strong, aggressive France as backdoor neighbor, the frontier problem became tied up with the question of security against possible foreign threats. The transfer of Louisiana to France also marked the beginning of restraints on American trade down the Mississippi. In the past, Spain had permitted American settlers to send their goods down the river and to deposit them at New Orleans. Just before transferring the colony, however, Spain revoked the American right of deposit, an action that made it almost impossible for Americans to send goods out by this route.





These considerations persuaded Jefferson in 1803 to inquire about the possibility of purchasing New Orleans from France. When Napoleon, anticipating the renewal of the war in Europe, offered to sell the whole of Louisiana for \$15 million, Jefferson quickly accepted and suddenly doubled the size of the United States. The Army, after taking formal possession of Louisiana on December 20, 1803, established small garrisons at New Orleans and the other former Spanish posts on the lower Mississippi. Jefferson later appointed Brig. Gen. James Wilkinson, who had survived the various reorganizations of the Army to become senior officer, as first Governor of the new territory. (*Map 14*)

Six months before the Louisiana Purchase, President Jefferson had persuaded Congress to support an exploration of the unknown territory west of the Mississippi River. The acquisition of the Louisiana Territory now made such an exploration even more desirable. It was no accident that the new nation and its president turned to the Army for this most important mission. Soldiers possessed the toughness, teamwork, discipline, and training appropriate to the rigors they would face. The Army also had a nationwide organization, even in 1803, and thus the potential to provide requisite operational and logistical support. It was perhaps the only truly national institution in America other than the Congress itself.

To lead the expedition, Jefferson chose Capt. Meriwether Lewis, a 28-year-old infantry officer who combined the necessary leadership ability and woodland skills with the potential to be an observer of natural phenomena. Lewis in turn received the President's permission to select William Clark as his cocaptain. A former infantry company com-



WEST EXPANSION AND EXPLORATION
1803-1807

-  Louisiana Purchase, 1803
-  Lewis and Clarke, Date Indicated
-  Pike, Date Indicated
-  High Ground Above 3000 Feet

100 0 100 200 300
Miles

Map 14

THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION

The Lewis and Clark Expedition (1803–1806) was a military mission from start to finish. The U.S. Army furnished the organization and much of the manpower, equipment, and supplies. Over the course of two years, four months, and ten days, the soldiers traveled 7,689 miles and brought back invaluable geographic and scientific data, including the first detailed map of the region. The Lewis and Clark Expedition has become an enduring symbol of the American spirit, selfless service, and human achievement. It succeeded in large measure because it tapped the spirit of the American soldier and the organization, leadership, and courage of the U.S. Army.

mander, Clark was a superb leader of men and an expert woodsman. Both men had served under General Wayne along the western frontier. Of the 48 men who accompanied Lewis and Clark up the Missouri River to the Mandan villages in 1804, 34 were soldiers and 12 were contract boatmen. The two other men were York, Clark's manservant, and George Drouillard, the contract interpreter. Of the 31 individuals who made the trip with Lewis and Clark to the Pacific coast in 1805 and back in 1806, 26 were soldiers. The other five were York, Drouillard, and the Charbonneau family (Toussaint, Sacagawea, and their newborn son, Jean Baptiste).

From the summer of 1803 to the fall of 1806, the expedition was an Army endeavor, officially the "Corps of Volunteers for North Western Discovery." It led Americans across the breadth of the vast continent for the first time. Its scientific agenda brought back invaluable information about flora, fauna, hydrology, and geography. Its benign intent resulted in peaceful commerce with Indians encountered en route. The expedition was, all things considered, a significant example of America's potential for progress and creative good.

While Lewis and Clark were exploring beyond the Missouri, General Wilkinson sent out Capt. Zebulon M. Pike on a similar expedition to the headwaters of the Mississippi. In 1807 Wilkinson organized another expedition. This time he sent twenty men under Captain Pike westward into what is now Colorado. After exploring the region around the peak that bears his name, Pike encountered some Spaniards who, resentful of the incursion, placed his party under armed guard and escorted it to Santa Fe. From there, the Spanish took the Americans into Mexico and then back across Texas to Natchitoches, once more in American territory. Despite the adversity, the Lewis and Clark Expedition and those of Captain Pike contributed much to the geographic and scientific knowledge of the country and today remain as great epics of the West.

To march across the continent might seem the manifest destiny of the republic, but it met with an understandable reaction from the Spanish. The dispute over the boundary between Louisiana and Spain's frontier provinces became a burning issue during Jefferson's second administration. Tension mounted in 1806, as rumors reached Washington of the dispatch of thousands of Spanish regulars to reinforce the mounted Mexican militiamen in east Texas. Jefferson reacted to the rumors by

calling up the Orleans and Mississippi Territories' militia and sending about 1,000 regulars to General Wilkinson to counter the Spanish move. The rumors proved unfounded; at no time did the Spanish outnumber the American forces in the area. A series of cavalry skirmishes occurred along the Sabine River, but the opposing commanders prudently avoided war by agreeing to establish a neutral zone between the Arroyo Hondo and the Sabine River. The two armies remained along this line throughout 1806, and the neutral zone served as a de facto boundary until 1812.

American Reaction to the Napoleonic Wars

The second round of the great conflict between England and France began in 1803, shortly after the purchase of Louisiana. It was a much more serious affair than the earlier conflict. Both Britain and France adopted policies under which American merchant shipping, whether carrying contraband or not, was subject to search and seizure. The Napoleonic Wars and the consequent depredations on American commerce were less a threat to national security than a blow to national pride. Jefferson responded to the challenge by withdrawing American shipping from the seas. His successor in 1809, James Madison, adopted the even riskier policy of economic coercion. A series of trade and embargo acts from 1807 to 1810 attempted to force England and France to limit their trade restrictions in their dealings with the United States.

Legislation failed to keep the United States from becoming embroiled in the war and was unsuccessful in forcing England or France to respect neutral trade. Neither Jefferson nor Madison recognized that under the new scheme of economic warfare being waged by both England and France the American measures were in effect provocative acts likely to bring the United States into the war on one side or the other. The resultant crippling of American trade so thoroughly disunited the American people that the government could not count on the loyalty and support of a sizable part of the population when conflict did break out.

International tension was so great in the months after the Embargo Act of 1807 that Congress, while rejecting Jefferson's proposal for recruiting a 24,000-man volunteer force, authorized the recruitment of 6,000 men as a temporary addition to the Army. In the last month of his administration President Jefferson sent more than 2,000 of these men to General Wilkinson to defend "New Orleans and its dependencies" against an expected English invasion. The invasion never materialized, but poor leadership and bureaucratic mismanagement bordering on criminal combined with the tropical heat to accomplish what no British invasion could have done. More than 1,000 men, half of Wilkinson's army, died in Louisiana.

By January 1810 relations with Britain had so deteriorated that President Madison recommended the recruitment of a volunteer force of 20,000. Congress, apparently satisfied with the existing militia system, again refused to vote for a volunteer force. Not until January 1812 did it increase the Army's strength, when it added thirteen additional regiments, totaling about 25,700 men, and authorized the President to call 50,000 militiamen into service.

Legislation failed to keep the United States from becoming embroiled in the war and was unsuccessful in forcing England or France to respect neutral trade.

The additional men would soon be needed. On June 18, 1812, Congress declared war against England. At the same time a Senate proposal to declare war against France failed by only two votes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent was George Washington the “indispensable man” in the formation of the United States of America and in ensuring the practice of civilian control of the military?

2. How has the concept of the militia changed since the early days of the republic?

3. How would you characterize the U.S. Army under the Articles of Confederation? What effect did Shays’ Rebellion have upon the military needs of the new republic?

4. Discuss the tangible benefits to the United States resulting from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Why did President Jefferson choose the U.S. Army to perform this mission?

5. Which tactics worked and which did not in fighting the Indians on the early frontier? Which force was more suited to fighting these campaigns: regulars or militia? Why?

6. Of what value was the newly established U.S. Military Academy at West Point to the Army and to the country as a whole?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Bird, Harrison. *War for the West, 1790–1813*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Coakley, Robert W. *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1789–1878*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1989.

Coffman, Edward M. *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1789–1898*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Crackel, Theodore J. *Mr. Jefferson’s Army: Political and Social Reform of the Military Establishment, 1801–1809*. New York: New York University Press, 1987.

Guthman, William H. *March to Massacre: A History of the First Seven Years of the United States Army, 1784–1791*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.

Kohn, Richard H. *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783–1802*. New York: Free Press, 1975.

Prucha, Francis P. *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783–1846*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.

Stagg, J. C. A. *Mr. Madison’s War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783–1830*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Sword, Wiley. *President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790–1795*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.

Other Readings

Adams, Henry. *The Formative Years: A History of the United States During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison*, ed. Herbert Agar. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974.

Brookhiser, Richard. *Alexander Hamilton, American*. New York: Free Press, 1999.

Callahan, North. *Henry Knox: General Washington's General*. New York: Rinehart, 1958.

Cleaves, Freeman. *Old Tippecanoe: William Henry Harrison and His Time*. New Town, Conn.: American Political Biography Press, 1990.

DeVoto, Bernard, ed. *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Jacobs, James R. *The Beginnings of the U.S. Army, 1783–1812*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1972.

Perkins, Bradford. *Prologue to War: England and the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961.

Slaughter, Thomas P. *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.