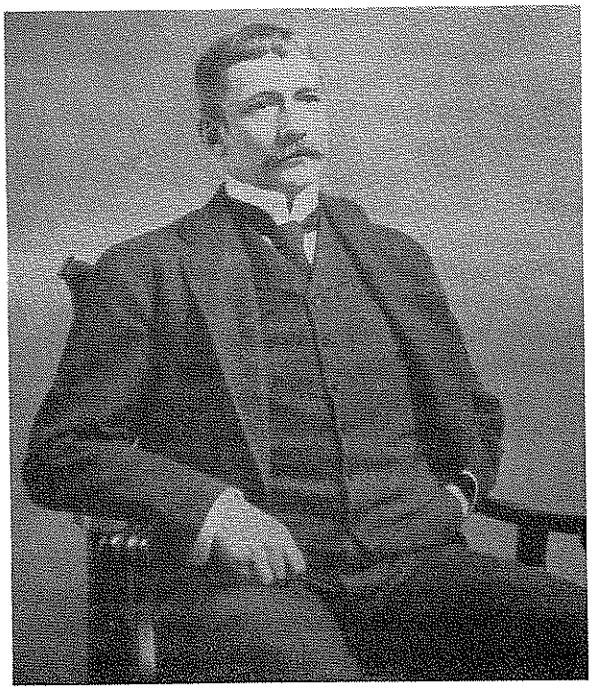

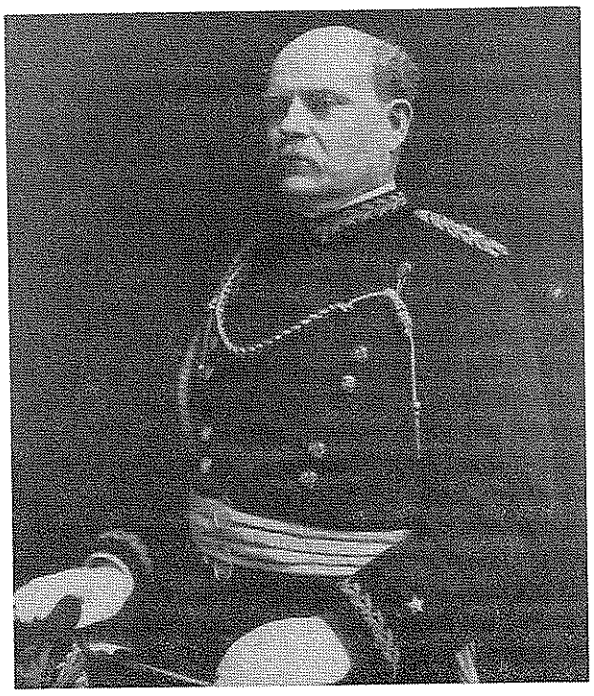

US ARMY

ROOT VERSUS BLISS: THE SHAPING OF THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE

by

JOHN D. WAINWRIGHT

Secretary of War Elihu Root is often considered to be the father of the modern Army, especially because he was the principal founder of the General Staff in 1903. But the founding of the Army War College, an aspect of Root's reforms almost as important as the General Staff, remains incompletely studied, and there has been considerable confusion about Root's perception of the nature and role of the War College. The early Army War College was less a military educational institution than an embryo general staff, and after 1903 it was merely an adjunct of the General Staff. Following World War I, the College was reorganized drastically to move it toward its present methods and functions. Samuel P. Huntington, an influential military writer, has charged Root with complicating the development of the War College and diluting his own reforms by confusing "the duties of a war college with those of a general staff." Huntington alleges that:

Mr. John D. Wainwright received his B.A. in History from Allegheny College in 1972. Currently, he is completing his pre-doctoral studies in American Military History at Temple University, where he also holds the position of Teaching Assistant in the Department of History. Mr. Wainwright looks forward to a career in teaching history at the college level upon completion of his Ph.D.

> . . . the development of the Army college reflected Root's inability to distinguish the functions of planning and administration from those of education and research. Root wanted the college to be composed of the heads of the staff department of the Army who would supervise the activities of military intelligence, and prepare plans for, and advise the President with respect to mobilization and military preparation. . . . Its academic duties were distinctly secondary to its staff and planning activities.[1]

Huntington is partially correct. In the period before World War I, the Army War College assumed as its primary mission the job of assisting the General Staff in its wide variety of duties, and there was little distinction between the two bodies. Huntington maintains, however, that it was under the leadership of Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss, the first President of the College, and under his successor, Arthur L. Wagner, that "the College began to be more concerned with the advanced study of war. But under Root's influence, its principal duty remained assisting the General Staff in the preparation of plans for national defense."[2] In these statements about Root's and Bliss's intentions for and conceptions of the War College, Huntington is mistaken in two important respects. The original intention that the College should function separately from the General Staff as an academic institution designed to educate officers in the advanced art of war was formulated, in fact, by Elihu Root. Furthermore, where Huntington asserts that this function was established by Bliss and Wagner in the first years of the College's operation, in reality it was not until after the first World War that the College turned away from the course set by Bliss and Wagner and returned to the role intended originally for it by Root.

A re-examination of the Army War College in its first stages and its relationship to Root's program of Army reform should dispel Huntington's misconception that Root was uncertain as to the nature of a war college.

THE ORIGINAL INTENTION THAT THE COLLEGE SHOULD FUNCTION SEPARATELY FROM THE GENERAL STAFF AS AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION DESIGNED TO EDUCATE OFFICERS IN THE ADVANCED ART OF WAR WAS FORMULATED BY ELIHU ROOT.

Evidence points to the conclusion that any confusion of academic functions with staff duties resulted from an inability by General Bliss to distinguish between the two and not by Secretary Root. In his *Annual Report* for 1899, Root's early proposals for the College outlined a variety of disparate functions which are difficult to reconcile with those that would seem to be consistent with the goals of a college dedicated to the art of war. While these proposals may appear to have been ill-conceived, it is imperative that they be measured both in the light of Root's overall goals and with an awareness of the constraints placed upon him which arose from strong resistance to any serious War Department reforms. When his early reports are measured against later specific policy statements regarding the establishment and the purposes of the Army War College, it is evident that Root had clear and viable objectives which, if properly implemented, would promptly have given the Army a superior academy for training its officers in the art of war.

AN ARMY IN NEED OF REFORM

When Root entered the War Department, the necessity for reform in the Department was apparent in the conclusions of the Dodge Commission which had investigated the conduct of the Spanish-American War. The certainty of opposition to such reform both from within the Department and from the Congress was also implicit in the very nature

of the conclusions.[3] A major conclusion of the lengthy Dodge Commission report was that the most serious inadequacy within the War Department was division of responsibility; the seemingly autonomous bureau system undermined the central authority and supervisory capacity of the Department. This decentralization constituted the single greatest obstacle to any reform efforts, because the bureau chiefs, with unlimited terms of office and equally unlimited time to cultivate friendly associations in the Congress, could not be expected to sympathize with recommendations that might challenge their authority and independence. Lack of sympathy for any reforms was equally certain to be the position of the Commanding General of the Army, Nelson A. Miles, whom Theodore Roosevelt had accused of having "the Presidential bee in his bonnet." With an election year approaching, he could not be expected to look favorably upon any action that might have suggested improper or inefficient management of his Army.[4]

The Dodge Commission also pointed out a second and potentially more serious problem requiring reform—while the peacetime Army could extemporize tactical units in preparation for war, it was not possible similarly to create an educated, experienced officer corps capable of exercising wartime command. John McAuley Palmer said of the situation:

> All such high organizations . . . were therefore commanded by officers who, though educated soldiers theoretically, had no practice in tactical employment of the units assigned to them. Instead of commanding units appropriate to their rank, our general officers had administered geographical departments. There they had busied themselves and their numerous staff officers in activities which had little or no relation to what would be expected of them in time of war.[5]

The poor peacetime organization and the lack of an adequately educated officer corps focus attention upon Root's educational reforms, for one of the major problems arising out of the complicated power structure of the War Department was the failure, through oversight or inability, to place responsibility and determine procedure for educating the Army's officers beyond the undergraduate level. The supervision over any post-graduate education was scattered among the various arms of the service. There was no apparent agreement as to either the means or ends in such education; and, quite simply, there was no educational policy at all insofar as the War Department was concerned.[6]

Though Root was appointed Secretary of War primarily because of the need for a colonial administrator, he found himself forced to tackle the more basic problems of War Department reorganization before he could turn to the issue of governing new colonies. Guided by the Dodge Commission report, it took little effort for Secretary Root to determine that the bureaus had long been engaged in work that had little to do with the Army's potential tasks in war.[7] In his first *Annual Report* of 1899, the new Secretary outlined his view that the proper function of an army is to provide for war, and implicit in his use of the word "provide" was one basic function which was, by its very statement, a condemnation of existing organization. "Systematic study by responsible officers" could hardly be construed as an accurate reflection of the existing staff organization and function.[8] Root placed a high priority on the need for a central planning agency that could bring coherence to a chaotic situation within the War Department, and a general staff (though he may have preferred the term "board of directors") would have provided a solution to his basic administrative problem. But, by its very nature, a general staff must be composed of skilled professionals, officers who are the product of a specialized education. Thus, although Root's primary goal was to create a staff organization for colonial administration, he first had to come to grips with a more fundamental task since he simply could not create a staff when there were no officers educated to perform staff duties. John McAuley Palmer likened the

situation to that of creating a college of physicians and surgeons in a country where there were no doctors. Quite simply, Root not only had to create a staff capable of responsible and systematic study of all facets of military organization and planning; he also had to educate that responsible body of officers until they were sufficiently competent to perform such general staff functions.[9]

Any suggestion of a solution to his primary problem, in the form of a general staff, was a potentially explosive one. Root was an experienced lawyer who knew the necessity of careful preparation, and who also knew that it was mandatory that he solve the reorganizational problem in the manner least likely to arouse serious opposition from supporters of the status quo. Root saw a definite need for a war college to educate the officers who would eventually make up his general staff, and precedent apparently existed for the creation of such an institution by executive order. Since he could not hope to win immediate passage of legislation creating a general staff, thus sweeping away the ancient prerogatives of General Miles and the bureaus, a logical strategy must have presented itself—combine these factors by using an administratively created war college to provide temporary general staff services until a more permanent organization could be formed to take its place.[10] With a quasi-general staff operating within the War College, Root could then devote his energy to building support for a more concrete general staff bill. Upon passage of such legislation, the War College could revert to a purely academic role. This course of action held great appeal because, by creating a war college and using it as a temporary general staff, Root did not face directly and immediately the problem of Congressional opposition. While creation of a war college by executive order would put the proposed institution on a precarious financial footing, it would alleviate the possibility of having any legislative proposal buried in committee by opposition both in Congress and from elements within the War Department. It had the added attractive feature of allowing the War College-cum-General Staff to demonstrate its effectiveness to Congress.[11]

In light of the likely opposition that Root would have to overcome, it is not surprising that there is no mention of a general staff in his 1899 Report. While giving considerable emphasis to the creation of a war college, there can be little doubt that Root was proposing numerous duties for it performed normally by a general staff, but not by a college. A superficial reading of this report could easily give the impression that Root had little understanding of the difference between academic and administrative concerns. Significant, however, is a very clear and precise statement of the College's foremost function—the "instruction and intellectual exercise of the Army."[12] Root was proposing what was primarily a "college in the science of war," and a part of its primary function was to assume responsibility for the management of the existing service schools. It seems highly unlikely that Root intended the War College to assume the numerous and important duties of a general staff as secondary in importance to its management of Army education unless he was forced to do so as a matter of expediency, not of confusion. A third recommendation of Root's report supports the contention that he intended that there should be a separation of functions between the staff and the college, for it stipulated that selection of staff officers should, with few exceptions, be "made on the basis of proficiency and fitness, as shown in the War College."[13]

Steps were taken quickly to set up such a school; by Special Order No. 42 of 19 February 1900, a board headed by Brigadier General William Ludlow was established for the purpose of considering such regulations as might be necessary. The letter of instruction to General Ludlow provides further evidence of the primacy of the proposed War College's educational function, reiterating all three of the relevant points from the 1899 Report.

> The purpose of the department in establishing this college is to further the higher instruction of the Army, to develop and organize, in accordance with

> a coherent and unified system, the existing means of professional education and training, and to serve as a coordinating and authoritative agency through which all means of professional military information shall be at the disposal of the War Department.[14]

The report of the Ludlow Board, submitted 31 October 1900, recommended that the functions of the War College should be several. They included the study of military science, the supervision of military schools, and the establishment of a War College course of advanced training. While the Report did suggest staff functions, "the board did not believe that such a War College would be equivalent to a real General Staff legally incorporated as an integral part of the Army organization and administration," and it urged that legislative provision be made for a staff. The Ludlow Board was well aware of the distinction between the two bodies, and its recommendations seem intended to provide Secretary Root with a war college which could function as a general staff until the time when the staff itself could be legally and separately constituted.[15]

The Army War College was established legally by General Order No. 155 of 27

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FIRST HOME OF THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE
This brownstone house on Jackson Place, Washington, D.C., was occupied by the College from 1902 to 1907.

November 1901. The order provided a detailed outline for the structuring of post-graduate military education in the Army, with the highest level of the system to be "a War College for the most advanced instruction at Washington Barracks, District of Columbia."[16] The College was to be supervised by five officers, detailed from the Army at large, who together would constitute an administrative body known as the War College Board which was to be distinctly separate from the academic body or War College proper. General Order No. 155 stated its function explicitly. The War College Board was to:

> exercise general supervision and inspection of all the different schools . . . and shall be charged with the duty of maintaining through them a complete system of military education, in which each separate school shall perform its proper part. . . .[17]

After carefully laying out the principles by which the War College Board was to be governed, a similar outline was provided for all the schools which fell under its supervision including the War College itself.

> A college is hereby established for an advanced course of study for Army officers, to be known as the Army War College. Such buildings as may be available and necessary will be assigned to its use on the reservation at Washington Barracks, District of Columbia.[18]

General Order No. 155 went on to stipulate that the head of the College would be known as the President of the Army War College, who would preside over both the War College *and* the War College Board. The course of instruction, which would be arranged by the Board, was to "embrace the higher branches of professional study," and it was especially stated that:

> . . . officers who have uniformly shown the greatest interest and proficiency in the theoretical and practical courses prescribed for the officers' schools at posts, the General Service and Staff College, and the War College shall have high consideration . . . for the higher duties of general staff work.[19]

By the provisions of General Order No. 155, Secretary Root had accomplished one of his major goals. He had created a War College to educate the best qualified officers "for the higher duties of general staff work" (which College could function as a temporary general staff until the subsequent legislative battle could be won), and he had a War College Board which centralized and consolidated the educational system of the Army, placing the responsibility for its curriculum and management in one body constituted specifically for that purpose. While it was not possible to state that the War College was training its graduates to fill the ranks of a general staff, since there was not yet such a body, the function nevertheless seems to be an implicit one.

Of particular importance is the fact that there is no direct mention, or implication, in this structuring of the War College, of any of the numerous staff functions which the Secretary had laid out in his *Annual Report* of 1899. It is unlikely that Secretary Root was the least bit confused in his objectives for the War College. In his 1901 Report he states that: "the creation of the War College Board, and the duties which will be imposed upon it, as indicated in my report for 1899 is probably as near an approach to the establishment of a General Staff as is practicable under existing law,"[20] and Root was here very careful to separate the creation of the War College from those numerous staff duties laid down in 1899. Whereas the earlier report was vague about who was to perform such duties, now the duties were to be "imposed" upon the War College Board, *not* upon the College itself. It is significant that Root used the word "imposed" even in regard to the Board, and this may be taken as a further indication that Root was intent upon separating the War College from any staff functions. At the same time, the War College Board could take on extra duties as a general staff, as a matter of

practical necessity, while still retaining its carefully designated function of educational supervision.

More important, the context of Root's later statements continues to verify the belief that he was making a clear distinction even between the War College Board, apart from the War College itself, and the proposed general staff in their respective duties:

> Consideration of the amount of work which that board ought to do, however, in the field of education alone, leads to the conclusion that it can not adequately perform all the duties of a General Staff, and that subject should be treated by Congress in a broader way. . . . A body of competent military officers should be charged with these matters of the highest importance, and to that end I strongly urge the establishment by law of a General Staff, of which the War College board shall form a part.[21]

While in 1899 this large list of duties seemed to be assigned in a vague manner to a proposed War College, in the 1901 Report Root has taken the same duties and suggested that, owing to their importance, a General Staff should be created to deal with them. He makes it clear that the Board should be only a part of this staff, *not* the whole organization. In so doing, Root provides strong evidence on his own behalf that he was making every effort to separate the academic responsibilities of the College from the administrative functions of the staff. It was only the Board that was to be a part of the staff, and logically so, for its mandated function was administration of Army education.

It is pertinent to point out the striking similarities between the War College as legally established and the German War Academy, described both by Brevet Major General Emory Upton and by Spenser Wilkinson, for here is further proof that Root had formulated precise ideas concerning the academic nature of the War College. Both Upton and Wilkinson described the War Academy as an academic institution designed solely to educate officers for duty on the General Staff of the German Army. Its only link with the Staff was through a division responsible solely for the management of the German Army's system of military education. Root incorporated this same scheme in the creation of the War College and the War College Board.[22]

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Major General Samuel B.M. Young

The selection of officers to constitute the War College Board was announced by General Order No. 64 of 1 July 1902. The members were: Major General Samuel B. M. Young, its first President; Brigadier General William H. Carter; Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss; Major Henry Greene; and Major William D. Beach, along with several *ex officio* members. The Board met for the first time on 10 July, and then at irregular intervals until August 1903.[23]

Meanwhile, after a lengthy but anticipated legislative conflict, the act creating the General Staff Corps was passed by Congress on 14 February 1903 to take effect on 15 August 1903, one week after the mandatory retirement of General Miles. The position of Chief of Staff fell to the President of the

Army War College Board, General Young. Until passage of the General Staff Act and in the interval between the passage and the implementation of the act, the War College Board continued to function as a temporary general staff, with the responsibility of not only planning the organization of the new General Staff then being sought from Congress, but also eventually with the job of selecting the forty-two officers to be detailed for duty on it.

ROOT VERSUS BLISS

The actual organization of the General Staff Corps was completed by 20 June 1903, and with the dissolution of the old War College Board by General Order No. 2 of 15 August 1903, the wide range of duties the Board had assumed due to the lack of a general staff now passed to the new General Staff. The task of returning the War College to its mission as an educational institution fell to General Bliss, who was named as its first President because he had held the position of Lecturer on Science and the Art of War at the Naval War College.[24]

On 11 November 1903, Bliss submitted a report to the Chief of Staff containing his proposals for the operation of the Army War College. In light of Secretary Root's conception of the War College, Bliss's report is something of a curiosity because it diverges sharply from the plan proposed by the Secretary. In his objectives for the War College, Root had conceived of it as a school for the study of the art of war. He also intended that there be a distinction between the War College itself and the War College Board which was to be an adjunct to the General Staff, serving in a capacity similar to a board of education for all of the Army's service schools. As in the German model, the War College would be linked to the General Staff through the War College Board. With a view to what the early War College actually became, the report of General Bliss deserves a close inspection to examine the exact nature of the divergence.

In his report, Bliss expressed the opinion that the system of military education already devised and exclusive of the War College:

> . . . exhausts the useful possibilities of scholastic professional training. It is impossible to devise a curriculum which shall not involve a repetition of what is taught in one or another of the . . . schools. We may, it is sure, have more . . . grand tactics and strategy, but for this we need not create another expensive institution.

Bliss apparently believed that the General Service and Staff School at Fort Leavenworth fulfilled the function of educating officers for staff duty, since he stated that:

> . . . its training will not be to fit officers for high-grade work in a special arm, but for general utility in the administration and handling of higher commands of all arms. In other words, if it be what its name indicates, it will be a special school for training officers of all arms for field service in any staff, corps, or department, *as well as in the General Staff.*[25]

This interpretation of the function of the General Service and Staff School is quite remarkable, because all evidence points to the fact that hitherto, and in Secretary Root's plans, the War College was intended to serve as the final step in educating the most qualified officers from whom General Staff officers would be selected. This view was stated clearly, for example, by General Carter, member of the War College Board and earlier a principal adviser to Root, in an undated memorandum to the Secretary of War written in 1901 recommending that "the system of training for officers should . . . terminate in the higher instruction, to be given in a War College, from which selections will be made for a General Staff." Officers completing the course of instruction at the Fort Leavenworth School who commended themselves as honor graduates "should, after a brief tour of duty with the line . . . be detailed in the Military Information Division of the Adjutant General's Office, and this system should continue until such time as the War College—which should be located in Washington—is established."[26] According to General Order No. 155, furthermore, the War

College was to be for advanced study "embracing the higher branches of professional study." The officers who had

> . . . uniformly shown the greatest interest and most proficiency in the theoretical and practical courses prescribed for the officers' schools at posts, the General Service and Staff College, and the War College shall have high consideration of the War Department, with a view to the utilization of their abilities . . . for the higher duties of general staff work.[27]

It is apparent that General Bliss either did not read General Order No. 155 carefully or disagreed so stubbornly with it that he disregarded it, for it is difficult to understand how he could have misinterpreted it.

Bliss, however, having concluded that the General Service and Staff School was capable of turning out officers prepared for general staff work, went on to describe what the mission of the War College was to be as he saw it and then, to ascertain the proper direction for the College, he turned to Secretary Root's 1899 Report. This was a mistake of unfortunate consequence for the academic future of the Army War College because, in seeking direction, Bliss turned to the intentionally vague guidelines set down by Root at a time when he saw the usefulness of creating a War College which could also fulfill staff functions until a true General Staff could be created by legislation. Bliss failed completely to realize that what Root was referring to had in fact emerged as the War College Board which, of necessity, had functioned as a quasi-general staff, but which was established independently from the War College in General Order No. 155.

Bliss further misinterpreted Root's intentions when he stated that: "It was his [Root's] idea at the time that . . . the college would not supersede the service schools, which even then, as he stated, 'so far as instruction is concerned, largely cover the ground.'"[28] In Root's statement, Bliss seemed to interpret "not supersede" to mean "not to be superior to," whereas the proper interpretation, in light of the arrangements dictated in General Order No. 155, should have been that the War College was not to displace any of the existing schools. At the same time when Root submitted his first report he was treading very lightly, and it is quite plausible that he sought to incorporate into his report the assurance that he was not going to abort the entire system of military education, replacing it with his new War College. It was his purpose to create a temporary staff arrangement which, on a long range basis, would not supersede but rather "incorporate, continue and bring under the same general management the present service schools." Furthermore, even in this report, Root speaks of officers as receiving instruction "at this college in the science of war, including the duties of the staff."[29] Bliss should have seen in this clear statement that the War College was to train officers for staff duty.

General Bliss, in attempting to further define the "true line" of the War College, also had this to say of the Secretary's 1899 Report:

> In this resume of the first and what is still the truest and soundest idea of what such an institution should be and do, the first thing that strikes us is the use of the word "college" in its old Latin sense of collegium—that is to say, a body of men associated together by a community of interests and object for doing something rather than to learn how to do it, or, at the most, the "learning how" is a mere incident to the "doing."[30]

This statement presents another mystery, for there is no evidence whatsoever to support the contention that Root intended this interpretation to be applied to the War College. His use of the word "instruction" refers obviously to the student-teacher relationship, and not to a gathering of equals. Bliss's statement is naive and perhaps indicates a contempt for instruction; it also implies that those officers detailed to the War College were to learn by the sink or swim method. While General Order No. 155 stipulated that in the "preparatory" work at

the War College "theory must not . . .be allowed to displace practical application,"[31] indicating that theoretical instruction was to hold an important but not dominating place in the War College curriculum, Bliss seems to have taken license with this injunction and transposed it to read: "At best, theoretical instruction is merely incidental to practical application."

Bliss goes on to point out that in Root's 1899 *Report* the War College was discussed in connection with many general staff functions, and he attributes this fact to the view that if the College were "properly developed and doing things which it should do," it would be doing nothing more than staff work. The War College, therefore, was to be one of the General Staff's most important agencies in devising plans relating to national defense. The War College Board, created by General Order No. 155, which was to have been responsible for the direction of the War College as well as all other service schools, seems to have been misplaced in the shuffle. Where in Root's conception the War College was to have been a school in the science of war, it was now to be part and parcel of the General Staff, serving in the capacity of an advisory committee. Its mission was not to be the education of officers qualified for service on the General Staff; rather it was to turn out plans for national defense.

It is difficult to understand why Bliss chose to diverge so drastically from Secretary Root's intended purpose for the War College. Bliss may have disagreed with the plans for the College as they emerged in general orders, and decided that he should redirect the College's emphasis. But even if he considered Root's first *Annual Report* to be "the truest and soundest idea of what such an institution should be and do," he clearly either misunderstood or rearranged Root's designs. Bliss was undoubtedly well aware that there were no officers at that time qualified to replace those members of the War College Board who had moved into positions on the General Staff, and possibly he intended that a War College, temporarily performing functions similar to those of the General Staff, could provide some initial direction for the new superior body. In taking this approach, the War College would have to become, at least for the time being, an integral part of the General Staff with no clear-cut lines between the functions of the College and those of the General Staff. This explanation of Bliss's report remains unsatisfactory, for it is difficult to believe that such an ad hoc type of arrangement would have been discussed in a preliminary report without stating explicitly that such a course of action was designed *only* to provide a workable interim plan of operations, until such time as there was an ample number of officers with sufficient competence to perform general staff functions. Additionally, this line of reasoning does nothing to shed light on why Bliss completely ignored General Order No. 155 in outlining the structure and nature of the Army War College and its relationship to the War College Board and the other service schools. The members of the War College Board, during the period when it had served as a temporary staff, were certainly aware of the appropriate distinctions. In a memorandum dated 18 February 1903 which suggested methods of organizing the General Staff, the Board stated explicitly that "the employment of the officers composing the board will, in the future, partake of the duties of an academic faculty, *rather than those of a General Staff.*"[32]

. . . UNDER BLISS'S LEADERSHIP THE WAR COLLEGE BEGAN ITS INDEPENDENT OPERATIONS IN A MANNER INCONSISTENT WITH THE GENERAL DESIGN OF SECRETARY ROOT'S GOALS.

The fact remains that under Bliss's leadership the War College began its independent operations in a manner inconsistent with the general design of Secretary Root's goals. Bliss's report and his guidelines established a pattern of operations

for the early War College which would carry it increasingly further away from the intended college of the science of war. The work of the permanent staff of the War College during its first year reflects the extent to which the effort of the College was spent on General Staff work, "as the agency of the General Staff charged with the preparation of plans for national defense, and for the mobilization of military forces in time of war. . . . Some of the problems assigned to the College in that first year included preparation of plans for defense of the northern United States in the event of war with Great Britain, and for operations of the Army in a war with Mexico.[33]

The first concrete statement of policy dealing explicitly with the College's internal operations was issued by Root's successor as Secretary of War, William H. Taft. On 27 June 1904 General Order No. 115 stated bluntly that ". . . the object of the War College is not to impart academic instruction, but to make a practical application of military knowledge already acquired." The impact of this order was to create a *totally* practical course limited primarily to the preparation of contingency plans. Student officers were not so much students as temporary personnel who were to assist the regularly assigned General Staff officers in their preparation of finished plans or solutions to problems, and to the student officers seems to have fallen the task of handling all the messy details of such plans.[34]

In June 1907, the War College moved to its new facilities at Washington Barracks (presently occupied by the National War College). The relocation caused considerable inconvenience to both permanent and temporary General Staff personnel by increasing the physical separation of the War College from the Second Division of the General Staff (Military Information). General Order No. 116 of 24 June 1907 "solved" this problem by merging the War College with the Second Division, with the President of the

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The Army War College, Washington Barracks, 1907.

Army War College becoming the Chief of the new Second Division, and with all personnel in the old Second Division being assigned to the War College. The direction in which General Bliss had first pointed the College almost four years earlier in his report to the Chief of Staff was confirmed by an amendment to this General Order, which was to remain in effect until after the First World War. The Order stated, in part, that "the purpose of the War College is to make a practical application of knowledge already acquired, not to impart academic instruction." Furthermore, the War College was "to provide for and to promote advanced study of military subjects for the information of the Chief of Staff."[35]

EPILOGUE

In this period of the War College's history, in short, there was a definite redirection of the goals which Secretary Root had envisioned for the College. Although the change in emphasis from an intellectual to a pragmatic approach to the study of the art of war was necessitated partly by the lack of trained personnel coming to Washington as newly assigned officers, it was due equally to Bliss's misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Root's objectives. Root has been accused of being confused in his interpretation of the models found in Upton and Wilkinson, and of similar confusion in the adaptation and application of these models to the American Army. This is to underestimate his capabilities. Root confronted a difficult problem when he became Secretary. He was faced with the dilemma of having to accomplish proper administration of the newly acquired American colonies, and the only tool with which he had to work was an Army scarcely capable of administering its own affairs with any degree of efficiency.

While he approached the solution to his problems somewhat obliquely in his reports, it is illogical to assume that this obliqueness was due to confusion on his part. The War College provided a convenient vehicle by which he could fulfill not only his major goal but also a second quite important one—reform of the Army's educational system with the keystone of that system to be a college, dedicated to the science of war which would qualify officers for the highest staff duties. Root's general order dealing with the reorganization of the Army's educational system bore a marked resemblance to the model which Root found in Wilkinson and Upton, and it was explicit in defining the relationship between the War College Board and the War College. It appears that Root the reformer was also an excellent strategist with well-defined objectives. While this conclusion is not necessarily apparent in an examination of his Annual Reports, his program emerges much more clearly in the General Orders and in the memoranda of the War College Board and its individual members.

The manner in which Bliss redefined the emphasis of the Army War College has led to the belief that Root's faulty perception of its academic role was responsible for the College's mistaken direction in its early years. But if the transfer of duties from the War College to the General Staff had been made precisely, and if the War College and the Board had maintained their proper relationship to the General Staff, it is likely that Root's programs would have been followed more closely. It is unfortunate that Root retired from the office of the Secretary of War so early, on 31 January 1904, for had he remained, he might well have steered his programs on a straight course toward the formation of the institutions he envisaged.

NOTES

1. Quotation from Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Vintage Edition, New York: Random House, 1957), p. 241. See also John W. Masland and Laurence I. Radway, *Soldiers and Scholars: Military Education and National Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 83-84, 88-89.

2. Huntington, p. 242.

3. For conduct of the Spanish War and its impact on reform of the War Department, especially with regard to the report of and response to the Dodge Commission, see Russell F. Weigley, *History of the*

United States Army (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 305-12; Edward M. Coffman, *The Hilt of the Sword: The Career of Peyton C. March* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 25; Richard W. Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), p. 15; and for some modification of Leopold's conventional judgment see Graham Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1971).

4. Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 11-12; Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root* (2 vols., New York: Dodd, Mead, 1938), I, 226, 241-42.

5. John McAuley Palmer, *America in Arms: The Experience of the United States with Military Organization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 31.

6. George S. Pappas, *Prudens Futuri: The US Army War College, 1901-1967* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Walsworth Publishing Company for The Alumni Association of the US Army War College, 1967, p. 6; Masland and Radway, pp. 80-81.

7. Walter E. Millis, *Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History* (New York: Capricorn, 1956), pp. 173-76; Phillip L. Semsch, "Elihu Root and the General Staff," 27, *Military Affairs* (Spring 1963), 16-17.

8. *Report of the Secretary of War,* 1899, pp. 45-47.

9. William H. Carter, *Creation of the American General Staff,* 68th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Documents, II (Serial 8254), no. 19, pp. 1-2; Palmer, pp. 125-26.

10. Semsch, p. 19; Pappas, pp. 1-2.

11. Jessup, p. 254. The precedent was suggested to Root by General William T. Sherman, who set up the School of Application at Fort Leavenworth by departmental order because he did not want it to be the "subject of legislation" and consequent congressional interference. Huntington, p. 234. Also, Semsch, p. 20.

12. *Report of the Secretary of War, 1899,* p. 49.

13. *Ibid.,* pp. 49-50.

14. US War Department, *Special Order, No. 42,* 19 February 1900, as quoted in Carter, pp. 2-3; also, US War Department, The Adjutant General, Letter of Instruction to Brigadier General Ludlow," 20 February 1900, quoted *Ibid.,* p. 3.

15. George B. Ahern, "Army War College Chronicle, 1899-1917" (Unpublished Manuscript in US Army Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.), pp. 4-6; Carter, p. 4.

16. US War Department, *General Orders, No. 155,* 27 November 1901, as quoted in Carter, p. 11. Hereafter cited as *G. O. 155.*

17. *Ibid.,* p. 12.

18. *Ibid.,* p. 14.

19. *Ibid.,* p. 14.

20. *Report of the Secretary of War, 1901,* p. 25.

21. *Ibid.,* p. 25.

22. Spenser Wilkinson, The Brain of the Army: A Popular Account of the German General Staff (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1895), pp. 154-71; Brevet Major General Emory Upton, *The Armies of Asia and Europe: Embracing Official Reports on the Armies of Japan, China, India, Persia, Italy, Russia, Austria, Germany, France, and England* (New York: D. Appleton, 1878, Reprint edition, New York: Greenwood, 1968), pp. 213-21.

23. US War Department, *General Orders, No. 64,* 1 July 1902, as quoted by Pappas, p. 25; Ahern, p. 9.

24. Ahern, p. 13; Pappas, p. 33.

25. Tasker H. Bliss, *Report of the President of the Army War College,* 58th Congress, 2nd Session, House Documents, IV (Serial 4631), no. 2, pp. 87-98, quotation from p. 94. Emphasis is added.

26. Quoted in Carter, pp. 6-7. Carter's memo contains some confusion, as he alludes to the possibility that the Fort Leavenworth school might be properly titled the War College, with the school in Washington being labeled the Staff College, it being designed to educate officers for future staff duty. He also seems confused as to the exact status a Leavenworth graduate would have at the War College in Washington. He does, however, state that the proposed college in Washington was to hold the highest position in the system, whether it be named Staff or War College.

27. *G. O. 155,* pp. 13-14.

28. Bliss, p. 95.

29. *Report of the Secretary of War, 1899,* pp. 49-50.

30. Bliss, p. 95; *G. O. 155,* p. 14.

31. *G. O. 155,* p. 14.

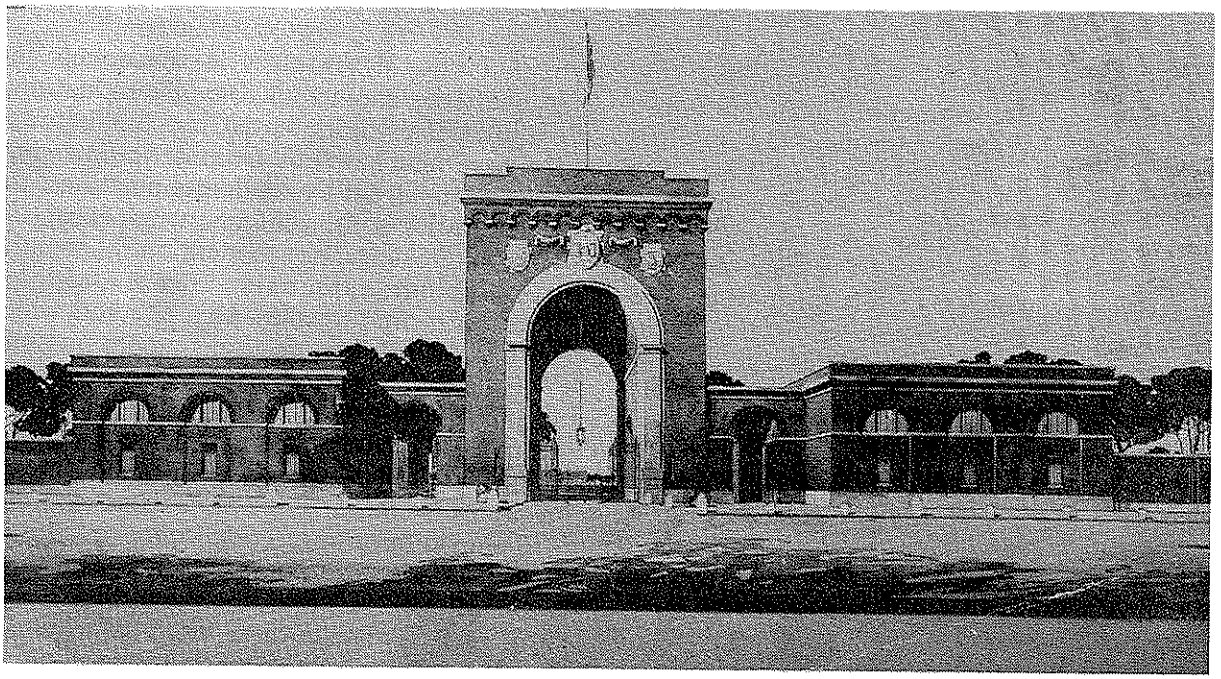
32. Carter, p. 54. Emphasis is added. Some possible confusion is indicated in the Board's recommendation that it should take up the duties of the academic faculty of the War College; but, while General Orders No. 155 states that the Board should

concern itself with the administration of the Army's school system, it does not exclude the possibility that these members might serve as faculty also. What is clear in the Orders, is that the College was to be separated from the Staff, and the memorandum serves to emphasize this distinction. No light is shed upon the question in Bliss's biography, as the author devoted only one short paragraph to Bliss's Presidency. No comment was made upon his term other than that it was a very happy period for Bliss. Frederick Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker: The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934).

33. Ahern, pp. 27-28; Bartow M. Mercer, "Memoranda Pertaining to the Establishment and Operation of the Army War College" (Unpublished Manuscript, National War College Library, Fort McNair, Washington, D. C., 1907), as quoted in Pappas, p. 37.

34. US War Department, *General Orders, No. 115,* 27 June 1904, as quoted by Ahern, p. 30; and *Ibid.,* p. 32.

35. *Report of the Secretary of War, 1908;* Ahern, p. 86; Pappas, pp. 57-58; US War Department, *Compilation of General Orders, Circulars and Bulletins of the War Department: Issued Between February 15, 1881, and December 31, 1915* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), pp. 253-54.



US ARMY

Main Entrance to Washington Barracks, D.C. (1907).