John C. Calhoun as Secretary of War, 1817-1825.

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JOHN C. CALHOUN AS SECRETARY OF WAR,
1817 - 1825

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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John C. Calhoun's severe ghost intruded upon my thoughts several years ago. He has been a dreadful companion to me since. I have spent much time with him, and I have never been comfortable in his presence. This is not surprising. Those who counted themselves among his closest friends often said that this brilliant man, so complex and intense, was too much for their feeble constitutions. Calhoun's ardent confidant, Richard Cralle, once complained, "When I seek relaxation with him, he screws me only the higher in some sort of excitement." Another well-disposed supporter, who was anxious to meet the famous South Carolinian, came away from their first talk saying, "I hate a man who makes me feel my own inferiority." I have much in common with those men.

One can only imagine what tolls my excitements have taken from my supporters. At Louisiana State University, Professor T. Harry Williams watched over my work much longer than simple duty required and entertained throughout an absurdly high opinion of my abilities when he had evidence to the contrary. His skills as a historian need no accolades from me, and whatever quality is betrayed in the following pages comes from my fortunate association with him. My friends and colleagues in the Department of History at Southwest Texas State University have likewise stood by me and have borne my importunities with cheerful good will for a very long time. Without their support at important moments, I doubt very much that this work would be finished yet.
After doing a study of this kind, it is impossible to entertain any notion of scholarly independence. Too much of what follows is based upon the works of earlier students, and I should not have been able to begin this study without their pointing my way. Because so much of this study has been done with the direct help of various librarians and archivists, I feel that I owe them a special debt. Two of these professionals deserve particular mention. Mrs. Marie Capps of the Library of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and Dr. John C. Dann of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan gave me vital assistance and willingly tolerated my intrusions upon their time.

When we were together, the only other person for whom John C. Calhoun would ungrudgingly step aside was my wife, Irene Nicholis Spiller. Everything was easier because of her. Calhoun may have felt the same way too. I could almost see him take a stately bow, his visage relax, and his troubles subside when she came into view. He was, after all, a southern gentleman.
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ABSTRACT

The biography of John C. Calhoun published in 1843 with his sanction was intended to assist in Calhoun's election to the presidency in 1844. Only a few pages of this work were devoted to an accounting of Calhoun's career as President James Monroe's Secretary of War from 1817 to 1825. Scholarship has generally reflected this biography's lack of detail concerning this part of Calhoun's official life, and yet it was while he was Secretary of War that Calhoun first became a presidential contender in the hard-fought campaign of 1824. Not only his participation in that campaign, but indeed his every activity during this period provided Calhoun with a practical education in the relationships between politics and military policy in America.

The fact that Calhoun made his first attempt to become President while he was a Secretary of War had salient consequences for the American military establishment also. Among military historians Calhoun has been well regarded for his attempts to modernize the War Department and the American Army, but the political context in which Calhoun's reforms were attempted rarely has entered into historical evaluations; the result has been the considerable distortion of the origins and meaning of these reforms. Thus the major aims of this study are an examination of the confluence of Calhoun's political and official roles, the impact his association with the War Department had upon his career, and the Regular Army's reaction to the political attention which Calhoun attracted to it.
Because the clash between Calhoun's ambitions for political advancement and military reform exposed the military establishment to considerable stress, an attempt has been made to examine the inner workings of the War Department in order to evaluate the impact of politics upon this institution. Subjects of particular concern are the provenance and effect of Calhoun's reforms, his influence upon the making and administering of national defense policy, and his execution of American Indian policy. And because the War Department was one of the most fiscally important agencies of government, Calhoun's role in the monitoring of public expenditures at a time of national economic distress is discussed.

The recent publication of the Papers of John C. Calhoun by the University of South Carolina Press made it possible to consider a wider range of topics than earlier studies, and to expand the scope of this work to include relevant collections of official and private papers bearing upon Calhoun's activities. In addition to these sources, little-used collections at the William L. Clements Library of the University of Michigan, and the Library of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, were instrumental in explaining Calhoun's part in the election of 1824 and his associations with the "defense entrepreneurs" of the era of good feelings.
INTRODUCTION

John C. Calhoun was President James Monroe's Secretary of War from December, 1817, to March, 1825. Although he was the youngest and perhaps the least experienced of Monroe's cabinet members, Calhoun fashioned for himself a unique place in the military and political annals of the United States while he held this post. Calhoun's stewardship over the American military establishment required that he execute many of the policies which stamped Monroe's government as one of the most progressive in the early history of the republic, and Calhoun's ascent from congressman to presidential candidate in the course of a dozen years was immeasurably aided by his accomplishments as the civilian chief of the War Department.

A question yet to be settled by the time Calhoun came to the War Department was the precise role of the military establishment in the democratic republic. Aged republican canons taught that standing armies were dangerous in times of peace, so dangerous that they should be suppressed even at the cost of early defeats when war did come. Accordingly, for the first forty years of the nation's history, the American military establishment had been estranged from the nation at large, neither threatening nor encouraging the progress of civil life. The institutional life of the military establishment was governed chiefly by these republican fears rather than by visions of republican progress.
Many of the postwar defense programs initiated by Calhoun were frankly aimed at rectifying the traditional estrangement of the army and the nation. Deliberately attempting to expand the army's range of functions, Calhoun and his most talented officers put the army to tasks heretofore seldom contemplated by the nation's political leaders. By using the army to explore the West, to make surveys, and to construct internal improvements, Calhoun and his staff at the War Department sought to strike a bargain with the nation. If by these new activities the army could assist the nation in peace as well as in war, the military establishment could earn for itself a secure place in the future from a grateful nation. Military institutions could thereby become an integral part of national life.

While Calhoun explored new ways to use a peacetime military force, he also set about reforming the organization of the War Department and the army. Techniques of management long applied to other executive departments seemingly had been ignored by previous secretaries of war. At Calhoun's insistence clearer lines of authority and responsibility were devised: a new general staff system which Calhoun aided in creating replaced a military command structure that was sustained more by personal than institutional authority. Calhoun saw to it that new regulations were laid down which demanded a stricter exercise of responsibility from officers now held accountable for their conduct of official business. New fiscal controls were devised for War Department disbursements which minimized the opportunities for official waste and peculation which had existed almost by tradition.
Yet these organizational reforms reflected only a part of Calhoun's larger ambitions. Even as he endeared the army to the nation through the medium of good works, and as he invested the military establishment with a new efficiency, it was Calhoun's intention to build a professional army in the United States for the first time. Any object which promised this end received Calhoun's support. In this ambition he could be certain of the enthusiastic assistance of a group of young officers who were already devoted to making their visions of military professionalism come true. With Calhoun's support, Major Sylvanus Thayer's West Point took its first steps toward providing the American army with professionally educated officers. Various other military intellectuals found the Secretary of War to be a valuable patron who followed their activities with unwavering interest. Under the auspices of Calhoun's War Department several military works were translated from the French and thousands of dollars' worth of other treatises on military subjects were imported from Europe to the United States so that army officers could take advantage of the most recent advances in the "science of war."

Although it would have been expedient for him to do so, Calhoun made no apologies, then or later, for his avid support of a modernized and professional military establishment. It is not surprising that his avidity left him open to charges of militarism. His opponents used such charges against him with good effect during his contest for the presidency. Their anti-military rhetoric showed clearly enough that these ancient suspicions were still alive in some quarters, but they were hardly accurate when they were turned on John C. Calhoun. Calhoun was
the sort of man who, although he created his own enthusiasms, was never overtaken completely by them. He did not need to mimic imagined military virtues. The standards of improvement he insisted that the military establishment meet were imminently civilian standards; for Calhoun one index of improvement for the army was how well it performed heretofore civilian tasks. Calhoun's opponents claimed that, if he could, he would make American into a garrison state, whose swollen defense budgets maintained a parasitic and dangerous army, but it is doubtful that Calhoun would ever have gone this far. Calhoun did not ingratiate himself to the military establishment by imitating the mentality that was associated with it, but by providing a bridge between the military and civilian worlds of the 1820s.

It is fruitless to speculate how the American military establishment would have fared had not Calhoun become embroiled in presidential politics. That he was politically involved almost from the beginning of his tenure in the War Office meant that military policy would become even more a matter of partisan contention than it normally was. Calhoun's status as one of America's leading political men was a two-edged sword as far as the army's fortunes were concerned. If Calhoun's brilliance and influence could instill the army with a new efficiency and pride in achievement, his role as a Secretary-politician could jeopardize any advancements which he happened to effect. Not originally aware of the conflict his duty and ambition might cause, Calhoun quickly became so. From 1817 to 1819 were the creative years for the Secretary of War. By 1820 the War Department was being assailed by Calhoun's political opponents in an attempt to discredit the Monroe administration's
nationalistic policy. After 1821, when all of the prospective presidents began their campaigns, the War Department and the army more clearly became Calhoun's surrogates in the congressional battles which erupted.

Caught up in the Secretary of War's ambitions, the army's men resorted to their traditional defenses: past glories and sacrifices were recounted, modern dangers were detailed to a defenseless nation. They pointed to the new military professionalism which was sensitive to the requirements of liberty as well as to the needs of expansion and progress. And though there was no danger that the army would be abolished once more, just for good measure the army's friends argued for its continued existence. It is a fair demonstration, also, of Calhoun's popularity among these officers that none of them blamed the Secretary of War for focusing attention upon their army; as soldiers in a democratic republic, they largely accepted the prejudices against them as their lot.

The fact that the Secretary of War was running for the presidency was nonetheless unsettling to some, and the participation of several high-ranking officers in Calhoun's campaign allowed his opponents to conjure up even darker visions of military despotism. Yet these politicians in mufti acted more out of self-interest than institutional loyalty; it was assumed that Calhoun's election would be good for the military establishment, and if any of them had notions about making a praetorian choice, there is no evidence of it. On the contrary, these soldier-politicians embraced the civilian political system as ardently as any partisan—as ardently, in fact, as their Secretary of War.

Contemporaries often said that Calhoun was a visionary; coming from pragmatic politicians, this was no recommendation. But it is
evident that John C. Calhoun was far more representative of his age and its thought than these observers believed. He was only slightly younger than the republic itself, and in his character and thought one can see the same ambitions and anxieties which beset the nation at large. Calhoun and his nation experienced together several of the most salient transformations in the history of the nation: his conversion from nationalism to sectionalism, because he was no much at the center of affairs, was hardly less important than that of the nation itself. During the election of 1824, he saw at first hand the emergence of a new electorate, more massive and importunate than any that had come before, and one which would change the face of American politics thereafter. His time in the War Department coincided with that in which the nation was reconsidering its steadfastly anti-military traditions, and in which the military men of America were striving to replace old amateur forms of defense with a new and "scientific" system, based upon professionalism.

Calhoun is therefore the central figure in the pages which follow, but this study is by no means an attempt at biography—that has already been done, and well. Calhoun's part here is solely confined to his activities as a Secretary of War and a politician. It is a part that is nevertheless crucial: Calhoun was the first American politician to attempt to build a bridge between the nation and its army, a fact that is equally important to him, the military establishment, and the nation which they served.
CHAPTER I

1817: THE NATION, THE SECRETARIAT,
AND MR. CALHOUN

In November, 1817, John Caldwell Calhoun, of late a congressman from the Abbeville district of South Carolina, left his home for Washington and his new post as President James Monroe's Secretary of War. Matters of war and peace were now very much Calhoun's concern, and as he traveled northward, Calhoun could reflect that for the first time in his memory, the world was enjoying a new tranquility. The man who was held most responsible for disturbing the peace of the Atlantic nations, Napoleon Bonaparte, had been locked away on St. Helena for nearly two years. Almost daily, Calhoun could see in the newspapers the latest reports of the infamous exile's doings.1 But the new Secretary of War knew, as did any thinking man, that peace was not won so simply—the great Corsican could go to his tomb, and national dangers could still persist.

America's latest war was over; the peace was just two years old. A long period was beginning in which the United States would be free from external danger, but only a few of America's leaders realized this. John Randolph of Roanoke, always the errant mind, believed that America's wars were over, but he was not given to thinking with majorities. Calhoun was more in concert with the national mood in warning

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1Niles' Weekly Register, November 22, 1817; National Intelligencer, April 10, April 11, April 14, and April 15, 1817.
that Britain would continually pose a future danger to the United States. Eight years later, an unembarrassed Calhoun would point to the Northwest Territory, which he thought was still an object of British desires. But by then voices which sounded such alarms were rarer; by then the United States had newer problems, less international, more self-considered. For now though the Atlantic world was as peaceful as it could have been.

The nature of the post-Napoleonic peace was such that Americans, public and private, had to content themselves with a less than secure world, and with a mixture of apprehension, vanity, and relief. The peace was unsettled and unsettling. One reason for this condition was that the enemy which the United States had stalemated recently was elsewhere triumphant as the first power among the Allies, and in 1817 the Allies were busily putting Europe into their own kind of order. At the end of 1818, one young American officer reported from France that there were 700,000 Allied soldiers in Paris and that the Louvre had been so looted that only four hundred works of art remained in the great palace. The military schools of France, including the famed École Polytechnique, had been turned into barracks and stables. Since France once had been

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4 Sylvanus Thayer to Joseph Swift, October 10, 1815, The Papers of Sylvanus Thayer, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York (hereafter cited as Thayer Papers).

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the only other modern republic and was now occupied by the monarchist
Allies, some believed that the United States was being given a preview
of its own fate. Samuel du Pont de Nemours, no friend of Napoleon's nor
the Allies', warned James Monroe, "Il s'agit d'êgorger la République
américaine, après avoir assassiné la nation Française." ⁵

For a world now thoroughly inured to war, there were many poten­
tial causes of conflict easily found in the western hemisphere. Too
much accustomed to strife, perhaps, some men in ships sortied into the
southern Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico to continue their private wars,
and brigands of every description played along the southern coasts.
Creek Indians and fugitive slaves attached themselves to this outlawry
in the borderlands of Spanish Florida. Nine months in office, President
Monroe had determined to exterminate the notorious "establishments" at
Amelia Island and Galvez Town. ⁶ Before the year was very old, Americans
were fighting once again on the southern borders. ⁷ Naturally, the
Spanish authorities were alarmed.

Spain's South American colonies were in the first stages of
revolt; simply the proximity of the United States to these colonies
meant that there was a possibility that the conflict there would somehow

⁵ "It is a question of cutting the throat of the American Repub­
lic, after having assassinated the French nation." Pierre Samuel du
Pont de Nemours to James Monroe, February 26, 1817, The Papers of James
Monroe Papers, LC).

⁶ James Monroe to James Madison, November 24, 1817, Stanislaus M.
Hamilton, ed., The Writings of James Monroe, 7 vols. (New York: AMS

⁷ John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, December 26, 1817, John S.
Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, 7 vols. (Washington:
The Carnegie Institute, 1926-35), 2:341-42 (hereafter cited as Bassett,
Jackson Correspondence).
involve the United States. This compounded the difficulties between the United States and Spain, especially after General Andrew Jackson invaded Florida in 1818. But Britain was involved too. In June, 1817, Monroe warned Jackson, then commanding the Regular Army's Southern Division, to beware of future developments; he wrote:

Affairs are unsettled with Spain and by recent intelligence from England, it appears that the British govt., is equipping two large Squadrons for the Spanish provinces. . . . It seems probable, that this movement [sic], of the British govt., may produce serious consequences, among which, war, with other powers, may be reasonably presumed. 

The British presence still hung like a pall over North America two years after the war's end, and the Rush-Bagot agreement made in April did little to dispel it. On the northwestern frontiers, British officers, Indian agents, and fur company men in Canada still exercised an influence on their old Indian allies that made its effect felt even over the international border. One American Indian agent in Green Bay insisted that the Indians living in U. S. territory somehow be quarantined from the pernicious British. Later that year, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs pessimistically inquired of his western agents whether there were any "lurking evils, or latent fires" in that region which might break out in the "event of British or Indian wars."

Interestingly, the British felt similar anxieties about America's intentions. The Times voiced apprehension about the growing

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8James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, June 2, 1817, ibid., 2:296.
10Thomas L. McKenney to George Graham, September 30, 1817, ibid., 19:480.
power of Britain's late enemy:

We cannot calculate on perpetual concord with the United States. Their first war with England made them independent—their second made them formidable. They have ... cultivated with more assured and unbending pertinacity the means and resources both of war and peace. They now have for the first time a standing army, a moveable militia, & a victorious marine. Their next war will be offensive. . . ."11

Mutually suspicious, neither Britain nor the United States seemed inclined to demobilize quickly; it was necessary to remain on one's guard in a dangerous if momentarily quiescent world. But the price of vigilance and defense was great; during the war America's national debt had soared beyond one hundred million dollars, an astonishing figure for a Republican government. Although this debt was considerably offset by very high customs receipts, soon after the war's end some lawmakers called for a retreat in expenditures and an abolition of internal taxes. Military costs, comprising the largest single outlay of public money, was the logical place to begin the retrenchment. In early 1817, the House Committee on Military Affairs offered a resolution to consider reductions in military strength. Jeremiah Mason of New Hampshire, speaking in support said, "In modern warfare, national wealth is essentially national strength. With a view, therefore, to public safety alone, whatever tends unnecessarily to the impoverishment of the national treasury, should be cautiously avoided."

There had been a consistent difference of opinion on the necessity of maintaining a large "peace establishment" since just after the war. As time went by, advocates of military retrenchment would gain ground, but memories of the

11 National Intelligencer, June 2, 1817.

12 Ibid., March 11, 1817.
war were still too fresh not to be effectively used in rebuttal. On this particular occasion James Barbour averred to the lack of preparedness before the British raid on Washington in 1814; this was a similar time, he said, when fatal errors could be made all too easily.  

Earlier, Calhoun and his fellow South Carolinian, Williams Lowndes, had pointedly reminded their colleagues of Europe's "habit of war" during the last two decades, and questioned the wisdom of going "on in the old imbecile mode, contributing nothing to the honor, nothing to the reputation of the country."  

The new President stood against retrenchment sentiments and repeatedly sounded the theme of vigilant defense. A goodly part of Monroe's inaugural address concerned the need for continued military protection. "Experiencing the fortune of other nations," he argued, "the United States may again be involved in war . . . we should disregard the faithful admonition of experience if we did not expect it."  

At mid-year, Monroe made a widely-publicized tour of the North, which three years before had been the center of war resistance. In New York, Boston, and elsewhere, Monroe's ideas on the national defense were received warmly. Addressing a crowd of notables in New York, Monroe told the gathering that "the honorable termination of the late war . . . should not lull us into repose." Monroe's views would prevail, but

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13 Ibid., March 12, 1817.
16 A Narrative of a tour of observation, made during the summer of 1817, by James Monroe, president of the United States, through the
only so long as prosperity continued and the war was so fresh in the popular and political minds; a few years later, when the Treasury showed a deficit of two million dollars, retrenchment would succeed.

Most Americans in 1817, however, had little faith in humanity's peacefulness. Since the Declaration of Independence scarcely a year had passed when Americans were not fighting somewhere. Most of them would have agreed with John Quincy Adams, who, when asked to support the new pacifist journal *Friend of Peace*, replied that pacifism was impractical; if tried, "the human flock would soon be butchered by one or a few."¹⁷

The United States had embarked upon the War of 1812 at least in part because it was possessed by the same sensitivity to real or fancied insult which plagues all immature nations. The same immoderation which involved the United States in a world war sustained it in its imagined triumph. Europe and Britain were watched closely for signs that they coveted America's success and prosperity. Conceivably, hostile envy could be a motive for renewed conflict; certainly, the jealousy of north-eastern and north-western departments of the Union; with a view to the examination of their several military defences (Philadelphia: S. A. Mitchell, H. Ames, Clark and Raser, Printers, 1818), pp. 38-9 (hereafter cited as *Narrative of a Tour*).

foreign powers was easily harnessed to the need for defense and vigilance of the variety which Monroe proposed.\textsuperscript{18}

Thus, a common idea which arose in the postwar years was that America was constantly in Europe's spyglass. "The British press teem with notices of the United States—every movement we make seems carefully watched, and minutely scanned," wrote Hezekiah Niles of \textit{Niles' Weekly Register}.\textsuperscript{19} Speaker of the House Henry Clay, while bragging shamelessly about America's unique good fortune, told his fellow legislators that this prosperity was sure to affect other countries "jealous of our rising importance."\textsuperscript{20} Not all of this was ignorant bravado; America was prospering noticeably. What made these contentions at all palatable was that they had a bit of truth about them, and that they were held on both sides of the Atlantic. With poorly disguised pride, Niles reported, "\textit{The Times calls us Britain's powerful descendant and rival.}"\textsuperscript{21}

Such jealousy could foretell new international problems for the United States, as many said, or it could give way to friendly admiration. Perhaps conditioned by their desire to see admiration where little existed, Americans returning from abroad told of new European attitudes toward the United States. As Niles put it, "Every one that has traveled in Europe since the treaty of Ghent, is sensible of the vast change that has been made in our favor. The opinions about us are

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19}\textit{Niles' Weekly Register}, April 25, 1818.
  \item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., April 18, 1818.
  \item \textsuperscript{21}Ibid., April 25, 1818.
\end{itemize}
as extravagant in our favor now, as they were against us some years ago."22

For one source of their newfound pride, Americans looked back to the war, and gleaned only the most pleasing parts. Several unexpected naval successes were commonly discussed. The hapless Briton who came to postwar America without knowing his recent naval history was at a disadvantage in social intercourse. Henry Bradshaw Fearon, upon arriving in 1817, remarked:

A short residence here . . . will force upon the attention of all persons an acquaintance with naval history. Every man, woman, and child in America talk about the Guerriere, the Java, the Macedonias, the Frolics, Lake Erie, Lake Champlain, and the 'vast inferiority of British sailors and soldiers to the true-blooded Yankies' . . . . A knowledge of such events is certainly desirable; but to cause them, as they are here, to be the never-ending theme of conversation, the circle round which every thing revolves, is to make the going into society a punishment instead of a pleasure.23

Naturally, matters of refinement such as "the sciences, morals, and literature" suffered terribly in social transactions. Fearon told of an episode on the occasion of the visit of Francis Jeffrey, editor of the Edinburgh Review. When James Madison asked Jeffrey, "What did you think of the war, Mr. Jeffrey?" he was apparently so sick of answering the question that he replied, "Upon my word, Sir, I did not hear of it."24

Sometimes this yearning for praise and approval from foreign quarters was not always so pointed, and Americans were not always so unreasoning in discussing their nation's military feats. One naval

22Ibid., August 30, 1817.


24Ibid.
officer with whom Fearon spoke while on a leisurely drift down the
Hudson "much pleased" Fearon with his temperate remarks. "I make no
claims to superiority over the British," the officer said. "Men cannot
be braver than they are." The most the young officer would allow was
that Americans in the navy, at least, were more disciplined and not so
sure of success as were their adversaries.25 To one American, the
boundless pride which so assaulted the senses of Henry Fearon and other
visitors was presumptuous and arrogant. The newly-installed Secretary
of State, John Quincy Adams, fumed to his diary, "When it is so noto­
rious that the issue of our late war with her [Britain] was at best a
drawn game, there is nothing but the most egregious national vanity that
can turn it into a triumph."26

Whether America was triumphant indeed, or merely vainglorious:
as Adams suggested, the United States did have an allure to foreigners
in 1817; eighty per cent of all immigration coming through New York was
from the British Empire.27 Following the war, several Britishers made a
reconnaissance of the nation and agreed that the country was best suited
for the laboring or middling classes.28 There was a considerable thirst

25 Ibid., p. 56.

26 Charles Francis Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, com­
prising portions of his Diary from 1795 to 1848, 12 vols. (Philadelphia:
J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1874-77), 4:33 (hereafter cited as Adams,
Diary).

27 Niles' Weekly Register, January 24, 1818.

28 W. Faux, Memorable Days in America, being a Journal of a Tour
to the United States, principally undertaken to ascertain, by positive
evidence, the condition and probable prospects of British Emigrants;
including Accounts of Mr. Birkbeck's settlement in the Illinois (London:
W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1823), pp. 109, 134 (hereafter cited as
Faux, Memorable Days in America); Niles' Weekly Register, November 29,
1817.

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for labor in the East, where European redemptioners were still the objects of frenzied bidding on the Philadelphia docks. Men brought a price of eighty dollars, women seventy, and boys sixty.  

"There is no want of employment here if disposed to work," said one immigrant who had obtained a place just two hours after disembarking.

The postwar British travelers were at pains to remark that in America, few could expect to attain great wealth, but that also the worst conditions in the United States stood no comparison to those in England or on the continent. However dim America may have looked, said the American Traveller and Emigrant's Guide, "the first and principle [sic] inducement . . . is the total absence of anxiety respecting the future success of a family." One observer reported meeting two of his countrymen in a mechanic's hall in Pittsburgh, where one of the men, a stonemason, complained that there was "nothing in America but d--d Yankies and rogues, and that it was not fit for a dog to live in." His friend replied, "You forget you were starving in England. Say what you will, this, after all, is the best poor man's country." The stonemason finally agreed, if only it "was free from dirty, cheating Yankies."

Thus the "low ease" with which Americans seemed to live (as one Englishman put it) was sufficiently inspiring to cause an immigration of

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30 The American Traveller and Emigrant's Guide; containing a Description of British Possessions in North America; particularly Quebec, Montreal, La Chine, and the Flourishing Town of Kingston, in the Canadas; of Hartford, in Connecticut, the Paradise of the United States; and various extracts from the Letters of Emigrants (Shrewsbury, England: Printed and Published by C. Hulbert, 1817), p. 19.

31 Ibid., p. 13.

32 Fearon, Sketches of America, p. 207.
such magnitude that some in Great Britain feared for the prosperity of
the realm. The Americans were castigated for being immorally willing to
take in any "miscreant" or "malcontent" who aided in the debilitation of
Great Britain while promoting the wealth of the United States.33 One
Times correspondent complained that Canada was particularly vulnerable
because of its proximity to the United States. He wrote that no longer
could Britain think of sending colonists to Canada, since they would
only desert to the Americans once there.34

One group of English farmers was, however, sufficiently prosp-
erous to send a man to make an extensive inspection of the United
States in order to select a site for settlement. Henry Fearon argued
that the nature of emigration had "assumed a totally new character: it
was no longer merely the poor, the idle, the profligate, or the wildly
speculative," who emigrated, "but men also of capital, of industry, of
sober habits and regular pursuits."35 The sight of "agriculturalists
and artificers . . . in the full tide of emigration" led some British
observers at home to call for restrictions on leaving the country.36

The United States was entering its middle age. As if by a
signal, the end of the war loosed an internal migration, chiefly to the
West. As this pace of restlessness quickened, one visitor noted:

The small and middling tradesmen do not make much exertion, live
easily, save no money, and appear to care nothing about either the

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33 The Times, n.d., quoted in Niles' Weekly Register, November 27, 1819.
34 The Times, April 5, 1817, quoted in National Intelligencer, June 2, 1817.
35 Fearon, Sketches of America, p. vii.
36 The Times, n.d., quoted in Niles' Weekly Register, November 27, 1819.
present or the future. If they find business getting bad, they do, what is called, "sell out," and pack up for the "back country."\footnote{37} The volume of traffic on the Pennsylvania pike increased accordingly.

On a journey between Chambersburgh and Pittsburgh, one hundred and three "stage-waggons" were counted going West, and only seventy-nine going the other way. Farther West, near Cincinnati, "every immigrant tells you he is going to Ohio; when you arrive in Ohio, its inhabitants are 'moving' to Missouri and Alabama."\footnote{38}

After a rough overland journey, the Ohio and Mississippi rivers waited to provide the traveler cheap, relatively easy transportation. The immigrant or merchant could scudd down the Ohio at four miles per hour, and it could be navigated at night. Economy-minded travelers on the Ohio could buy a skiff, tie on to an ark, and follow it down the river for seven hundred miles at a cost of fourteen dollars.\footnote{39} Naturally, cordelling up the rivers was more expensive, slower, and more dangerous. Newly-arrived merchants on the frontier who did not figure their costs closely were often frustrated in their attempts to start trading houses in the Mississippi valley. Goods from New Orleans upriver were shipped at five cents on the pound; downriver passage from Ohio was thirty days, but upriver it was closer to a hundred.\footnote{40} Nevertheless, trade between East and West did not seem depressed. In 1817

\footnote{37}{Fearon, Sketches of America, p. 172.}

\footnote{38}{Ibid., pp. 196, 234.}

\footnote{39}{William Cobbett, A Year's Residence in the United States of America, in three parts (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1818-19), pp. 460-61.}

\footnote{40}{Fearon, Sketches of America, pp. 432-33.}
thirteen thousand wagons arrived at Pittsburg from the eastern cities, and the value of goods brought from the East was estimated to have been seventeen million dollars. 41

Western cities which before the war were little more than depressing bogs now took on a new luster. Pittsburg and Cincinnati marketed luxury items and commodities which were newly demanded by Trans-Appalachian folk. On his trip into this district, Fearon was taken with displays of goods he hardly expected to find so far from the "civilized" parts of the country. He wrote to his sponsors in England:

Spots in Tennessee, in Ohio and Kentucky, that within the lifetime of even young men, witnessed only the arrow and the scalping knife, now present to the traveller articles of elegance and modes of luxury which might rival the displays of London and Paris, while, within the last half century, the beasts of the forests, and man more savage than the beast, were the only inhabitants of the whole of that immense tract peculiarly denominated the "Western Country." 42

As American society expanded physically and materially, older problems would acquire a new edge of urgency. The vast extent of the country, said John Calhoun in 1817, was the strength of the United States. Speaking to the House of Representatives in support of internal improvements, Calhoun reminded his fellow legislators that there were two sides to the question of growth, for as the country expanded the possibility of disunion so increased. Distance, more than any other factor, had the potential to "estrange man from man." To prevent the estrangements of distance, he said, "let us conquer space." 43

42 Fearon, Sketches of America, pp. 204-05.
The centrifugal dangers which threatened a vast democracy were a well-worn Republican creed by Calhoun's time, but Calhoun had in mind more specifically the conduct of the New England states during the recent war. When, following Ghent, these states seemed to return to the national fold, no one was more pleased than Calhoun, to whom wartime threats of disunion from that part of the country were the rankest anathema. "Factious opposition," he said, was an enemy not only to union, but to progress as well; if a vibrant union was always in danger of spinning to destruction, a stagnant union would sicken and die.  

A nation unified in prosperity and progress was the fit antidote to the disease of inaction. In times of war, no less than in peace, Calhoun believed, the life of the republic depended upon the very absence of dangerous and willful factions (but harmless and beneficial factions were never acknowledged in 1817). "The hearty concurrence of the people in such a war," he said, "constitutes the principal force of the country. It is as essential as cannon and ball." The new unanimity of purpose Calhoun believed he saw in 1817 encouraged his view of the American future. With faction declining, things could be done; "when party spirit is high, it is very difficult to undertake reformat... happily for us, party spirit has in a great measure disappeared."

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When President Monroe made his tour of the northern states in the summer of 1817, he may have embarked with some trepidation at what he would find in a section so recently hostile to the war and to the central government. Monroe chose to see the northern states as doing some sort of penance for their recent factionalism. He was amazed and pleased by the warm reception he received. Newspapers watching the tour reported cautiously, "The real or apparent moderation of party spirit, has caused the present to be called the 'era of good feelings.'" From Plattsburg, New York, the mid-point of his visit, Monroe wrote to Thomas Jefferson:

In the principal towns, the whole population, has been in motion, and in a manner, to produce the greatest degree of excitement possible. In the Eastern States of our Union, I have seen, distinctly, that the great cause, which brought the people forward, was a conviction, that they had suffered in their character, by their conduct in the late war, and a desire to show, that unfavorable opinions, and as they thought, unjust, had been form'd in regard to their views and principles. They said the opportunity, which the casual incident of my tour presented to them, of making a strong exertion, to restore themselves to the confidence and ground which they had formerly held, in the affections of their brethren, in other quarters. I have seen enough to satisfy me, that the great mass of our fellow-citizens, in the Eastern States are as firmly attached to the union and to republican govt. as I have always believ'd or could desire them to be. 48

The genesis of the "era of good feelings" was the war itself. The "factious opposition" of which Calhoun and likeminded Republicans spoke had reached a crescendo when the Federalist-dominated Hartford Convention met in late 1814 and dispatched agents to Washington to press the claims of a resisting New England. The agents arrived just after the news of Ghent had reached the capital, and, in the words of historian George Dangerfield, returned to New England carrying with them

47 Niles' Weekly Register, November 8, 1817.
"the ruin of the Federalist Party." In the election of 1816, only three states voted Federalist; if the occasionally loyal opposition was not dead, it was certainly dying.49

The frailty of the Federalist party was further confirmed by the actions of the Republicans in 1816. As if they sensed no real danger from their opposition, the Republicans allowed themselves the luxury of disagreement over a presidential candidate.50 The real contest for the presidency was fought out in the Republicans' own caucus. Monroe expected to receive the prize in payment for his long and meritorious service, if nothing else, but other Republicans proposed their own man, William H. Crawford of Georgia. Even though Crawford refused to publicly acknowledge his candidacy, the close caucus vote of sixty-five to fifty-four in favor of Monroe demonstrated for all Republicans to see that majority parties were not immune to their own brand of factional stress.51

By their very absence of power, the Federalists could contribute to discord within the ranks of the Republicans. With the Federalists all but vanquished, Republicanism could collapse of its own weight, the implosions seeding still new factions. The baneful effect of party upon the Republic was an American perennial, and it was generally assumed that the paramount evil of party was that factional monopoly could easily


grow out of party government. So much did Monroe look for an end to partisanism that he sometimes saw no faction when faction was rife. 52

Jefferson had expressed the same view in 1807; he said then, "When the republicans should have put all things under their feet, [I expect] they would schismatize among themselves. I always expected, too, that whatever names the parties might bear, the real division would be into moderate and ardent republicanism." 53

Jefferson came close in this statement to saying that parties were an inevitable feature of democratic government. Nevertheless, when in 1817 Americans applauded the end of factional strife, they referred to strife between, not within, parties. Because thinking politicians thought that parties were unnatural in a truly republican form of government, they were forced to look elsewhere for the causes of faction. International unrest offered a likely cause to some. One Ohioan remarked:

The political state of Europe, which, during the reign of French despotism, operated so strongly upon the feelings and passions of American politicians, has in it nothing now to excite either their hopes or their fears. The two great parties are pretty well agreed upon the course the national government ought to pursue. 54

Such pronouncements were a painless way for Federalists, in particular, to acknowledge the decline of their party's strength.

Excited by foreign assaults upon its political system, the republic had thrown up parties as well as armies for its defense. The end of these

52James Monroe to James Madison, May 10, 1822, Monroe Papers LC.


54Ohio Federalist, May 8, 1817, quoted in National Intelligencer, May 28, 1817.

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intrigues argued likewise for an end to the need for such protections, political or military. In this way, the Federalists' decline could be seen as a symptom of the nation's political health and military well-being. So said a Federalist newspaper in 1817:

One great cause of a violent diversity of opinion in this country has passed away; we mean the difference of opinion which existed in relation to the friendship and enmity of foreign nations. Napoleon no longer moves and agitates the political world. . . . We are happy in observing a more auspicious epoch dawning upon us.55

Thus, while both parties applauded the beginning of an era, they did so for different reasons entirely. The Federalists sought ways to contend with their party's demise. The Republicans, on the other hand, were sure enough that the new era would be a Republican one. However, the agitations in their caucus of 1816 showed, if anything, that the Republicans were not overburdened with unanimity. The advent of this curious era, then, meant only that Federalism was in decline and told relatively little of the Republican future.

At the confluence of national political—and therefore Republican—power in 1817 stood the city of Washington. In a very real sense, national politics were sustained by doings in the capital. At a time when central government was viewed with some suspicion, the mechanism which disposed of the presidency—the congressional caucus—was firmly a city institution.56 Officials of government served two constituencies when in the capital: Washington's society, and their supporters


at home, and at times it is difficult to conclude which constituency mattered most to them. It was the Republican congressional caucus which held political power so close to the seat of government. When the caucus came under attack in 1820, political power began its diaspora, and politics became more provincial; never again would the Washington environment be so intimately important to the building of personal political power.  

Monroe's name had stood before the caucus in 1816, and in March, 1817, after a bitterly cold winter, a clear day welcomed the new executive as he made his inaugural address in the open air. As a preview of stormier days ahead, the House of Representatives and the Senate could not agree on final arrangements for the ceremony to be held in the House chamber. It was said that Henry Clay, angered by not having received the post of Secretary of State, was behind the contretemps. But all that seemed not to matter for the present; thousands of avid citizens watched the ritual. It was the largest demonstration of popular curiosity yet to witness the inaugural ceremony.  

The leaders of Washington's society were curious about the new President too. With the glittering Madisons gone, "people seem to think we shall have great changes in social intercourse and customs," wrote one city doyenne. And because "Mr. and Mrs. Monroe's manners will give a tone to all the rest," the social lions were sure to be disheartened. Some months after the inauguration, Margaret Bayard Smith reported that "few persons are admitted to the great house and not a single lady has as yet seen Mrs. Monroe," with but one exception. While Washington's  

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58 National Intelligencer, March 5, 1817; Ammon, Monroe, pp. 367-68.

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social scene changed with the presidents, the Monroes' sociability apparently had not. "Altho' they have lived 7 years in W[ashington] both Mr. and Mrs. Monroe are perfect strangers not only to me but to all the citizens." 

Such matters were of no mean consequence in Washington. A great deal of public business was conducted at teas, balls, and private dinners. The social season corresponded precisely to those times when the Congress was in session; when it was not, little gaiety could be found in the city, save in the sloughs which made Washington notorious as an unhealthy summer place. As the public business commenced in the fall, invitations flew from residence to residence, and it was upon these invitations that much of the society and business of Washington ran.

Because the Madisons had functioned so masterfully in this atmosphere, the timid Monroes were bound to lose the battle of comparisons with their predecessors. Those who attended President Monroe's first drawing room were greeted by a "beggarly row of empty chairs," only to find that an indispensable element of any successful soiree—the female—was sadly lacking. There were only five in attendance.

60 See Adams, Diary, 4:30-1, for one of many examples.
61 Faux, Memorable Days in America, p. 87.
62 Fearon, Sketches of America, p. 291.
that henceforth visitors could be seen only by appointment and at official functions. Mrs. Monroe also refused to pay calls upon city ladies, as did her daughter. There was an anguished outcry in society. Then the senators, their dignity wounded, declared that they would not pay first calls either. John Quincy Adams, as Secretary of State, was asked to solve this grave impasse. Only in a society where status was so keenly felt could such picayune resentments be elevated to a hostility of this intensity. What made Washington society run was politics, and naturally some persons were better than others at mixing the two to their advantage. This aspect of the city did not change substantially during the next decade. Just before the end of the Monroe presidency, George Ticknor, down from Harvard, paid a visit to the city. To a friend back home, he wrote:

The regular inhabitants of the city, from the President downwards, lead a hard and troublesome life. It is their business to entertain strangers, and they do it, each one according to his means, but all in a very laborious way. . . . The truth is, that at Washington society is the business of life. . . . People have nothing but one another to amuse themselves with; and as it is thus obviously for every man's interest to be agreeable, you may be sure very few fail.

Ticknor added that his only objection to Washington's society was that "there is too much of it."  

During his years in Washington, John C. Calhoun had easily learned how to move in capital society. As a relatively well-to-do young

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66 Ibid., 1:351.
man of some presence, with a lovely young wife, he was, as Secretary of War, an "item" in the society of the times. As one of the highest-ranking members of the executive branch of government, his presence at official and social gatherings was all the more desirable. He had little competition. His President was "a very plain, practical man of business."67 The Secretary of the Treasury, William H. Crawford, was engaging enough, but he was still very much the roughhewn Georgian.68 The Secretary of State's friends chided him for not going into society more often to widen his circle of supporters, but he replied that he was "scarcely ever satisfied with myself after going into company, and always have the impression that my time at home is more usefully spent."69 Although he doubted the quality of his social grace, Adams nonetheless continued to give and attend parties where political business was always a topic of conversation.70 Abruptly cut off from informal relations with the first family, Washington society compensated by lavishing attention upon the next highest ranks: the cabinet officers. As the social season was about to begin in 1817, one matron fairly gushed upon hearing of the most recent ministerial appointments: "Every one is highly pleased with the appointments of Mr. Wirt and Mr. Calhoun, they will be most agreeable additions to our society."71 Calhoun lived up to his promise. At these soirees, Calhoun looked for the listeners and was a generous conversationalist. "You know how frank and communicative he is," Mrs. Smith

67 Fearon, Sketches of America, p. 291.
71 Smith, The First Forty Years, pp. 141-42.
wrote a relative, "perhaps you will not be surprised at our conversing without any interruption until 9 o'clock." Once having won his executive appointment, Calhoun was able to bring his wife, Floride, to the capital and establish a permanent home. With this social base, the Calhouns entertained frequently and well. Ticknor partook of all the social amusements when he visited the city and pronounced "Calhoun's ... the pleasantest of the ministerial dinners, because he invited ladies, and is the most agreeable person in conversation at Washington." In Washington, social intercourse offered unique liabilities. If a man's reputation could be made at parties, it could be unmade as well. Contrary to what Ticknor believed, the conversations around the dinner tables and on the dance floors were not always bland and unprovoking. Some guests were not above trying to deflate their adversaries in public company. Because politics formed the superstructure for all these relationships, they were frequently reordered and adjusted themselves with reference to new political unions and disunions. Invitations and counter-invitations which tested endurance and patience could

72 Ibid., p. 147.

73 Calhoun's dinners tended to be of some size and expense and, of course, of political significance. While in Washington in 1819 to defend himself against the congressional investigation of the Seminole War, General Jackson found himself apologizing to Adams for having attended a Calhoun party when he had already committed himself to come to Adams' house the same evening. Adams, Diary, 4:247, 512; Ticknor, Journal, 1:349; Smith, The First Forty Years, p. 148.

74 Adams, Diary, 4:513.

75 The best single analysis of social and political interrelationships in early Washington is James Sterling Young's The Washington Community, 1800-1828 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), passim (hereafter cited as Young, Washington Community). Much of the foregoing analysis relies upon Young's work.
impose a further burden upon the political man. Even the matter of going to a party was sometimes not so simple in Washington. Returning from a party in Georgetown, only two miles away, Adams' carriage was almost overturned twice on the foul roads. Near the Treasury building, the Secretary of State and his driver had to get out in the mud, beg a lantern from a guard at the Treasury, and make their way home in the muck. "It was a mercy we got home with whole bones," Adams said.

As a capital, Washington was certainly no St. Petersburg. The ravages of the war were still evident. Congress had to meet in the "Brick Capitol," which looked to one visitor like "an hotel." The old capitol still stood as it had burned, its walls adorned with public comment on who was responsible for the success of the British invasion. "The capital of the Union lost by cowardice," or more pointedly, "James Madison is a rascal, a coward, and a fool." Benjamin Latrobe was at work on the new domed structure, which, however externally imposing, fell short of comfort and elegance inside. The President's new house was habitable by mid-September, when he returned from his tour of the North, but Monroe was "apprehensive of the effects of fresh painting and plastering" and retreated to Virginia for a few days more. Looking over the city from Capitol Hill, one received the impression of "a Roman village," but of a most peculiar kind. Streets were "a mile or two in length, with houses a quarter mile apart, beautified by trees and swamps, and cows grazing between." The whole establishment showed a meager promise for a very distant future.

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76 Adams, Diary, 4:74.

77 Ibid., 4:7; Faux, Memorable Days in America, p. 112; Fearon, Sketches of America, pp. 283-85.
Physically reflecting the constitutional arrangements of the government, the President's house and the Capitol stood some distance apart, divorced by a stream, the "Tiber," which regularly flooded, doubtless assisting further the separation of powers. Private houses, hotels, and boarding houses clustered around the capitol served the legislators' needs, while executive officers huddled across the Tiber near the President's house. Close by the executive mansion on the eastern side stood the Treasury. On the other side of the mansion another building (part of the old "Seven Buildings") housed the War, State, and Navy departments. Their building squatted in a depression apparently not of a natural origin; its grounds had been excavated so that the structure might not exceed the height of the Treasury. Calhoun's offices occupied the southeastern part of this bureaucratic warren. Here Calhoun did his work for the next seven years. Were he the usual kind of Secretary of War, a short time obscured here would have been a sufficient test of his stamina, but he was not; he was foremost a political man doing political work.

II

The War Department which John C. Calhoun inherited in 1817 was hardly the most distinguished of the American ministries. No great political power adhered to its chiefs as in the cases of those premier departments, State and Treasury. Although these last owed some of their repute and power to those individuals who first held them, these departments were important in their own right.

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78Young, Washington Community, p. 75. 79Ibid., pp. 73-5.

By 1816 the man who presided over the State Department was con­sidered the American crown prince, the president-designate. Presidential aspirants naturally vied for the post. By contrast, the Treasury Department from the first had a value of a different kind. Although it lacked the prestige of the State Department, the Treasury possessed patronage in abundance to soothe the faithful supporter. 81

The Treasury Department began its life well populated; in 1789 there were thirty-nine staff members. Within one year that number doubled. Two years after that, there were ninety comptrollers, auditors, and clerks. Guided by the sure hand of Alexander Hamilton, the Treasury was soon transformed to Hunnic proportions. The office staff declined to seventy-eight in 1801, but by then there were sixteen hundred civilian field officers. Neither the State nor War Departments could compete with Treasury's imperial growth. Both these offices made do with less than ten staff members until the end of the century. When employment could expand, it naturally did so, as in the addition of sixty-three consular and commercial agents to the State Department by 1801; but the War Department remained a poor relation. By 1801 the Department of War still had only sixteen employees, and that number included two messengers. 82

Thus, by sheer organizational weight the Treasury was in a posi­tion to establish suzerainty over the other departments. Because of their extensive and well-manned department, Treasury secretaries could encroach upon other ministerial prerogatives. This poaching was common enough during Hamilton's tenure, and later under Secretary Albert Gallatin,

cabinet business all too frequently became Treasury's business.  

Although Treasury's administrative empire did not expand markedly during the first quarter of the century, it remained a formidable department which could easily accommodate to the political needs of ambitious chiefs.

Although it is a commonplace to argue that the two great departments were, in the first instance, made so by their first two secretaries, Hamilton and Jefferson, it is also true that the tasks which each department performed during the Federalist decade demanded their rise to pre-eminence in the structure of government. The War Department had lesser guardians, and it was subject to clearly prescribed duties which were conditioned by two centuries of suspicion of standing armies and their governmental accouterments.

Like the other executive departments, the War Department and its chief officer were carried over to the new government from the old Confederation. Adjustments had to be made, of course. The Secretary at War of the Confederation, Henry Knox, had been the military agent of the Congress, and in 1789, as the Secretary of War, he became an officer of the executive branch. Laws passed by the new Congress in 1789 further detailed the cautious approach to military affairs which marked the Constitution. Because a standing army was considered in some quarters a threat to liberty and democracy and a friend of despotism, any machinery of government which sustained an army was suspect. Even though the need

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for an army during the Revolution was uncontested, there was some doubt that one was needed by a nation nominally at peace. Likewise, the civilian chief of the army seemed less than useful (or even necessary) to some. Senator William Maclay of Pennsylvania told the Congress in 1789 that "the first error seems to have been the appointing of a Secretary of War when we were at peace, and now we must find troops lest his office should run out of employment." The special requirements of the frontier nation soon accommodated Maclay's desires. No one had such doubts about the usefulness of other departments or their ministers.

By the time Calhoun was ready to take over the War Department, this office was known to have attracted an inordinate number of mediocrities to preside over it. Those who did have some talent, almost as if by common agreement, seemed not to perform well in the job. If one had ambitions beyond the Department of War, perhaps it was best not to do too well in a post which was the object of republican suspicions. Henry Knox was the ablest of the Federalist Secretaries of War; among those who served in the Republican administrations before Calhoun, John Armstrong--an executive of countless failings--was the best the Jeffersonians could offer. Nine men had filled this post in the first twenty-eight years of the republic, their tenure averaging thirty-five months each. Of the four presidents before Monroe, only one--John Adams--had been contented with just one Secretary of War. Madison had the record

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85 Quoted in Weigley, History of the U. S. Army, p. 89.
86 Massachusetts men also had a propensity for the post; five of the first nine secretaries of war were from that state.
for changing secretaries: under the press of impending hostilities and then the War of 1812, the department had four different chiefs. The office was difficult enough to manage in times of peace, but during wartime its demands quickly eliminated those lacking talent and dedication, or those whose attentions were directed elsewhere.

Even though most of Calhoun's nine predecessors were not young men when they came to the War Department (their average age upon assuming office was forty-nine), their tenures there could hardly be called the zeniths of their careers. All except William Crawford had served in the Revolution and therefore could be said to have possessed at least a nominal military experience. Most went on to more attractive positions. After leaving office, Henry Knox remained active in Federalist politics and indulged his interest in the Society of the Cincinnati. Timothy Pickering became a Secretary of State, a Senator, and a Congressman. Henry Dearborn took to the Canadian battlefields of the War of 1812, without notable success. Even the incompetent William Eustis became a minister to Holland, and then later the governor of Massachusetts. Future President James Monroe divided his time between the Department of State and the War Department after John Armstrong was relieved. William Crawford took over the Treasury during the Monroe administration and hoped for the Presidency. Thus, when Calhoun came to the department, two of his fellow cabinet members had held his post. Whether the President or

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87 Weigley, History of the U. S. Army, p. 557; and also his chapters 5, 6, and 7, passim.
88 Henry Knox was the youngest Secretary of War before Calhoun. He was 39 years old; Calhoun was 35.
89 See Webster's Biographical Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam, Publishers, 1968), passim. For a cautiously favorable view of Armstrong's period in office, see T. Harry Williams, Americans at War (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), pp. 28-9 (hereafter cited as Williams, Americans at War).
the Secretary of Treasury were very solicitous of their old department is problematical, but it is unlikely that they would take an interest in a department which they had passed through on their way to better things.

The laws under which these secretaries operated were frequently reshaped in the years following the basic legislation which established the War Department. Compared to the duties of the Secretary at War under the Confederation, the legislation of 1789 was quite general. It enjoined the Secretary to watch over any matters having to do with the land and naval forces, military stores, commissions, warrant lands, and Indian affairs. The Confederation's "Ordinance for Ascertaining the Powers and Duties of the Secretary at War" set out in detail the several obligations of the military's civilian supervisor. He was at once an inspector general, quartermaster general, commissary, paymaster, and chief of recruiting and demobilization. The Ordinance also demanded that the Secretary at War "keep a public and convenient office at the place where Congress shall reside," thereby binding him physically as well as legally to congressional supervision. Under the law of 1789, this last requirement was not spelled out, but presumably the war minister was to be attached to the President.

Subsequent legislation under the new Constitution tended to assign special tasks to military officers or civilian sub-officers, who were in turn responsible to the Secretary of War. The Navy was given

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90 1 Stat. 49. Here, too, the name of the officer was changed. He became, officially, the Secretary of War. Both forms were used for some time thereafter. Before he took that office, Calhoun referred to the Secretary at War habitually. See, for instance, John C. Calhoun to John E. Calhoun, February 20, 1815, Calhoun Papers, 1:276.

91 Ibid., see Ordinance appended to statute.
the independence of its own department in 1798, and before long other statutes had created a paymaster, and superintendents of military stores and Indian affairs. Secretary John Armstrong's most notable act was the encouragement of the creation of what was called a "General Staff" in 1813. Unlike a modern General Staff, this group of officers (and civilians) had no authority at all over field commanders; staff authority was limited either to specific functions or to the supervision of the more technical branches of the service. Eventually, separate bureaus were established to deal with the pay, subsistence, and medical care of the troops; the scientific arms of engineering and ordinance were represented by departments also. Thus, this arrangement provided for more a technical than general staff. Now, however, the Secretary could call upon the assistance of military specialists who were required to spend their time at the War Department instead of being attached to wayward field commands.

Such legislative forms merely provided general directions to the secretaries, however. The first official generation of the republic gave substance to the machinery of government by establishing customs and usages which laws simply could not apprehend. The laws prescribing the Secretary's duties told only a part of what he actually did. None of this legislation designated the Secretary of War an officer of cabinet rank (and indeed the Constitution says nothing of a cabinet).

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92 1 Stat. 279, sec. 3; 1 Stat. 279, sec. 5; 1 Stat. 352, sec. 3; 1 Stat. 352, secs. 1 and 2; 1 Stat. 137; 1 Stat. 452; and 1 Stat. 469.

93 2 Stat. 819; see, also, White, The Jeffersonians, pp. 236-37; and Weigley, History of the U. S. Army, pp. 122-23.

94 U. S., Constitution, art. 2, sec. 2.
casually, the new executive departments were fashioned after British models, but still they were not identical to their British counterparts. This is especially true insofar as the War Department was concerned. In Great Britain the Secretary at War was decidedly a minor official. He was not a cabinet officer and had no policy-making authority under the Constitution. Any power connected with that post derived entirely from the political exertions of the man who held it. Had America's government-makers given much thought to the matter of what the exact place and function of their Secretary of War were to be (and there is little evidence that they did), they likely would have looked at William Wildman, Viscount Barrington. It was Barrington who held this post in Crown government from the Seven Years' War to 1778. Barrington was highly assertive, frequently visited the King's Closet, and by virtue of that familiarity, he was able to act during the last part of his career somewhat more independently of the House of Commons than his predecessors. Thus did Barrington overshadow his own post and acquire power in his own right. It is therefore interesting to speculate why a nation which made so much of its suspicion of standing armies and their appendages, would elevate to cabinet rank a position which, even in Great Britain, depended less on the Constitution than on personal interest and energy.

The cabinet status of the Secretary of War automatically gave more official freedom to this officer than the original law countenanced. There he was held rather strictly to the military domain. In practice, 

however, he was not just the President's overseer for military affairs. As a cabinet officer, he was at once a part of a ministerial collegium. From the first musings about an American cabinet, there was no doubt that these men were meant to be the President's assistants, not rivals; but allowing for the different mixtures of personalities within the various cabinets, degrees of assistance could sometimes vary widely. On the practical level, cabinet members would oftentimes guide and even shape policy. Within the closed politics of the collegium, they could argue, cajole, debate, appeal to reason, emotion, patriotism, or partisanship. The cabinet of which Calhoun was a member offers ample illustrations of just such deliberations.

In a situation where the precise functions of office were poorly described, distinct and legal boundaries of duty often faded to invisibility. To some extent, each member of the cabinet was responsible not only for his own department's business, but in cabinet might be called upon to deal with any other matter if the President so wished. At first Monroe's new Attorney General, William Wirt, complained bitterly that he did work which was not properly his, but he quickly warmed to an expanded notion of what it meant to sit in the cabinet.

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96 White, The Federalists, p. 28.
97 On occasion, cabinet members did not wait to be asked for their opinions, especially about other cabinet members' business. See, for instance, William H. Crawford to James Monroe [December?], 1818, Monroe Papers, LC.

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Moreover, a cabinet officer in Monroe's administration might well find himself filling the role of chef de Conseil when the President was away from the seat of government. When Monroe left Washington, one or another of the secretaries would take it upon himself to keep the President informed of matters requiring his attention; after having conferred with other members of the cabinet present in the city, the communication of decisions would be made or deferred as needed.\(^9\) On occasion, a member of Monroe's cabinet could be left alone in the city, essentially in charge of the entire executive branch. Attorney General Wirt lamented the leaving of the President and all the other cabinet members except himself because, as he put it, "three departments will be in the hands of subalterns, who will stand in daily need of the Attorney General to help them through their difficulties."\(^10\)

Ministering to the President's whims and the claims made by the daily business of state perforce complicated each cabinet officer's role. But the President was not a secretary's only constituent; the cabinet also owed at least some attention to a group whose opinions were often importunate. The chiefs of department had to be aware of and calculate upon the vagaries of the congressional mind, contemplations sometimes overwhelming and unendurable. If a cabinet officer was to champion an administration policy, or if he somehow became personally identified with a particular program, ignorance of this special constituency could cause him much grief. However, the Secretary of War dealt with another constituency just as troublesome: the military hierarchy.

\(^9\) John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, September 6, 1818, Monroe Papers, LC.

During Monroe's administration, only the Secretary of War had to contend with subordinates who were so potentially mischievous. Adams had no diplomat, Crawford no revenue officer, who could compare with Calhoun's Andrew Jackson problem. Nominally, Jackson was only a militia general who had risen to command a significant portion of the Regular Army on the southwestern frontier, but his political importance transcended that mundane role. Jackson's real power derived from his popularity as the Hero of New Orleans, and it was sufficiently strong in 1817 for the President-elect to do him the courtesy of discussing at length cabinet appointments with him. President-elect Monroe was not merely taking casual notice of one of his generals; he did not see fit to consult with other high-ranking military figures on the choice of his cabinet appointments. When Monroe looked at the political horizon, he saw Jackson, and Calhoun was bound to share his President's sensitivity to the general's views.¹⁰¹

Neither could a cabinet officer afford to overlook public opinion. The highly politicized newspapers of the day were an excellent forum in which administration policy could be explained.¹⁰² Holding the government printing contract in the city, the National Intelligencer regularly published the proceedings of Congress and all new legislation, as well as executive proclamations, regulations, announcements, and

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¹⁰¹ James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, March 1, 1818, Hamilton, Monroe Papers, 6:4-6; M. Bayley to James Monroe, July 28, 1818, Monroe Papers, LC; James Monroe to James Madison, May 7, 1819, Monroe Papers, LC; John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, December 29, 1817, Calhoun Papers, 2:43-44.

¹⁰² Adams, Diary, 4:371-72.
important correspondence.  Thus, for at least a part of Monroe's tenure the newspaper served as a valuable conduit, not only for official news, but also for pieces authored by cabinet officers. During the Florida crisis of 1818, extensive correspondence between Adams and various Spanish officials appeared in the newspapers. Monroe counseled Adams in some detail about the public impact which the Secretary's pronouncements should have. Occasionally, an officer in the executive branch would anonymously author a piece which defended some aspect of policy. As "Vauban," Calhoun had the Intelligencer publish a defense of coastal fortifications when the program came under attack in the Congress. Calhoun's Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Thomas L. McKenney, contributed several such articles which opposed the dismantling of the government's Indian factory system. In an age when the public prints had frankly partisan sympathies, such official subvention as the National Intelligencer enjoyed made of its editors, Messrs. Gales and Seaton, powers to be reckoned with in Washington.

104 Adams, Diary, 4:116, 119.
105 See, for instance, National Intelligencer, July 27, 1818.
106 James Monroe to John Quincy Adams, August 17, 1818, Hamilton, Monroe Papers, 6:66.
107 National Intelligencer, April 10, 1821; and John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxey, April 11, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:41.
109 Ames, History of the National Intelligencer, p. 132.
Finally, there was the matter of policy-making. Certainly, the President originally was meant to set the direction and tone of his administration, but a wide latitude existed within this intention. The President could rule the executive branch by virtual fiat, or he could encourage his officers' participation in manifold questions of policy. Monroe leaned toward the latter. The cabinet he envisioned for his administration was a sort of genial college, in which "each member will stand on his own merit, and the people respect us all according to our conduct." Monroe wanted his cabinet officers to tend to their business and did not want the cabinet coalescing into factions, either sectional, or personal. To guard against the first eventuality, Monroe contemplated a cabinet which would reflect the new sectional arrangement of the nation: a Secretary of State taken from the Northeast, a Secretary of Treasury taken from the South, and a Secretary of War taken from the newly important West. He hoped that the cabinet would be so composed as to deny any opportunity of "aggrandizement for any one."

With such a collection of public men, disinterested in their own destinies, animated only by a desire to serve the republic, Monroe hoped to put questions of moment regularly before the cabinet and obtain a

110 James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, March 1, 1817, Hamilton, Monroe Papers, 6:5.

111 Jackson applauded Monroe's plan to balance the cabinet sectionally, but added that if it could not be done, "the executive is entitled to have the best talents, when combined with other necessary qualifications that the country can afford regardless of the section of the country that hold them."

112 Monroe explained his plans for building a cabinet to several people, including Jefferson and Madison. See Monroe's letters to Jackson, March 1, 1817, Hamilton, Monroe Papers, 6:5-6, for example.
consensus on matters of policy. These were not politically naive aspirations. Monroe well knew that the heads of the three great departments had "friends" in the Congress. Cabinet consensus therefore could smooth the way for administration policy which had to be translated into legislation. But unanimity was too much to ask of such a contentious set of men. Before long, Monroe's aspirations of a noble collegium would be shattered; after a particularly trying cabinet meeting, Monroe was "apparently affected" by a protracted argument. This argument, over whether to retain the just-captured Amelia Island, was just the beginning of more heated disputes which had less to do with islands than politics.  

Considering together all the official and auxiliary functions demanded of a cabinet official, as well as the particular circumstances of the Monroe cabinet, an entirely happy choice of ministers was almost impossible to achieve. John Quincy Adams was decided upon rather quickly, much to the chagrin of Henry Clay, who wanted the State Department for himself. In compensation, Monroe offered Clay the War Department, which he sullenly declined. Crawford was continued in the Treasury, it was said, as much because of political expediency as for any other reason (as if there could have been a better reason). Having filled these two places, Monroe took his time deciding upon his choices for Attorney General and Secretary of War.

113 Adams, Diary, 4:36-7.  
114 Ibid., 4:71-3.  
115 Jeremiah Mason to Christopher Gore, December 30, 1816, Hilliard, Mason Correspondence, p. 148.  
116 There was some slight speculation about the man who would fill this position. Lowndes' refusal was known by the Fall. The Charleston Courier of October 30, 1817, reprinted a piece from the Richmond Enquirer which asked, "Would it not be best to appoint some gentleman of the army to the arduous station--arduous, because the Secretary has
Monroe seemed less interested in having a good Secretary than in making an acceptable political appointment. Aside from building a sectional balance in the cabinet, Monroe did not ponder exactly what made a good Secretary of War. He believed his short time with the War Department had enhanced his political reputation (even though he ran the State Department simultaneously and was ill from overwork much of the time). He certainly knew that Bustis' and Armstrong's confused administrations were insufficient to wreck the department totally, even in hostile times. Thus, as Monroe considered the various pretenders to the office, there were no real pressures upon him to fill quickly a place which seemed rather immune to maladministration.  

Monroe wanted the West to provide one member of the cabinet, and in fact a majority of those in the running were from that section. As a political and military man of the West, Jackson was naturally and directly interested in whom Monroe would choose. Even before the election, Jackson had heard it rumoured that Senator Richard Mentor Johnson of Kentucky was being considered. Bluntly, the General informed Monroe that such an appointment would not do. Jackson argued that Johnson lacked "capacity stability or energy," [sic] all the requisites, Jackson thought, of a good head of department. He recommended instead William Drayton, a South Carolina Federalist. This last suggestion Monroe

sometimes to deal with impetuous spirits, made still more impetuous by the reputation they have won during the late war." Allusions to "impetuous spirits" could have applied to any number of military men of repute. The Baltimore Patriot of November 11, 1817, reported Lowndes' refusal and named David R. Williams as the new appointee. Finally, on November 29, 1817, Calhoun's appointment was announced in the Charleston Courier.

117 James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, February 23, 1817, Hamilton, Monroe Papers, 6:3; see also Ammon, Monroe, pp. 342-48, for a summary of Monroe's tenure as Secretary of War.
tactfully ignored, but during the next several months Jackson went to
some pains to inform the President-elect of the kind of person who should
cfill the War Department position. Most of all, the new officer should be
competent and aware of the best interests of the army. A poor Secretary
could be disruptive of good military order, but a wrong-headed one was
potentially "a tyrant." Other correspondents had discussed the new War
Secretary in general terms, but Jackson's letters to Monroe seemed more
importunate. The General was adamant that the War Office did not need
another incompetent to oversee it. Of course, Jackson himself was an
obvious choice, as Monroe cheerily and doubtless with some relief informed
the General when word reached the capital that Jackson was not interested
at all.

By then Monroe had decided upon Isaac Shelby, the Governor of
Kentucky. The President had gone so far as to place his name in nomina-
tion before word came that Shelby did not want the job either. There
was at the same time a minor swell in the West for General William Henry
Harrison, who did want the appointment. Judge Thomas Todd of Kentucky
deftly pointed out to Monroe that, rumours to the contrary notwith-
standing, Harrison's appointment would be looked upon with favor in the
West. However, Harrison did not receive the call.

118 Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, October 23, 1816, and March 4,
1817, Bassett, Jackson Correspondence, 2:262, 277-82.
119 James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, March 1, 1817, Hamilton,
Monroe Papers, 6:5.
120 James Monroe to Isaac Shelby, February 20, 1817, ibid., 6:1.
121 Thomas Todd to James Monroe, February 9, 1817, Monroe Papers,
LC; see also Rufus King to Jeremiah Mason, April 7, 1817, Hilliard,
Mason Correspondence, pp. 162-63.
Not until early in the summer of 1817 did Monroe begin to look to the South. There were three potential Secretaries there, all from South Carolina: former Governor David R. Williams, Senator William Lowndes (who had turned down the post when President Madison had offered it to him), and finally, Calhoun.

It was by no means odd that Monroe should consider Calhoun as a prospective cabinet member. The two men had known each other since the early days of the Twelfth Congress, when Calhoun was closely identified with the so-called "War Mess," a nest of War Hawks who lived in the same boarding house in Washington. As the War of 1812 approached, Calhoun had steadily supported administration war measures while on the Committee for Foreign Relations. As acting chairman of that committee, Calhoun had delivered the manifesto for war, which had been written by Monroe. During the conflict, Calhoun was known to be solidly in the administration camp. One very good reason Monroe considered Calhoun in the first place, therefore, was because Calhoun's politics corresponded with the President's.¹²²

When the President offered the War Department to Calhoun in October, 1817, the young South Carolinian was at least the President's fifth choice for the spot. There is no reason to believe that Calhoun had expected the offer. It probably came as a happy surprise to him; just as happily he accepted it. By late November, both Calhoun and his letter of acceptance were on their way to Washington.¹²³

¹²² The best discussion of Calhoun's career before he became Secretary of War can be found in Wiltse, Calhoun, pp. 53-102.

¹²³ John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, November 1, 1817, Calhoun Papers, 1:418-19. Monroe had tested reactions to Calhoun's possible appointment earlier that year during his tour of the North. He apparently asked several officers (perhaps including Jacob Brown) while there and drew a favorable response. John C. Calhoun to James Monroe,
Scholars have argued that ambition drove Calhoun into the cabinet, but such an argument tells us very little about him. Few of Calhoun's contemporaries would have shunned Monroe's offer. The fact that several men turned the post down before Calhoun accepted did not demean the value of the offer. We may presume that others (such as Harrison) would have been quite happy with such a position, but Calhoun's acceptance effectively closed off all other offers. Even if one grants that Calhoun had presidential ambitions beyond an idle daydream in 1817 (and there is evidence which suggests that he did), his acceptance does not necessarily bespeak an unusual amount of ambition. He had risen meteorically during his short time in government, and he had not yet met with failure or defeat. It is easy enough to forget that by the time he became Secretary of War, Calhoun had been in national government for only six years. Especially in the era of good feelings, ambition fueled politics. By 1817, Calhoun's old comrade from the War Mess of 1812, Henry Clay, already had presidential visions. Calhoun was surrounded by ambitious men, and those who refused the post did so only because they thought they could gain more by staying out of Monroe's administration than by being in it.

Monroe's search for a Secretary of War entailed little of the frenzy we have come to associate with cabinet appointments. The President was prepared to be content with a reasonable political choice,


124 See Chapter II, p. 76.
one which would complement those already made. Once he found that the
more prominent westerners were not interested in a relatively minor
cabinet post, he doubtless thought that the place could just as well be
filled by a talented newcomer. As to standards of expertness in affairs
military and administrative, they were of little moment to Monroe or any­
one else, and thus tradition was followed in the appointment.

There was a decided lack of public excitement about the cabinet
appointments, as there was about government in general. Calhoun's
appointment was mildly received. Several newspapers, including the
Charleston Courier, ran only terse announcements. The leading Federal­
ist of the day, Rufus King of New York, speculated that Calhoun would
have little influence in the administration. Earlier, King had written
to a friend, "of the new cabinet, we hear nothing; it is not talked of,
and with the exception of a few persons, I really believe it is a matter
of much indifference." Indeed, it seemed to King that the doldrums had
mysteriously moved northward to seize Washington City, its inhabitants,
and its affairs.

King had described Calhoun as "a young man, with honorable views,
so far as they are known," but King was too grudging of the new Secre­
tary. A more common criticism of Calhoun in 1817 would have been that
he had quite too many views, expressed them too easily with great

125 Charleston Courier, November 29, 1817.

126 Rufus King to Christopher Gore, January [n.d.], 1817, Hilliard,
Mason Correspondence, p. 192.

127 Rufus King to Jeremiah Mason, March [n.d.], 1818, C. R. King,
ed., Life and Correspondence of Rufus L. King, 6 vols. (New York: G. P.
Putnam's Sons, 1894-1900), 6:50 (hereafter cited as King Correspondence).
certitude, that he was too adept, and that he was altogether too devoted to serious pursuits. At the age of thirty-five, he was by most accounts a severe and humorless pedant. The signs of a South Carolina frontier upbringing had been polished away by Yale, the Litchfield Law School, and legal apprenticeship in Charleston. He once told a friend that he was less in love with the law than with the "delicious theme of the muses, or interesting pages of history," but there is little else to prove that he was more comfortable with Horace in his lap than with Blackstone or de Vattel. 128

John Calhoun styled himself a Republican, but any Secretary of War was perforce a nationalist. More than any other of the cabinet officers, the Federalist imprimatur had been stamped on this one. In the first years of the republic, politicians had shown that it was possible to devise foreign policies which were consistent with party sentiment. So, too, had the Treasury Department been harnessed to partisan designs. When the government fell into Jefferson's hands, the differences of administration by party became apparent to all who cared to look. But the War Department had been the most unerringly nationalist of all, because within the purview of this office there was little which could manifestly identify its occupant as anything but a nationalist.

Insofar as political thought may be said to determine political action, it is proper to speculate just how much the Republican ideology of the

128 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Pickens, Sr., November 24, 1805, Calhoun Papers, 1:22. He found the practice of law even less to his liking than the study of it. To his future mother-in-law several years later, he wrote: "I still feel a strong aversion to the law; and am determined to forsake it as soon as I can make a decent independence." John C. Calhoun to Floride Calhoun, April 6, 1809, Calhoun Papers, 1:41.

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Jeffersonian secretaries impeded their satisfying the requirements of this office. How comfortable could a Republican be doing a nationalist's job? Republicanism had to change, for nationalism could not.

If Thomas Jefferson had given any thought to Calhoun's particular creed, and attempted to place him as an "ardent" or "moderate" Republican, he would have been hard pressed. Calhoun was certainly more casual about the greatest question of the Constitution than the old eighteenth century ideologues; he simply preferred not to quibble about it, as he said to the House one time. That he could openly assert that constitutional interpretation was a matter of modern irrelevance indicated clearly the changes the party phenomenon had undergone by that time. Those who yearned for the ideological integrity of the 1790s, Federalist or Republican, were out of date. The Constitution had begun to live.

Calhoun made his political debut in South Carolina when the nation was threatened, his national debut when the Republic was on the verge of war; thus his formative political education took place in the martial atmosphere of a Congress at war. Much as young lieutenants were called to the flag in 1812, Calhoun and his legislative comrades were unwilling to be retarded in their purpose by the worries of the experienced, were quick to act and content to deal with hidden miscalculations in more peaceful times. How much the environment of crisis affected the character of Calhoun's thought can only be surmised, but it is evident that it was the crisis of national defense which acted as the premise for all Calhoun's early political views. From the crisis of the historical moment devolved the notion that only nationalism could insure

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survival. Once those grounds were accepted by Calhoun, all that was necessary was to aid in the enactment of certain programs. To that end, Calhoun was willing to fight in the Congress for internal improvements because improvements meant roads, canals, and bridges, and these meant faster civil and military communications. He was willing to fight for national taxes, national banks, and protective tariffs because he thought that the enlivened and orderly economic structure which would emerge was so salutary that those who objected from the states would see the wisdom that particularism meant, first, martial, and then national disaster.

He made the transition from martial politics to those of peace handily. The war's recent conclusion insured that his premise would be generally accepted for a time, perhaps so much so that the premise of nationalist politics would become commonplace. His early political statements mark him, above all, as a progressive politician. Although the war's lessons provided the touchstone for his nationalism, Calhoun was no Frederick the Great, building the garrison state, preaching the politics of a cordon defense. Only insofar as those lessons could make a contribution to civil improvement, to prosperity, and to expansion were they of interest to him. His attitudes on war were ordinary: he was neither particularly bellicose nor pacifistic. He accepted war as one of the instruments of statecraft. His service in the war congresses gave him a military as well as a political education, and it was this experience that he would carry with him into the War Office. In his capacity as a Secretary of War (and as a politician), he would find during the next six-and-a-half years that many of the views he had learned in his political youth would no longer sustain him. Eventually, he would abandon these youthful ideas; but for now he could do no other.
CHAPTER II

NATIONAL MILITARY POLICY:
TRADITIONS AND AMBITIONS

It is said that in the middle ages, battles were watched over by referees whose duty it was to agree on the winners.¹ Defeat became a signal for military reform and improvement, and history is replete with disasters which fostered evolutions of military thought.² No such observers reported after the War of 1812: the irresolution that had dominated the American battlefields found its way to the negotiating tables at Ghent, where a peace as indecisive as the war was forged. The agreements at Ghent inaugurated the "era of free security," in which the United States was left to its own affairs for nearly a century.³ The military crises which animate so much of the military thought were


hardly present. In this respect, the Civil War was a congenial home affair, conducted by men who were of the same military mind. 4

Most Americans would have said, if asked, that this inactivity by the military mind was just as well. Their animus toward things military was an Anglo-American tradition, dating at least as early as the Mutiny Act of 1689, when Parliament finally bridled its dangerous armies. 5 The alienation between the state and its culture and the military forces which guarded it was reinforced in the eighteenth century by radical Whig ideology, which despised standing armies as enemies of liberty. 6 As Americans relied upon the British Army during the colonial period, they were able to indulge their apprehensions. When Americans went to war on their own in the Revolution and after, it was with the feeling that it was not really their vocation, not indeed their virtue, but rather a distasteful necessity. A New England pacifist argued at the close of the War of 1812 that the act of war itself, even more than victory or defeat, corrupted the very marrow of society:

The depravity, occasioned by war, is not confined to the army. Every species of vice gains ground in a nation during a war. And when a war is brought to a close, seldom, perhaps, does a community return to its former standard of morality. 7


From this point of view, it made little difference whose army one considered; soldiers were much alike, regardless of their uniforms. So said the arch-Republican newspaper *Aurora* in 1799: "Privates who exchange the price of honest industry, for the humiliating duties of soldiers, are 'villains more desperate, and cut-throats equally bloody minded, with the soldiery of the British monarchy.'"\(^8\)

Such views comported well enough with the early American experience: given its limited production capacity and tractless wilderness, America had always been unmanageable militarily. Whereas the immediate defensive capacities of the country were limited, its potential strength was formidable. The nation relied mostly upon the militia, whose reaction was sometimes dangerously delayed, and whose recovery from disaster was often little short of miraculous. Strategic reaction, not anticipation, was consistent with America's military needs and political ideas.\(^9\)

However, the need for some sort of military protection was accepted. But America's progressive ideology supported only a reactionary military policy, and the few professional soldiers which the nation tolerated were viewed as temporary expedients only. The militia remained the bulwark of America's defense by the time the War of 1812 began. Some who watched the nation go to war did so feeling that the lack of preparation could prove disastrous. Serving in Congress for the first time, Calhoun wrote to a friend: "This is the first war that the country has

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\(^8\) Quoted in Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, p. 260.

\(^9\) Shy, "American Military Experience," p. 239.
ever engaged in; and the whole of our system has to be commenced and organised."

The militia's political acceptability hardly added to its military effectiveness during the war; so dismal was its performance that some political leaders began to search for new ways to satisfy the military requirements of a democratic state. After the war, the militia figured less and less in the calculations of policy. Both Monroe and Calhoun were careful, however, to pay homage to the militia when the occasion arose; but when the time came to decide upon the character of the force to be used in the first Seminole War, they instructed Jackson and Gaines to use regular soldiers only.  

10 John C. Calhoun to James MacBride, April 18, 1812, Calhoun Papers, 1:99.

11 At the beginning of the Seminole action, the Cabinet decided to call out the Georgia militia, only to find that some of its members were difficult to control when sent against the Indians. There was a massacre of an innocent Chehaw village by a militia Captain, and countless other difficulties with the allied Indians. After nearly a year's experience, Calhoun was recommending that his commanders try to do without the militia if it could be helped. He made this recommendation to Monroe also, who by that time agreed. See, Adams, Diary, 4:31. See also John C. Calhoun to Edmund P. Gaines, September 23, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:152, in which Calhoun tells Gaines that he should in the future use only the Regular Army and Creek allies and avoid "the expenses and vexations attending militia requisitions." See a letter in a similar vein from John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, September 21, 1818, ibid., 3:148-149.

In succeeding years Calhoun did not change his mind: the proper place of the militia was one that was secondary to the standing army. He would not have admitted that a nation could rely upon a militia in place of a professional establishment. In a letter to Timothy Pickering in 1821, Calhoun made his position quite clear. He wrote: "It is mere deception to place our militia on the footing of regular troops and the reference [sic] to the militia of Rome, or Switzerland [sic] is an unworthy sophism to maintain, that deception. These countries ought to be considered as cantonments, and their inhabitants the garrison. This state of things could only be produced, or continued by that constantly impending danger to which you so justly refer, as its cause. No nation occupy [sic] a situation so much the opposite, as ourselves. . . . I am
English historian John Keegan has written recently that "inside every [professional] army is a crowd struggling to get out." In the case of the United States that concept might be reversed. After the American Revolution an army of sorts was fashioned out of the crowds of mostly unenthusiastic amateurs, but the nation still held it at a distance and then only grudgingly. The evolution of the professional army from the armed crowd was by no means a unique American experience: it had been repeated in all the countries of western Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and in each case the new army was watched over by the state with a kind of suspicion that no other group in society suffered. After a time these nations became accustomed to a martial presence; having ingratiated themselves by their actions, the armies became integral parts of the societies at large. Keegan has argued that one of the reasons for the new receptivity to standing armies was a kind of militarizing of the societies themselves. Caught up in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, the civilians began to mimic the supposed efficiency, precision, and purposefulness of their armies. Crowds were dangerous in any context: they were disruptive, passion-ridden, and anarchical, regardless of whether they were crowds of soldiers or factory workers or citizens. In the era of good feelings by no means disposed to set the militia aside ... " The nation should "be taught to look to their real use, instead of assigning duties to them, to which they are wholly inadequate and in which the only results, which can be justly anticipated, are defeat and an enormous augmentation of the publick expenditure." John C. Calhoun to Timothy Pickering, April 29, 1821, ibid., 6:81-82.

12 Keegan, Face of Battle, p. 173. Keegan's notion, of course, is not a new one to military sociology, but he is the most recent in a long line of expositors. As I indicate in the text, I believe that this concept has a good deal to offer American military historians.

13 Ibid., p. 175.
the United States was at the very crossroads which the European nations had passed not too long before.

The Regular Army that the nation allowed in 1817 and over which Calhoun had charge was very like a radical democrat's dreams: the nation had created a caricature of an army. The Regular Army was small, dispersed, inefficient and costly, and dangerous to serve in. There were 647 officers and 7,799 men in the army when Calhoun took office. Congress had allowed a 10,000 man force in 1815, but only during the year 1820 (just before reduction) did the establishment reach its authorized strength.¹⁴

The numbers of the army did not change much during Calhoun's time in the War Department; the average strength between 1817 and 1825 was 602 officers and 6,426 men. After 1821, when Congress mandated a reduction of the total force to 6,000 men, the averages dropped by about 100 officers and 1,000 men thereafter. Throughout this period the ratio of officers to soldiers was about one to ten, but from 1819 on, the number of officers in relation to soldiers tended to decline.¹⁵

Soldiers enlisted then for the very same reasons they always have: to get away from home; to hide from debtors or the law; to escape an unfortunate affair; or, to travel and seek adventure. But the ranker's life was no life for a gentleman unless he was in trouble, nor was it a life for the ambitious. Immigrants who arrived after the War of 1812 composed an ever greater part of the army as time went by: a survey of incomplete enlistment records for the six years following the

¹⁴These statistics are taken from Weigley, History of the U. S. Army, p. 566.
¹⁵Ibid.
war showed twenty per cent of all enlistees willing to identify themselves as foreigners. By the eve of the Civil War perhaps only forty per cent of the Regular Army was native-born.\footnote{16}

The soldiers of the Regular Army were generally posted to inhospitable places. A preponderance of the army’s strength was already located on the frontier; their stations along the Gulf Coast or in the Northwest Territory were hardly areas of repose. Less than 2,000 of the men in the Army were posted to relatively civilized areas along the Atlantic seaboard, and although there was quite a number around New Orleans, only seven men were posted in the city itself, the rest being in the swamps.\footnote{17} In 1818 and 1819, as Calhoun began to execute the army’s movement into the northwest, the chances of a soldier’s being sent to an easy post diminished considerably.

As in every army since antiquity, most casualties were sustained because of mishap or disease. This was particularly true of an army on the march, as in the Seminole War, but these kinds of casualties could impede the most ordinary of military operations.\footnote{18} One captain reported

\footnote{16}{These figures are widely quoted, but Cunliffe believes that, apart from their general unreliability, they are much too conservative. Many enlistees simply did not care to have their national origins known. Marcus Cunliffe, Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865 (New York: The Free Press, 1973), pp. 119-120 (hereafter cited as Cunliffe, The Martial Spirit).}


\footnote{18}{One study points out that of all the Army’s activities in the west between 1815 and 1845, only a dozen men were killed in hostile engagements with the Indians. Stanley S. Graham, “The Life of the
plaintively to the War Department that his attempts to set the foundation for a battery at Mobile Bay had been constantly interrupted by "Hurricanes & disease."\textsuperscript{19} Calhoun's energetic new Surgeon General, Joseph Lovell, was greatly exercised by the wretched general health of the army. Lovell assigned two reasons for the deplorable state of affairs: recruiting officers did not enlist healthy men in the first place, and awful rations were given the soldiers.\textsuperscript{20} He recommended to Calhoun that the ration be changed immediately and radically. "In fact," Lovell said, "there is probably no service in which the officers appear to pay so little respect to the character of the soldier as in ours, or in which so little attention is given to their comfort convenience and health [sic]." Lovell supported his argument by comparing the rations allowed soldiers in France, Britain, and the United States. American rankers got bread and meat only. The others got these items and also some sort of vegetable.\textsuperscript{21} In one of his earliest reports to Congress, Calhoun asked that an improvement in the soldiers' rations include a complement of vegetables; and, following another of Lovell's recommendations, Calhoun suggested that the daily ration of a jigger of whiskey for each soldier be done away with.\textsuperscript{22}

Enlisted Soldier on the Western Frontier, 1815-1845," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, North Texas State University, 1972, p. 188.

\textsuperscript{19}James Gadsden to Christopher Vandeventer, December 2, 1819, \textit{Calhoun Papers}, 4:464.

\textsuperscript{20}Joseph Lovell to John C. Calhoun, February 1, 1819, and November 1, 1818, ibid., 3:534, 249.


\textsuperscript{22}"Reduction of the Army Considered, December 16, 1818," ibid., 1:781. The whiskey ration was not officially banned until 1830. Some
The general treatment of the soldier, as Lovell pointed out, left much to be desired. Aside from sickness, privation, and simple danger, the soldier was misused. Rumors came to Calhoun from various posts of soldiers being let out as contract laborers. One officer complained that two of his men had been ordered to serve under Governor Lewis Cass at Detroit. The officer informed Calhoun:

These two men have been constantly employed, to the best of my knowledge & belief solely for the private employment & advantage of Gov [sic] Cass; & have been by him placed on the most laborious & fatiguing [sic] duties, such as working out his road tax, procuring timber & pickets, cultivating his farm &c. &c. 23

Apparently some officers considered soldiers as their own labor pool and that as a perquisite of their rank. The misuse of soldierly labor outraged Lovell. He told Calhoun that "they are not only put upon menial and fatiguing duties for the accommodation of officers but even loaned like so many Negroes, to the citizens." 24 Calhoun did little about all this, and the extent to which the practice occurred has yet to be investigated by historians.


In an attempt to improve the Army's diet, Calhoun decreed that, wherever possible, commands should farm for themselves. Colonel Henry Atkinson was an especially devoted military farmer. After a year's residence at Council Bluffs, during which floods carried away some of his efforts, his garrison had sown forage, and planted more than 200 acres of corn and other edibles. Henry Atkinson to John C. Calhoun, June 19, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:193-194.

23 Morrill Marston to John C. Calhoun, September 4, 1818, ibid., 3:100. Marston was eventually court-martialed by General Alexander Macomb, the local commander, for trifling with the Governor.

24 Joseph Lovell to John C. Calhoun, November 1, 1818, ibid., 3:247.
For the ordinary soldier military justice would have been a laughable affair had it not been administered in such a draconian way. Flogging, branding, dunking, binding, imprisonment, and executions—all were practiced at one time or another. One unusual letter came to the War Department from a private soldier stationed at Green Bay in Wisconsin territory. He told Calhoun that he had been "severely flogged" on several occasions for no good reason and bound and "ducked almost to strangulation with buckets of water." He brought these incidents to Calhoun's attention, as he said:

[Because] it has been remarked by a Grecian legislator that the most perfect form of Government was that in which the complaints and wrongs of the meanest, were equally listened to and redressed with those of the most powerful subject.25

The most notorious incident of punishment to come to light during Calhoun's time in office involved the practice of cropping ears. In 1820 the Kentucky Gazette reported that Colonel Talbot Chambers had countenanced such a punishment for two of his men the year before.26 Once the news became public, Calhoun had little choice but to order a court-martial for Chambers, who was found guilty.27 Chambers was sentenced to be suspended from service for one month, a judgment which Calhoun thought was too mild for the offense committed. In a memorandum to President Monroe on the Chambers case, Calhoun remarked:

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26 Willoughby Morgan to John C. Calhoun, September 8, 1820, ibid., 5:350-352.
27 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, January 21, 1821, ibid., 5:268.
The truth appears to be, that the Officers of the Army, at the end of the war, had a very erroneous mode of thinking, as well on this, as many other points, which took some years to correct. I believe the establishment is now thoroughly reformed of most of the faults, which grew out of the incidents of the war.  

Calhoun was wrong; such punishments did not disappear. Flogging, which had been abolished in 1812, was reinstated in 1833, a testament to the real or imagined problems of disciplining such an army.

For his service the ordinary soldier was paid five dollars a month; the officers, depending upon grade, got a little more. At a time when the common laborer could earn as much as a dollar a day, one had to have modest ambitions indeed to go soldering. Military pay was low enough, but when Congress considered saving money by further cutting military salaries, Calhoun protested. "There is no class in the community whose compensation has advanced less since the termination of the War of the Revolution, than that of the officers and soldiers of our Army," he wrote.

No wonder, then, that the army which Calhoun sought to administer sometimes seemed to be gradually melting away. The desertion rate was staggering. This is why the figures for army strength during this entire period are unreliable; deserters were carried on the rolls in all but the most final reports to the Secretary of War. Calhoun's Adjutant and Inspector General, Daniel Parker, informed the Secretary in 1820 that "desertions alone, during the last year, in some Regiments exceeded

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28 John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, June 18, 1821, ibid., 6:196-197.
29 Prucha, Sword of the Republic, pp. 325-326.
30 "Reduction of the Army Considered, December 11, 1818," ASPMA, 1:781.
one-fifth of the whole & have kept the army far below the [authorized] organization." Recruiters were pressed even to keep up with the desertions; in 1823 twenty-five per cent of the number of recruits deserted, and in 1825, nearly fifty per cent.  

II

Militarily (and very nearly any other category one would care to name) the United States was an undeveloped nation. Although the republic had succeeded in winning political independence and was on its way to winning economic independence, culturally the nation was still in its infancy. The exertions of Noah Webster to develop an American lexicon were not finished and a uniquely American literature was only beginning to emerge. There was no such movement toward independence in American military thought.

Furthermore, there was not much sensitivity among military thinkers about their lack of independence. On the contrary, it was believed by most officers who contemplated such matters that the true font of military knowledge had been discovered. By all evidence, the dominant influence upon American military thought following the War of 1812 was French. The Germans had not yet come to the attention of

31 Daniel Parker to John C. Calhoun, January 13, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4:569-570.
32 Prucha, Sword of the Republic, pp. 324-325.
33 This is not to say that there were not other influences at work. It has been successfully argued that the Americans' own colonial experience and British heritage were the most important of these influences. What I have reference to here, however, is a conscious attempt by American military thinkers after the War of 1812 to build a professional army. To those people, the professional army and the napoleonic army were the same.
American military men, and would not for some time to come. The British were eliminated from consideration both because of their long-standing enmity and because they were the very model upon which republican prejudices were founded. A suggestion to create a British-model army would have been as well received as a motion to establish a monarchy. But gratitude for the old French alliance during the Revolution and ideological affinities were sufficiently binding to withstand episodic strains such as the Quasi-war and other maritime harassments before the War of 1812. Regardless of how much American politicians railed against the policies of revolutionary France in those years, there was a persistent sympathy for the only other nation in the world which had dared to style itself a republic.

And then there was Napoleon. It is doubtful that many American military thinkers were much concerned about the more dictatorial aspects of Napoleonic rule, but the Corsican's success on the battlefields provided American officers with the excitement of witnessing the emergence of a new age of warfare. In a world inured to daily excitements, the modern historian is perhaps ill-equipped to understand how mentally exciting it may have been for the American officer to have read of Marengo, Jena-Auerstadt, Austerlitz, and the other great clashes of the day. The fact remains that the military image of France captured the imagination of American minds and continued to do so until the Civil War. 34 There is no indication that these images, presumably founded upon

34 Denis Hart Mahan and Henry Halleck, two of the better known soldier-scholars before the Civil War, became almost rhapsodic when discussing Napoleon. Both men produced works on fortifications which were significantly improved versions of the standard French works by Vauban and Vernon. See Russell Weigley, The American Way of War (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1973), pp. 81-88 (hereafter cited as Weigley,
Napoleonic successes, suffered from a decline in popularity because of Waterloo. There was certainly no corresponding rise in affection for British military ideas. By contrast, anyone who had been even remotely associated with the martial glories of France immediately piqued military Americans' interest. American newspapers even took notices of such relatively obscure figures as Baron Henri Antoine Jomini, who was elevated to minor celebrity as the newspapers reminded their readers of his career and his authorship of several illuminating pieces on the campaigns of 1805-1806.35 Neither was France's image dampened by the restoration of the Bourbons under the sponsorship of the Allied powers. To the Americans, the Bourbon regime was fully as reactionary as the other major powers, but the military glitter of the French was hardly affected by their new politics.36

Suffusing the political and military Americans' admiration for things French was the belief that warfare had recently reached a new plateau. There was a great deal of talk after the War of 1812 about the "science of war," a catch-phrase which expressed less a distinct body of knowledge than a new attitude that warfare was no longer the province of even the talented amateur, but a business for professionals. There was the sense that the United States had come perilously close to disaster


35 City of Washington Gazette, February 20, 1818.
36 The newspapers were full of hostile remarks about the Bourbons in 1815 and 1816. See, for example, Niles' Weekly Register, December 6, 1815, September 14, 1816, and November 9, 1816.
because of the lack of knowledge of this "science." General Thomas Jesup explained handily why America had not progressed in this field: "The speculative energies of our country . . . being directed to politics and the active energies to Commerce, but little mind was left to be applied to military affairs," and therefore, "thirty years of peace and prosperity had left us almost without military knowledge."37

The best way of acquiring current military knowledge was to send promising young officers abroad on extended tours of observation. There was no question about where to send them; France was the only place one needed to go to learn about the "science of war." Scarcely had the War of 1812 ended than General Joseph G. Swift, Chief of the Corps of Engineers and the first graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, was pressing President Madison and the War Department for permission to send two officers to the continent. Since the military academy was about to be improved, the mission to Europe could serve a dual purpose: the officers could search for books for the academy's library, and could acquire up-to-date military information. President Madison and Secretary of War Alexander Dallas agreed, and in the summer of 1815, Majors Sylvanus Thayer and William McRee, two officers of engineers, set sail for France.38 The instructions given them by Secretary Dallas attested to the government's main interests. They were to examine


"military schools, work shops, arsenals and harbours, [sic] the fortifications, especially those for maritime defense will claim your particular attention."  

Thayer and McRee enthusiastically went about their duties, but they were impeded at times. When they sailed for France, Napoleon was still at large; when they arrived, Paris was already occupied by the Allies and Napoleon was on his way to St. Helena. And when the American Minister to France, Albert Gallatin, applied for permission for his young charges to visit the great defensive works at Metz (which was also the location of the Artillery School), Lille, Cherbourg, and Brest, it was refused; the Duc de Richelieu offered instead to allow the observers to see their wooden models at Galerie des Invalides. Un- daunted, the officers contented themselves with prowling the bookshops of Paris for the most recent texts on military subjects. About to leave France at the end of 1816, Thayer and McRee crated up more than 19,000 francs' worth of books and charts for shipment home.

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39 Alexander J. Dallas to Sylvanus Thayer, April 20, 1815, Thayer Papers. Earlier, Swift had instructed Thayer to visit the libraries "in France, Germany, and England--particularly the first and last named nations--to collect Books, Maps, and Instruments." J. G. Swift (?) to Sylvanus Thayer, March 30, 1815, ibid.

40 Eight days after Thayer and McRee sailed on June 10, 1815, Napoleon had been brought to ground at Waterloo.

41 Albert Gallatin to the Duc de Richelieu, January 29, 1817, and the Duc de Richelieu to Albert Gallatin, February 8, 1817, Thayer Papers.

42 From Paris, Thayer wrote Swift, "Since our arrival we have overhalled the several military bookstores & have acquired a sufficient knowledge of their contents." Sylvanus Thayer to J. G. Swift, October 15, 1815, ibid.

43 William McRee to J. G. Swift, December 16, 1816, ibid. This shipment included, notably, the works of Vauban. In dollars, this shipment was worth between $4,000 and $5,000.
While Thayer and McRee were still in France, another young military intellectual, Captain John M. O'Connor, was translating Gay de Vernon's *Trait de La Science de La Guerre et La Fortifications* for the army's use. Vernon's work was reputed to have been the best recent study produced on this subject, or so O'Connor claimed. Although he was moody, and a tireless intriguer, O'Connor nonetheless was regarded as a talented officer. He enjoyed the confidence of such diverse acquaintances as Monroe, Crawford, Swift, Thayer, and the irascible senior professor at West Point, Jared Mansfield. O'Connor petitioned Calhoun in 1818 to approve a visit to France in order to, as O'Connor said, "perfect my knowledge of Fortifications and other branches of war." Two years later, another shipment of military books bound for the West Point Library preceded O'Connor home; among these works were Saxe's *Reveries*, Jomini's *Trait de Grandes Operations*, Carnot's *Defense*.

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44 O'Connor did most of his translation at West Point, and until the writings of Mahan and Halleck it was the standard text on this subject at the school. See, S. F. Gay de Vernon, *A Treatise on the Science of War and Fortification . . . to which is added a Summary of the Principles and Maxims of Grand Tactics and Operations*, trans. by J. M. O'Connor, 2 vols. (New York: J. Seymour, 1817).

45 Professor Jared Mansfield's daughter Elizabeth pronounced O'Connor "a man of talents, but of most unhappy temperaments." Elizabeth Mansfield to Harriet [Drake?], December 8, 1817, The Papers of Jared Mansfield, The Library of the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York (hereafter cited as Mansfield Papers).


des Places and, inexplicably, a volume entitled Theatre de Racine. Military sabbaticals to Europe such as these continued irregularly up to the Civil War; two visits to Europe thereafter were made, for instance, by the brilliant Denis Hart Mahan in the late 1820s and George B. McClellan during the Crimean War.

Thayer, McRee, and O'Connor all made the American ministry in Paris their headquarters during their trips abroad, and there lively associations doubtless occurred among these young military representatives and French military figures. The final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo prematurely ended the careers of many experienced French officers, some of whom looked to new opportunities in the United States. While in Paris Thayer and McRee had met Claudius Crozet, a graduate of the famed École Polytechnique and ex-artillerist under Napoleon. When Thayer returned to America and took command of West Point, Crozet became the academy's first professor of engineering. Here, too, Thayer may have met the dashing William Theobald Wolfe Tone, son of the French general of that name, and an adopted son of the French Republic, which saw to his schooling at the Prytaneum and Imperial Lyceum. Though relatively young, Tone had a wealth of military experience. He had been a sub-lieutenant of chasseurs, and aide-de-camp to General Bagnères; he had also been wounded six times at the battle of Leipzig and was a member of the Legion of Honor. Tone came to the United States in 1816 and

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48 Invoice, dated October 12, 1820, ibid.

49 Weigley, History of the U. S. Army, pp. 150, 191.

served for a short time in the Regular Army, but he was a private gentle­man for the most part, writing about military subjects that intrigued him. After coming to America, he became a social acquaintance of Calhoun's and of several other individuals in the War Department. Tone later wrote a treatise on cavalry operations, but the American military establish­ment, having no cavalry units nor encouraging their creation, had little use for it.  

Other military works found ready support from the government. Calhoun readily supported O'Connor's translation of Vernon's work on fortifications, and, beginning in 1819, the Secretary supported the writing and translation of a treatise on artillery by another military refugee, ex-General Henri Lallemand. Lallemand's Treatise on Artillery was written especially to serve as a manual of instruction for the School of Artillery Practice at Fortress Monroe, the first of the army's postgraduate schools, which Calhoun also sponsored.  

Certainly the most controversial of the French military men to come to America after Waterloo was Simon Bernard, a former General in Napoleon's corps du genie and apparently a favorite of the Emperor's. The Bourbon regime naturally was anxious to keep under police surveil­lance this man whom Napoleon had said was more of a Bonapartist than he. Bernard was well known to Americans in Paris. He had been acquainted

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with William Crawford when Crawford was the U. S. minister to the Tuileries, and with his successor, Albert Gallatin. Bernard had assisted Thayer and McRee in their tours of observation as well. Through the good offices of the Marquise de Lafayette, Crawford, and Gallatin, Bernard was offered a place in 1816 on the newly formed United States Board of Engineers, whose mission was the creation of an organized network of coastal defenses. The Frenchman was to have (by a special act of Congress) a brevet rank of brigadier with the understanding that he had no chance of actually commanding the American corps of engineers. James Monroe, then Secretary of War, believed that this special arrangement would quiet any protests from American officers. Referring to Bernard, Monroe explained to Andrew Jackson:

"It required much delicacy in the arrangement, to take advantage of his knowledge and experience, in a manner acceptable to himself, without wounding the feelings of the Officers of our own corps,"

Although Bernard had returned to service during the Hundred Days, he nonetheless offered his loyalty to the Bourbons later and asked to be reinstated in the French Army; the new government refused and banished him to his home, where he was closely watched by the police. This, however, was not the story he told Francis Wright in New York in 1819. In this version he said that the King had "twice solicited his services, but he replied that having been aide-de-camp to the ex-emperor and honored with his intimacy, he could not enter into the service of the reigning family without drawing upon himself the suspicion that... he was guided by interest." Instead, he told Wright, he simply preferred to retire to his villa, where he was constantly harassed by the local authorities "till his patience became exhausted." Compare his letter to the Duc de Feltre in 1816, quoted in Joseph H. Harrison, Jr., "Simon Bernard, the American System, and the Ghost of the French Alliance," in America: The Middle Period, edited by John B. Boles (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1973), p. 149 (hereafter cited as Harrison, "Simon Bernard"); with Bernard's remarks to Wright, in Francis Wright, Views of Society and Manners in America, edited by Paul R. Baker (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 26 (hereafter cited as Wright, Views of Society). See also William McRee to J. G. Swift, September 14, 1816, Thayer Papers. On the means of Bernard's appointment, see Harrison, "Simon Bernard," p. 150.
who had rendered such useful services, and were entitled to the confidence and protection of their country.\textsuperscript{54}

Contrary to Monroe's expectation, Bernard's appointment stirred considerable resentment among America's sensitive young officers. Although General Swift's place as chief of the corps of engineers was not threatened, Swift chose to take the matter personally; he resigned less than a year after Bernard arrived in the country.\textsuperscript{55} In order to take advantage of Bernard's skills, all plans for fortifications had been suspended until the Frenchman had arrived in America. Christopher Vandeventer, then attached to the engineers around New York City, remarked to his old friend Thayer that "I need say but little to expose the evils to the service and wrongs to the Engineer Officers which will flow from . . . withdrawing confidence from American talent and exposing it exclusively in the presumption of adventurers."\textsuperscript{56}

In fairness to Bernard, he was every bit the engineer he was said to be; no American at the time had the experience and skill of the Frenchman.\textsuperscript{57} Bernard's appointment was, as the outraged American officers said, an admission by leaders of government that American talent was not quite up to the mark. The fact that Bernard's appointment was readily approved by the first postwar American Congress was a tacit

\textsuperscript{54} John F. Callan, \textit{The Military Laws of the United States} (Philadelphia: George Childs, 1863), p. 112 (hereafter cited as Callan, \textit{Military Laws of United States}).

\textsuperscript{55} Swift resigned in November, 1818. See Calhoun's letter respecting this, November 17, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:277.

\textsuperscript{56} Christopher Vandeventer to Sylvanus Thayer, June 4, 1816, Thayer Papers.

\textsuperscript{57} Bernard's training was impressive; he had studied under Lagrange and Monge at the École Polytechnique, worked on field fortifications with the Army of the Rhine, and had been in charge of the
admission that the modest abilities of American engineers could not be relied upon to begin the vast military building program which the government had inaugurated. Bernard clearly did have the confidence of President Monroe and Secretary Calhoun in the years to come; some said they were influenced more by this Frenchman than by their own officers. It was probably true.  

The wholesale importation of French ideas and men could hardly have encouraged native military innovations. France cast a long shadow over the American profession of arms in these years and influenced not only the thought, but the form and structure of the American military establishment. When Thayer set about modernizing West Point, he and members of government looked to the École Polytechnique as their model. When Calhoun was setting up the new Artillery School of Practice at Fortress Monroe, both he and his officers were anxious to know how things were done in the French Artillery School at Metz, and Henri Lallemand's ideas formed the new school's intellectual foundations for its first years in operation.  

fortifications at Antwerp in 1811. This last assignment explains George Washington Cullum's remark nearly fifty years later that Joseph Swift's work at New York City's fortifications was equal to those done at Antwerp. Writing in his biographical sketch of Swift, Cullum revealed the same sort of national chauvinism displayed by Swift, Vandeventer, and others when they heard of Bernard's appointment. See Harrison, "Simon Bernard," pp. 147-151; Wright, Views of Society, p. 26; and George Washington Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, from its Establishment in 1802 to 1890, 3 vols. (New York: 1863), 1:50-55 (hereafter cited as Cullum, Biographical Register).  

58 Swift, Memoirs, p. 149.  

All this is not to say that American officers offered no resistance to the French way as the only way. When General Bernard suggested that American artillery pieces merely be copied from those of the French, Ordnance chief Decius Wadsworth protested hotly. Concerning the carriage patterns, he declared, "The making of Wheel Carriages is as well understood in this as in any Country; and we should lose a great Deal and expose ourselves to Derision, in the Minds of those who know how Carriages ought to be built, by servilely copying Patterns invented and established in France 50 or 60 years ago." Some officers charged that the government seemed bent on making America little more than an enlarged France, with military policies and organizations to match. General Thomas Jesup made an objection to this way of thinking which, if the truth were known, did not so much trouble many of his thinking fellow officers. "An error prevails in this Country," Jesup told Calhoun, "in relation to the organization of the Army . . . which may be productive of the greatest injury to the service." European military forms were dangerous, to Jesup's way of thinking. "Without reflecting on the difference of situation & circumstances in which we are placed . . . we suppose that the same organization is adapted to our service which would answer there."  

Calhoun became enamored of the French military way. The Secretary, impressed by Bernard, willingly assisted the French general in his disputes with American officers and supported him in the government at

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60 Decius Wadsworth to John C. Calhoun, July 22, 1818, ibid., 2:413-417.

61 Thomas S. Jesup to John C. Calhoun, March 31, 1820, ibid., 4:475.
large. "Mr. Calhoun," said a detractor, "aided to infect members of Congress with an idea that General Bernard had a transcendant genius... as if he had been possessed of intuitive knowledge." It was true that Bernard had a great deal of influence over Calhoun; for the entirety of Calhoun's tenure in the War Office, Bernard was a major contributor to Calhoun's ideas as a representative of the French way of war.

The immigration of French military influences to the United States after 1815 was only the precursor of a greater consequence of the war: the nation was on the threshold of a military renaissance which did not owe its vitality to French ideas alone. The drive to modernize the American military establishment had been created in the first instance by the embarrassments of the war itself. Domestic experience could hardly have been ignored: the rubble which still surrounded the government in the capital kept the memories alive if nothing else would.

The end of the war was a signal for fresh beginnings, and advocates of modernization seemed stronger than they had ever been. Discussions about America's postwar military policy began as soon as President Madison announced the news from Ghent. Understanding well that tradition dictated a rapid demobilization, Madison admonished the congressmen to take care not to reduce the army dangerously. At the war's end there were forty thousand men on the army's rolls; Madison

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62 Swift, Memoirs, p. 149.
63 Bernard's contributions to American military policy will become evident in Chapter III, below.
asked that the number be lowered only by fifty per cent. The Senate was receptive to the administration's proposal, but the House of Representatives seemed ready to cut the army to a mere token force. James Monroe, then in the War Office, attempted to justify a twenty-thousand man army; that number, he said, would be hardly sufficient to maintain the few coastal defenses and garrison the frontier posts in the northwest. An army of the kind contemplated by the most anti-military members of the House—6,000 men—would not even be enough to carry on the military knowledge the country had acquired during the war, much less put up a reasonable defense. During the subsequent debates, the administration's friends in both houses of Congress were unable to agree on only a fifty per cent reduction. Disagreements between the Senate and House eventually forced out a compromise which went further in the direction of orthodox republicanism: a bill was eventually passed which fixed the peacetime army at ten thousand men. One of the few members of the House who had argued the administration's part was Calhoun. Little did he know that several years later, he would devise his arguments against reduction once more from the War Office itself.

The debates over the peacetime army in 1815 were important not only for the effect they had on the military establishment, but also

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65 Ibid., pp. 1265-1266, 1196-1199, 1164; see also, Weigley, History of the U. S. Army, p. 566.

66 Ibid.

67 James Monroe to William Branch Giles, February 22, 1815, Monroe Papers LC.


because they acted as a catalyst for the ideas of the two men who would dominate military policy in succeeding years. In a private letter to Senator William Branch Giles during the army debates, Monroe pointed out that the late war had closed an era of military amateurism. He felt that it had been this amateurism which had encouraged British hostility toward America. "The late war formed an epoch," he told Giles, "we cannot go back." Cautious military policies bespoke a "yielding spirit," which could easily be seen in a string of mediocre coastal fortifications and a military force of similar quality. The war had demonstrated the poverty of a conservative military policy by showing up weaknesses everywhere. In the Northwest Territory, the United States was now faced again with the same problem of taking possession which had plagued the country since the end of the revolution. If the nation could not summon the will to occupy what it already claimed, then the British conceivably could take it all again.

Several times during the next two years Monroe returned to these themes. In his first inaugural address, Monroe told his audience frankly that the nation could not hope to avoid future wars, and he invoked the embarrassments of the war just over in arguing for military preparedness. Announcing his determination to continue the fortification program which Madison started, Monroe reminded his listeners that one only need calculate the costs of a ravaged countryside to see the utility of coastal fortifications, adequately staffed. A proper army would also be of use in maintaining the science and implements of war, and with an effective

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70 James Monroe to William Branch Giles, February 22, 1815, Monroe Papers LC.
militia in support of the coastal defenses, a recurrence of the crisis on the Chesapeake in 1814 could be prevented.  

Monroe's desire for a progressive military policy was by no means an end unto itself, however. A modern policy, creating a screen of military protection, would allow the nation to fulfill its ambitions for expansion and improvements. National prosperity needed only the aid of internal improvements; protected by an adequate military force, the government could connect expanding western settlements "by degrees." 

Calhoun had been similarly affected by the war, perhaps more so. Even during the war, Calhoun said in a speech to the House that one result could already be observed: "It has already liberated us from that dread of British power, which was almost universal." According to Calhoun, this effect was not merely important by itself, but because the acquisition of "military skill and means, combined with the tone of thinking and feeling necessary to their use," would enable the nation to prosper in the future. 

When the darker days of the war were over, Calhoun rose again in the House to sound a note of triumph. One of the many dividends of the war, Calhoun said, was a maturing of the nation's dignity:

> The late war has given you a mode of feeling and thinking which forbids the acknowledgment of national inferiority, that first of political evils. Had we not encountered Great Britain, we should not have had the brilliant points to rest on we have now. We, too,

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72 Ibid.

have now our heroes and illustrious actions. If Britain has her Wellington, we have our Jacksons, Browns, and Scotts. It is impossible that we can now be degraded by comparisons.  

Throughout the war Calhoun had seemed hardly touched by the perils which the nation faced. When, on the eve of the war, one of his old law students from South Carolina asked his advice on joining the Army, Calhoun replied, "Were I a single man I would certainly take a commission [sic]. The war will be a favourite one with the country. Much honor await those who may distinguish themselves."  

It would be easy to dismiss such remarks as martial bombast, and yet their very overstatement was a clear announcement that Calhoun was not in the least susceptible to the anti-military prejudices of his Republican forbearers. To those who hesitated to reinforce the Regular Army at the beginning of the war, he asked what there was to fear about such an army when the nation could field a million militiamen? If he had to choose between a militarized nation and national feebleness, he said, he would take the former. Always behind Calhoun's military rhetoric lay the conviction that, at last, the nation was capable of great things. His utter faith in the vitality of the nation could not admit that the political institutions of the country could be threatened by a creed as impoverished as military despotism. To have admitted such

75 John C. Calhoun to Patrick Noble, March 22, 1812, ibid., 1:95-96.  
a possibility, one would have to betray his confidence in the strength of the republic itself, and that Calhoun would not do. It was this very sense of the nation's inherent strength and potential that animated Calhoun's career in the War Department. Earlier politicians had viewed the standing army as an unpleasant necessity and a potential enemy of national progress. Calhoun meant to transform the army into a servant of that progress. His first task, therefore, was to fashion the military establishment to do the nation's bidding and, not incidentally, his own.

III

In his old age, Calhoun said that he had taken his first cabinet post for the administrative experience it offered. He believed that if a young politician was to advance, a turn of duty in an executive post would be helpful.78 Just a few months before Calhoun left the House of Representatives for the Monroe administration, he remarked at length (and disapprovingly) that the structure of American government encouraged

78 [R. M. T. Hunter], The Life of John C. Calhoun, Presenting a Condensed History of Political Events from 1811 to 1843 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843), pp. 24-26 (hereafter cited as Calhoun Biography). The authorship of this work has been in dispute for a good while. Gerald Capers, John C. Calhoun, Opportunist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press; Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), pp. 255-256 (hereafter cited as Capers, Opportunist), argues that while Hunter may have done the actual writing of the book, Calhoun supplied the materials and determined the "eulogistic" tone; thus, Capers styles this work Calhoun's "autobiography." More recently, James L. Anderson and W. Edwin Hemphill, "The 1843 Biography of John C. Calhoun: Was R. M. T. Hunter its Author?" Journal of Southern History, 38 (August, 1972), 469-474, attribute the effort to Hunter and do so persuasively. It seems to me that the attribution question is largely a red herring; Calhoun could only have been pleased by the work, which is so prone to give him the benefit of every doubt, and which distorts Calhoun's services in the War Department considerably. I would only add that this work should be used with special caution, and that it should be taken for what it is: a document which was designed to influence the outcome of a race for the presidency in Calhoun's favor.
ambitious young men to seek their fortunes in the executive branch. A question of increasing congressmen's allowances had come before the House, and Calhoun rose to defend the measure. The executive branch attracted the "very best talents," he said, with its habits of rewarding its members with profit and honor and offering the chance for the public's esteem. By comparison, "the only office in the general government in the gift of the people," the Congress, was in danger of relinquishing its power by encouraging mediocrity. The system allowed the American people to take the political aspirant only so far: "to go beyond . . . the Executive must take him by the hand." At that time, Calhoun thought that the imbalance of talents could be redressed by better pay, but ten months after describing the course of political ambition, he set off along that very road.  

Although it was true that Calhoun had never held an administrative post in government, he was not a complete stranger to management, nor was he at all mystified by the workings of the executive branch. Serving in the House of Representatives during the war, he could hardly have ignored the maladministration of the War Department and the lack of direction in the executive branch. From the first anticipations of the war, Calhoun had misgivings about the Madison administration's ability to meet the demands about to be made upon it. Madison himself seemed to Calhoun to lack the resolution necessary in a war leader. "Our president," Calhoun wrote to a friend, "tho [sic] a man of amiable manners and great talents, has not I fear those commanding talents


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necessary to control those about him." Instead of preparing for war, Calhoun complained, the administration "reluctantly gives up the system of peace." Even more ominous than that, Calhoun reported, Madison "permits division [sic] in his cabinet."\(^{80}\)

Eventually Calhoun was satisfied that his misgivings about the executive's abilities to run a war had been borne out:

What I had strong reason to fear has actually happened. Our executive officers are most incompetent men; and will let the best of causes I fear perish in their hands. We are literally bored [sic] down under the effects of errors and mismanagement. I am sorry to say that many of them lie deep; and are coeval with the existence of Mr. Jeffersons [sic] administration. The organization of the government I do not think ^s much to blame. Fairly administered it is a strong government. This is a source of consolation.\(^{81}\)

He could not have been much consoled by the events which followed. After a disastrous six months of fighting, the War Department's William Eustis and the Navy's Paul Hamilton left office. Their removal "promises som[e]thing," Calhoun allowed, but how little even Calhoun could not tell.\(^{82}\)

As interested in military administration as Calhoun may have appeared, other matters occupied his time and he only occasionally discussed military affairs per se. He defended war programs knowing only that money and men and military skills were all in short supply.\(^{83}\)

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\(^{80}\) John C. Calhoun to James MacBride, April 18, 1812, ibid., 1:99-100.

\(^{81}\) John C. Calhoun to James MacBride, December 25, 1812, ibid., 1:146.

\(^{82}\) John C. Calhoun to James MacBride, February 2, 1813, ibid., 1:162. Calhoun and his fellow war hawks had worked for several months to have both the Secretaries of War and Navy removed. See Wiltse, Calhoun, p. 74.

\(^{83}\) See, for example, John C. Calhoun, "Speech on the Merchant's Bonds," December 8, 1812, ibid., 1:136-144.
minor details he left to others better versed in the arcana of military
science; he had yet to read a military treatise of any kind by the time
he came to the War Department.\textsuperscript{84}

When he did arrive in Washington on December 2, 1817, to take up
his new position, he found at first that he needed his brilliance less
than common sense and physical endurance, for the management of America's
military establishment in this period was largely one which demanded
mastery of details.\textsuperscript{85}

He immediately plunged into the War Department's business,
learning all he could about the President's policy and current depart­
mental problems. During the first few days he probably talked with
acting Secretary George Graham. Several days later Calhoun paid a visit
to Monroe in the newly named "White House," and met John Quincy Adams
for the first time.\textsuperscript{86} Calhoun also met with General Joseph Swift and
the President on the matter of the department's organization. From the
first, Calhoun and the President apparently agreed that the major
sections of the War Department should be physically consolidated and
close at the Secretary's hand.\textsuperscript{87}

Calhoun meant to be deliberate about any changes he would make
in the organization and structure of the War Department. He first needed
to acquaint himself with the organization and the people with whom he

\textsuperscript{84}Calhoun Biography, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{85}Calhoun wrote to his mother-in-law on November 15, reporting
their progress. By then he and his family had been on the road for some
days. John C. Calhoun to Mrs. Floride Calhoun, November 15, 1817, ibid.,
1:420, xl.

\textsuperscript{86}Adams, Diary, 4:28. \textsuperscript{87}Swift, Memoirs, p. 170.
would have to deal during the next few years. As a group, these men would comprise some of Calhoun's most intimate acquaintances and ardent supporters. One of these was a young man he had yet to meet, although he had heard much of him by the time he took office. The day after he arrived, Calhoun received notes from both Henry Clay and William Crawford upon the same subject: the appointment of a chief clerk for the War Department. 88 Graham had this post before becoming acting Secretary of War, and it was assumed that Calhoun would want his own appointee in the place. Clay and Crawford had written to recommend the same man: Christopher Vandeventer, late a major on the northern frontier during the war. Vandeventer had served Generals Jacob Brown and Swift with some distinction, had been taken prisoner during a night action at Stony Creek in 1813, and had managed to escape, only to be recaptured. 89 After parole and convalescence, Vandeventer began a campaign of his own among a set of rather influential friends to gain a post in the new Monroe administration. Starting only a few days after the inauguration, letters began to arrive at the War Department recommending Vandeventer for the chief clerk's post. The first was from DeWitt Clinton, but Graham did not reply, filing the letter for the future Secretary instead. 90


89 "Register, Rules, and Regulations for the Army in 1813," ASPMA, 1:388; Cullum, Register, 1:91.

90 DeWitt Clinton to Secretary of War, March 11, 1817, Vandeventer Papers.
Next, Vandeventer wrote former Secretary of War John Armstrong for advice. Armstrong could not imagine why a vigorous young man would want to make of himself "a mere quill driver for life," and cautioned Vandeventer against hoping for advancement to a higher position in the department or the Regular Army. "Time and chance," wrote Armstrong, "took [Daniel] Parker [Adjutant and Inspector General] out of that station and put him at the head of a department, but this is a rare instance." But since Vandeventer had to choose between remaining in the army and trying to join the government, Armstrong advised the latter:

... because we know that a blockhead without any sense, knowledge [sic] or delicacy may be a [General?], whereas we cannot allow ourselves to believe that any other than a gentleman will be called upon to administer the War Dept. and if such be called he will sit very lightly on the people about him, from the first clerk to the Door Keeper.92

By late October, Vandeventer had won a promise from Secretary Crawford of his good offices "with the new incumbent." In all, no less than seven letters in support of Vandeventer had arrived in the War Department by the time Calhoun got there. On December 10 Calhoun finally asked Vandeventer to join the department as his chief clerk. Such were the trials of place-hunting.93

The chief clerk's position was an important one, paying two thousand dollars per year—perhaps more if the occupant were willing to take advantage of departmental information.94 Calhoun's chief clerk

91 John Armstrong to Christopher Vandeventer, November 12, 1817, ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 William H. Crawford to Christopher Vandeventer, October 29, 1817; John C. Calhoun to Christopher Vandeventer, December 10, 1817, ibid.
94 Vandeventer was ambitious, energetic, and not altogether scrupulous in his dealings at the War Department, and he was not above

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was not, as Armstrong had said, a "mere quill driver." He was an administrative assistant who could act as Calhoun's surrogate in the Secretary's absence, and Vandeventer often did so. In a modern system, he could be called an "assistant Secretary." Moreover, a firm and close relationship developed between Calhoun and the young major; in the years following, Vandeventer would act as one of the Secretary's closest confidants and also as one of his military advisors.  

Subject to Vandeventer's immediate supervision and at Calhoun's disposal were twenty-one clerks. Even with this large amount of assistance, Calhoun's official days were crushingly long. Among the various clerks, several were responsible for certain subjects of correspondence, such as bounties, accounts, and the like, but with the using Calhoun in any way he could, nor was he hesitant about misleading the Secretary on several occasions. Vandeventer eventually became embroiled in what today would be called a "conflict of interest." Through it all, Calhoun would stand by Vandeventer. See Chapter III, pp. 133-137.

Considering the strategic position which Vandeventer held in relation to Calhoun and his work as Secretary of War, it is surprising that none of Calhoun's biographers have taken much notice of the clerk, or, indeed, used his papers, now located and well catalogued at the Clements Library. This is, to my knowledge, the first time that Vandeventer's papers at the Clements have been used. As shall be seen, they are quite important to an understanding of this period of Calhoun's official life and politics.


Calhoun Biography, p. 30. By this account, Calhoun regularly put in fourteen and fifteen hour days; naturally, he was not too happy about doing so. Indeed, other cabinet officers complained about their work loads. William Wirt had only taken his office upon "the calculation of being able to pursue my profession on a more advantageous ground--i.e., more money for less work." He quickly found, however, that "the office . . . is no sinecure. I have been up 'till midnight, at work, every night, and still have my hands full." William Wirt to Judge Carr, January 21, 1818, Kennedy, Life of Wirt, p. 73.
exception of the "Pension office," they could hardly be said to have com-
prised special "sections" within the secretariat.\footnote{White, The Jeffersonians, p. 234.} With the exception of Vandeventer, all were civilians in 1817, although Calhoun eventually introduced the practice of employing army officers in this part of the War Office.

Beyond Calhoun's clerical entourage lay the so-called "General Staff" of the army, and then the command system of the army itself. These two bodies were different and were separated organizationally and geographically. There was no chief of staff, but merely so many bureaus, each with its own chief, each responsible to the Secretary himself.\footnote{See the organizational chart accompanying "Reduction of the Army Considered," December 11, 1818, ASPMA, 1:783.}

The provenance of the general staff concept is French; however imperfectly applied to the American military establishment, at least the idea had been current in America for some time. Ordinarily, the État-major was conceived as the staff of the general only; by definition no staff was superior to any field commander. This notion was understood by American military leaders, but like the martial experience of the nation, was applied only as convenience suited.\footnote{Certainly, the British military system afforded no precedent but confusion, nor was attention paid to the Prussian reforms than proceeding under Gerhard von Scharnhorst. On the other hand, the work of Jomini on the French art of war was known in the United States at least as early as 1808. A testament to the influence of the French military system during this period may be found in William Duane, The American Military Library; or Compendium of the Modern Tactics, Embracing the Discipline, Manoeuvres, and Duties of Every Species of Troops, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Printed by Author, 1809), 1:vii (hereafter cited as Duane, American Military Library). Duane writes: "As the French system is now adopted by all the nations of Europe, it is essential, that whatever nation is in danger of being attacked by that system should understand..."} An act to regulate...
the military establishment of 1795 described a "General Staff" which conformed to the État-major, in the sense that the staff was attached to the commander of the line. By 1802 a statute creating the Corps of Engineers revealed a subtle shift in the line of military authority. The law stipulated that the corps was responsible to the President, not the commanders in the field, and his military agent, the Secretary of War. Ten years later, the Quartermaster's and Ordnance departments were given places directly subordinate to the Secretary—a trend toward concentration of military authority in the hands of the chief civilian officer that culminated in 1813 with a law "for the better regulations of the General Staff of the Army of the United States," and which left no doubt that these departments were superintended by the Secretary on behalf of the President.

The machinery that Calhoun actually inherited was little more than a collection of military fiefdoms. Responsibility for the military system supposedly focused upon the Secretary; however, there was no real it." Apparently, it was Duane's work which transmitted Paul Thiebault's comments on the modern staff to those interested few in the United States. Part III of Duane's work is almost wholly taken up by his translation of Thiebault's Manuel de Adjutants Generaux et des Adjoints Employes dans let Etat-Majors Divisionaires des Armees (Paris, 1800). For more on Duane and his work, see Fred K. Vigman, "William Duane's American Military Library," Military Affairs, 8 (1943-1944), 321-324. For Jomini's views on the military staff and its function and organization see Antoine Henri Jomini, The Art of War, trans. by G. H. Mendell, and W. F. Craighill (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1862), pp. 51, 231-234.

101 Callan, Military Laws of the United States, p. 112.
102 Ibid., pp. 148-149.
103 Ibid., pp. 217-220, 226-227, 245-246. The law of 1813, however, provided for eight quartermasters, to be attached to divisional and regimental commands.
centralization of authority. The statutes said otherwise, but the disorganization of the military establishment ruled as no law could.

Within Calhoun's authoritative reach at Washington were, variously, the Paymaster General (Brigadier General Daniel Brent), the Adjutant and Inspector General (Brigadier General Daniel Parker), the Chief of Ordnance (Colonel Decius Wadsworth), and the Superintendent of Indian Trade (Thomas L. McKenney, a civilian).

There were also departments located outside the capital. In New York City, an Apothecary General (Francis LeBaron) purchased medical supplies for the post surgeons. In Philadelphia, Callendar Irvine was the Commissary-General of Purchases (that is to say, procurement of military supplies). General Swift, the Chief of the Corps of Engineers, was nominally stationed at the military academy at West Point, but in practice, Swift's far-flung duties meant that the corps had a flying headquarters. Indeed, Swift put in rare appearances at West Point, and then only when things were awry (as they often were during this period). 104

The command structure of the army was even more muddled, and the personalities of the men who made it up made dealing with it all the more difficult. The army was split into Northern and Southern Divisions. From Brownsville, New York, the senior Major General of the army, Jacob Brown, commanded. He was assisted by two Brigadiers, Alexander Macomb in Detroit, and Winfield Scott in New York City (both these men were brevetted major generals). A similar arrangement obtained in the

Southern Division, where Nashville served as Andrew Jackson's headquarters. His Brigadiers (again, both carrying brevets as major generals) were Eleazar Ripley in New Orleans and Edmund P. Gaines in Augusta. Attached to the two divisions were two quartermasters-general and two medical officers, none of whom had (as yet) an office in the War Department to oversee their operations. A War Department report to Congress in 1818 contains an organizational accounting which designates the "General Staff" as all those officers serving in the Washington offices, plus these field commanders; thus capturing adequately the martial confusion. The term "General Staff" was commonly used at the time, but the War Department's organization was more correctly a hybrid of the concept as it was then known, and with the possible exception of Bertier's Imperial Staff bureaux under Napoleon, it did not resemble any other military organization then used.

These staff and command elements, and their locations were above all creatures of the War of 1812. The four brigade headquarters at New York City, Detroit, New Orleans, and Augusta, if considered indicative of strategy represent the defensive quality which that war acquired after the summer of 1814. This arrangement was not, in other words, reflective of a strategic concept which was suited to a nation then moving rapidly westward. Strategically, as well as organizationally,


the American military establishment had yet to leave the war behind and
adapt to the newer demands of the nation.

The deficiencies of such a military organization were manifold.
There was no one officer who could serve as liaison between the army and
the Secretary of War, nor, for that matter, between the chiefs of depart­
ment and the Secretary. Calhoun served as his own chief of staff, and
one can only imagine how much his work day increased because of it. He
had to deal simultaneously with two divisional commanders who were alike
only in their hostility to one another and in their jealousy of their
prerogatives of office. The offices such as the Apothecary General and
the Commissary General of Purchases that were removed from Calhoun's
immediate control, made for countless inefficiencies, particularly in the
important matter of departmental accounts. And although the Chief of
Engineers was at that time executing a centrally-directed military
fortifications scheme worth several hundred thousands of dollars, he was
seldom on hand for consultation with his superiors at Washington.

Therefore, there was no great distinction in seeing, as Calhoun
did, that the system of staff and command desperately wanted reforming.
Calhoun's predecessor, William Crawford, recommended to Congress that a
"Staff of the Army" be organized in 1815. Crawford thought that the
reasons for a reorganization of the military system were self-evident:

The experience of the two first campaigns of the last war, which
has furnished volumes of evidence upon this subject, has incontest­
ably established not only the expediency, but the necessity of giving
to the military establishment, in time of peace, the organization
which it must have to render it efficient in a state of war.

It is believed also to be demonstrable, that a complete organiza­
tion of the staff will contribute as much to the economy of the
establishment as to its efficiency.107

107 "Organization of the Staff of the Army," December 27, 1815,
ASPMA, 1:636.
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107"Organization of the Staff of the Army," December 27, 1815, ASPMA, 1:636.
Crawford had advocated the centralizing of the Adjutant and Inspector General's office, the Paymaster's office, and the Quartermaster General's office at Washington. The main difference between the structure Crawford asked for in 1815 and the one which Calhoun inherited two years later was a crucial one: Congress had declined to establish a central Quartermaster's office. Above all, this omission seriously affected the "economy and efficiency" that Crawford and Calhoun sought during their turns in the War Department. 108

Even before Calhoun took his oath of office, the problem of structure had thrust itself into his attention, intruding during an interview with the President and General Swift. 109 That chaos was the real master of the military establishment was conceded generally; Crawford had said as much, and Monroe apparently agreed. Calhoun was not long in being convinced: less than a week in office, he complained that "little heretofore has been done to give exactness, economy, and dispatch to its [the department's] monied transactions." 110 He claimed not to be too sanguine about his chances to alter a system which had seemingly defied all previous attempts, but his vigorous attack on these problems during the next few months told otherwise. 111

110 John C. Calhoun to Charles J. Ingersoll, December 14, 1817, Calhoun Papers, 2:16-17.
111 Ibid. Within his first year in office, Calhoun had inaugurated the system of accountability, the Yellowstone movement, the new system of coastal defenses, the interdiction of British penetration in the northwest territories, and the extinguishment of all Indian land claims east of the Mississippi river. No one ever claimed that Calhoun was in the least modest about his own abilities.
It was unlikely that Calhoun needed more convincing of the need for reorganization than the few days he had spent in the War Office; but, the first Seminole War had broken out on the Florida border, and as Generals Gaines and Jackson mounted their operations against the Indians, Calhoun soon received as much motivation as he would ever need. The Secretary found himself acting the part of commanding general sometimes, and quartermaster general on other occasions. The ordinary difficulties of rapidly staging a frontier action were complicated further by a gross breakdown of the supply network. A civilian who had been contracted to furnish the Southern Division with pay and rations had failed to do so. When General Gaines arrived at Amelia Island, he was greeted by this news. Despite sizable advances made to the contractor, Benjamin Orr, that civilian had failed to send sufficient monies to agents in Georgia.112 It was not long before General Jackson complained of the same difficulties. Calhoun quickly authorized both generals to purchase supplies they might need to bring hostilities to a close, and dispatched Major Milo Mason southward with a war chest of forty thousand dollars.113 Thereafter, Calhoun monitored the major's operations and several times corresponded with Jackson, Gaines, and several southern governors on

112 John C. Calhoun to Edmund P. Gaines, January 16, 1818, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War relating to Military Affairs, National Archives Microfilm Publication, M 6, RG 107 (hereafter cited as Letters Sent, SWMA). Although the Calhoun Papers reproduce an impressive number of Calhoun's official and personal letters, some correspondence of use to this study are only calendared. In cases where calendared letters have been cited, I have taken pains to read the actual texts, all of which are available on National Archives microfilm. Only when the calendar notes of the Calhoun Papers convey the sense of my allusions to those items will they be cited. In every instance the reader's convenience in quickly confirming the quote or allusion will be the deciding factor.

113 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, January 29, 1818, ibid.
matters of materiel, personnel, and additional advances sufficient to carry on the war. 114

Although this was one of the least dramatic episodes of the Seminole war, it accurately depicts the magnitude of the organizational problem with which Calhoun was faced. Knowing little about military organization per se, Calhoun was nonetheless disturbed by what he repeatedly called "the dispersed situation of the army," and this applied to an organizational as well as the physical dispersal of the establishment. 115 This was the greatest obstacle to what he wanted to accomplish: to make the Army efficient and economical.

Some of the changes Calhoun aimed to make could be done with the power of his position; other, more extensive alterations required the approval of Congress. Just a few days into the new year, Calhoun began to try to centralize the War Department's organizational elements. His first move was to order the peripatetic General Swift to come to ground at Washington and fix his headquarters there after he had settled a coastal survey which then occupied the engineers. The Secretary then began conversations with friendly congressmen who could sponsor the sort of legislation Calhoun had in mind. For the moment, the points of origin for friendly legislation were the military committees of the House and Senate. Particularly helpful to Calhoun was the Senate committee chairman,

114 John C. Calhoun to Milo Mason, February 19, 1818; John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, February 19, 1818; John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, February 23, 1818; John C. Calhoun to Milo Mason, February 26, 1818; John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, March 2, 1818, ibid.

115 John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, December 17, 1817, January 2, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:22, 53.
John Williams of Tennessee, who was to work closely with the Secretary during the next two months.

By mid-January Williams and his committee were ready to bring Calhoun's plan before Congress. Another friendly member, Senator Isaac Tichenor of Vermont, moved that the Senate consider altering parts of the old staff legislation as they concerned the medical services and judges advocate. Interestingly, he suggested that the Senate determine how to place the pay and allowances of the "Military and Staff officers" on a "more economical establishment." Tichenor's resolutions were quickly accepted by the Senate, and Williams sent them along to the War Department, asking for Calhoun's advice. 116

Calhoun replied to Williams on February 5, 1818. 117 The Secretary admitted outright that he knew little about the intricacies of military organization, but what was less apparent was Calhoun's blunting of the sense of Tichenor's resolutions, which seemed to be aimed at retrenchments rather than additions to the staff. The Secretary blithely ignored the implications of Tichenor's motions and recommended that new officers be appointed "in lieu" of those which were about to be cut. 118 These new


117 John C. Calhoun to John Williams, February 5, 1818, ibid., 2:133-134.

118 The bill was repeatedly referred to by Tichenor and Williams before the Senate as a "Bill to reduce the Staff of the Army," and yet there is no intrinsic reason why, under this plan, the staff should have been reduced. There could have been demotions, or reassignments of personnel, and there were changes in the names of medical personnel, but as for an absolute reduction in the numbers of staff people, the plan did not compel it. Whether this phrasing was a ploy to make the new plan

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officers were to be a Surgeon General, a Quartermaster General, and a Judge Advocate General. After a brief explanation of the duties which these officers would perform, Calhoun closed by saying, "I know of no farther [sic] retrenchments, that would not impair the efficiency of the staff." He had proposed staff additions, not cuts; nowhere in his letter did he contemplate a retrenchment in numbers. Only by increased efficiency could retrenchment be achieved; at least this was the way Calhoun chose to see it.

In the course of his explanation to Williams, Calhoun showed a keen interest in consolidating his control over the different parts of the army. Referring to the medical staff, Calhoun said that it was "without responsibility; and must, I conceive, remain so 'till its duties are brought to a centre." A Surgeon General could inspect medical returns, supervise post surgeons, monitor the use of medical supplies, and oversee the general improvement of the army's health. "It is not to be doubted," he wrote, "that the public sustains great losses for the want of such a system." For much the same reason, the establishment of a central Quartermaster's department was important. As he argued for its creation, Calhoun stated what amounted to the first principle of his system of management: "No branch of the general staff is more important or difficult to be managed than the quarter master's; none requires more eminently the control of a single and responsible head." To the new Secretary, all would be well if responsibility could be fixed and palatable to Congress is not known, but it seems a reasonable assumption to make. Mysteriously, by the time the bill was approved in its final form, it was known simply as "An Act Respecting the Organization of the Army." U. S., Annals of Congress, 15th Cong., 1st sess., p. 379.

119 John C. Calhoun to John Williams, February 5, 1818, Jameson, Calhoun Correspondence, 2:133-134.
authority centralized in the chief officers of the department. Senator Williams' reaction to this was to ask Calhoun to draft the new staff bill himself—in one day. Calhoun took a week. On February 18, 1818, Williams promptly reported Calhoun's bill to the Senate.  

While the bill made its way easily through Congress, Calhoun was having to contend with the matter of patronage: these were the first offices of consequence placed in his gift. Dr. Tobias Watkins of New York was a formidable contender for the Surgeon General's place. "His friends in Congress, who are very numerous and influential, [are] very anxious" that Watkins should win the place, Calhoun remarked. While a "great effort" was being made on Watkins' behalf, General Jacob Brown arrived in Washington with his own favorite for the position: Dr. Joseph Lovell. Brown had arrived at about the same time that Calhoun was drafting his bill for staff alterations, but the general seemed far more interested in getting the new post for Lovell than in any sort of reform. Apparently Calhoun and Brown made a private understanding about Lovell, for the physician was ordered to Washington well before the staff bill passed into law. As a consolation, Watkins was made the

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121 John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, April 25, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:259.

122 A letter from Calhoun to Brown puts the general in Washington on January 20, 1818, ibid., 2:82. This is of some importance, for Brown ten years later attempted to claim a great deal more credit than the evidence indicates he was entitled to regarding these reforms. Calhoun did talk with Brown about the reorganization, or at least part of it. See Virgil Maxey to John C. Calhoun, March 2, 1827, Jameson, Calhoun Correspondence, 2:791-793; and John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, April 25, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:258-259.
assistant Surgeon General for the Northern Department, with Brown's blessing.\textsuperscript{123}

At the same time, Colonel James R. Mullany was exercising every influence he could call upon to win the new Quartermaster General's position. Early in April, Vice-President Daniel D. Tompkins threw his inconsiderable weight behind Mullany's pretentions, and a few days later twenty-one members of the House of Representatives also lent their support to the colonel.\textsuperscript{124} Mullany then appealed directly to President Monroe. The Secretary, however, would not have his mind made up by such an impressive display of support: on the day Mullany wrote to the President, Calhoun asked William Cummings of Georgia to take the new post. Less than a month later, Calhoun informed Mullany that his services were no longer required.\textsuperscript{125}

On April 14, 1818, the new staff bill became law. It gave Calhoun almost everything he had asked for: the section creating a Judge Advocate had been trimmed, but he pronounced himself pleased with the results of

\textsuperscript{123} Jacob Brown to John C. Calhoun, April 2, 1818; and John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, April 25, 1818, ibid., 2:224, 259.

\textsuperscript{124} D. D. Tompkins to John C. Calhoun, April 4, 1818; and John Spencer, et. al. to John C. Calhoun, April 10, 1818, ibid., 2:227, 239.

\textsuperscript{125} John C. Calhoun to James R. Mullany, May 2, 1818; and John C. Calhoun to William Cummings, April 13, 1818, ibid., 2:276, 243. There was also some question about Mullany's handling of accounts and materiel during his service at New York City as quartermaster for the Northern Division. See James R. Mullany to John C. Calhoun, March 3, 1818, ibid., 2:172. Cummings declined Calhoun's offer of the new post as being "inconsistent with my present pursuits;" see William Cummings to John C. Calhoun, April 27, 1818, ibid., 2:262. Although Cummings obviously enjoyed Calhoun's confidence, the Secretary's second choice, newly promoted General Thomas S. Jesup, was a happy one; for an idea of the kind of Quartermaster General Jesup will make, see his letter of acceptance, Thomas S. Jesup to John C. Calhoun, June 5, 1818, ibid., 2:329-330.
this first attempt. There was also a bonus: along with the Surgeon and Quartermaster Generals, a Commissary General was to be created when ration contracts with civilians expired in June, 1819. The bill concerned itself much more with this office than with the others. The new Commissary was hereafter to be taken from the army. He would carry the rank of colonel, and, in a curious departure from the practice of not requiring bonds of officers, the new Commissary would have to post a bond ensuring performance. The act specifically enjoined the officer from participating in any business which might conflict with his official duties.

The spectacular failure of contractor Benjamin Orr to supply General Jackson's columns in the Seminole War probably influenced the inclusion of this section in the bill, because Calhoun did not mention a new commissariat to Senator Williams during their exchange of views on reorganization. Calhoun was nevertheless aware of the need for such an officer: one of the few times Calhoun spoke directly on a military subject during the war was when he recommended that Congress find a way to supply and subsist the army more efficiently. The objections to using civilians to supply the army were numerous. Civilian contractors were not subject to martial law. They moved as quickly or as slowly as they pleased, even when military movements depended upon them. If

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somehow they defaulted on their contracts, civil courts were the only recourse. In his original competition for the contract from the government, the businessman could submit a bid so low that honest contractors could not compete with the promise of such a thin profit margin. The winner of the contract could then resell the contract to a second businessman, and the profit margin would be thinner still. Sometimes, the second contractor sold the contract to still other contractors, who, in the words of one outraged general during the war, "are forced to bear certain loss and ultimate ruin, or commit frauds, by furnishing damaged provisions; they generally choose the latter, though it should tend to destroy the army." General Gaines was once forced to confine several of his officers and men who had become greatly agitated over their contractor's shortcomings. Gaines testified to Congress later that the contractor seemed immune to threats, or indeed anything short of outright violence. Thus the new commissariat was created at the insistence of Congress alone, although Calhoun could only have applauded its initiative.

A new Commissary General would not be required until 1819, but Calhoun chose to fill the place right away, along with his other appointments. Less than a week after the bill became law, Calhoun had arranged for his newest officers: Colonel George Gibson, quartermaster for the Southern Division and a favorite of General Jackson's, became Commissary General; Joseph Lovell was from the Northern Division; and Thomas S. Jesup, the new Quartermaster General, had recently served in both

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129 See the remarks of General Winfield Scott and Edmund P. Gaines in "Subsisting the Army," January 25, 1815, ASPMA, 1:600.
divisions. Washington cognoscenti could hardly fail to have noticed the politically wise split in the appointments between the two divisions.\footnote{John C. Calhoun to Milo Mason, April 19, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:251.}

The new act had given Calhoun the skeleton of a good organization, but it was only that. The law left Calhoun considerable latitude to complement the new arrangements with departmental regulations. Beginning in April, 1818, the first of several sets of new rules was issued from Calhoun's office. General Swift received instructions which concentrated in detail on how the Corps of Engineers would be held responsible for the public monies it spent.\footnote{John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, April 7, 1818, Letters Sent, SWMA.} Henceforth, Swift's project engineers were the authorities on the spot: the civilian agents of fortifications, who supplied the materials under contract to the War Department, answered directly to the military engineer, as indeed did all civilians connected with the project. For his part the engineer was required to account specifically for all materials requisitioned and to attest to the quality of those materials. Descriptions of civilian laborers, the jobs they did, and their wages were all to be sent to the War Department every quarter. Not a penny was to move without the justification of the regulations.\footnote{Ibid.}

The weight given in the new Engineer regulations to the disbursement of government money presaged a major direction of the Calhoun reforms. With the exception of the Adjutant and Inspector General's department, all the other headquarters offices were as much great
business offices as military centers. It was to this facet of military organization that Calhoun's efforts were nearly constantly directed during his time in office; indeed, at first Calhoun seemed little interested in re-ordering the actual duties of these units, although that was one effect of the new regulations. To be sure, the project engineer's work would never be the same. 133

Eventually, all the bureaus under Calhoun's control were given similar regulations, and even though each bureau's regulations were fashioned for the office they governed, the common features of these new rules best express the new system Calhoun had in mind for the War Department. 134 Calhoun was obviously interested in restricting the access of civilians to public money. Wherever possible, Calhoun's new regulations turned the handling of the department's business over to military officers, who were at least subject to military justice. Civilian disbursement agents operating under the aegis of the War Department still numbered in the hundreds, but at least the principle had been established. 135

133 Calhoun divided Swift's duties into five separate tasks, only two of which did not directly bear upon the protection of public expenditures: "military reconnoitering," construction and repair of works, inspection of works, correspondence, and general supervision of disbursements. Ibid.

134 Quartermaster General Jesup and Surgeon General Lovell, much more aggressive in their duties than General Swift ever was, wrote their own; Calhoun and Monroe quickly approved their regulations. See Thomas S. Jesup to John C. Calhoun, July 7, 1818; and John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, September 19, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:390-392, and 3:141.

135 In 1822 the War Department controlled some 291 disbursement agents. Those charged with fiscal responsibility included quartermasters, commissaries, paymasters, surgeons and apothecaries, military storekeepers, barrackmasters, agents of fortifications, pension agents, Indian agents, factors, assistant factors, and contractors of various kinds. It is possible that in 1818 there were many more on the rolls left over from the war who still drew their salaries but did no work.
Neither did Calhoun indulge himself with a simple faith in the fidelity of the army officer. On the contrary, responsible officers now found themselves surrounded by a welter of new requirements for the proofs of their performance: vouchers, receipts, and accountings of every kind. As their information came into the War Department, Calhoun had his bureau chiefs consolidate these data for his own information and use. Administratively, it was as good a system as the War Department had yet seen, and it suited Calhoun's tastes: he was the center of action, and to outside observers, the success of centralization depended upon Calhoun alone.

III

In the fall of 1818 the verdict on the changes Calhoun had made was not yet in; Calhoun was satisfied that the new system would work.

In 1819 General Brown found an "agent of fortifications" at Green Bay, paid as a Captain, but doing no work of any kind for years—since the war, in fact. Brown dismissed the agent. Calhoun responded favorably (and, surprisingly, with a little humor): "So loosely was the business of the Engineer Department formerly conducted that it was not known to this Department that there was an agent for fortifications at Green Bay." Jacob Brown to John C. Calhoun, September 10, 1819; and John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, September 22, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:313, 342. "Conditions of the Military Establishment and the Fortifications, and Returns of the Militia," November 29, 1823, ASPMA, 2:554.


See, for instance, Calhoun's instructions "To All Military Storekeepers of the Ordnance Department," October 24, 1818, Letters Sent, SWMA.

John C. Calhoun to Thomas Jesup, Daniel Brent, Calendar Irvine, Decius Wadsworth, J. G. Swift, and Joseph Lovell, August 29, 1818; and "Regulations requiring reports, etc. from the several officers of the Dept [sic] of War," September 5, 1818, ibid.
but it was a system for the future. Since the centralization of authority and the placing of subordinate responsibility were the cornerstones of the reforms he intended, he expectantly awaited the first influx of reports from the various commands and bureau chiefs. A report to Congress on the status of the War Department was due in two months, and he believed he would then be able to tell the legislators that his changes were well underway. Now, he wrote to Andrew Jackson:

I have strong hopes that Qr. masters and other branches of disbursements, will hereafter be brought into much more exact method. Charged, as the Department formerly was, with an infinity, of details, it was quite impossible to bestow the requisite attention to any one part without neglecting some other. A responsible head to each branch of disbursements, will hereafter remove this evil.  

It remained, however, for the young administrator to undo the mismanagement of the previous several decades. What Calhoun attempted throughout 1818 was by no means a new or exotic procedure for the governance of an executive department. The requiring of exact reportage of disbursements, and fixing responsibility precisely upon the officer charged with doing a department's business was known then as the system of "accountability," an administrative form whose origins lay in the Federalist period. The leading scholar of early American public administration, Leonard White, has compared the Jeffersonian administrations unfavorably with those of the Federalists, and assuredly the pre-Calhoun War Department represented the worst that Jeffersonian talents had to offer. 

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139 Calhoun's 1843 biography gives the reader the impression that this new system was implemented quickly and rather easily, despite "formidable opposition" in Congress, and that thereafter, the new system worked "without a jar." See Calhoun Biography, pp. 25-26.

140 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, September 29, 1818, Letters Sent, SWMA.

141 White, The Jeffersonians, p. 162.
Calhoun's drive for economy and efficiency in the War Department's administration has impressed many observers; their judgment has been based largely upon an often cited managerial feat: when he came to office, the department's unsettled accounts amounted to forty-five million dollars. When he left office eight years later, that figure had been reduced to less than four million dollars. Calhoun proudly reported this accomplishment to President Monroe in 1823, and he repeated it in his campaign biography years later. Since then, this claim has become enthroned in modern scholarship. Calhoun was not dissimulating when he made this boast, and what he had achieved had been considerable, but the impression left is that Calhoun somehow forced the payment of forty-one million dollars in back debts to the War Department. That he certainly did not do.

Confusion on this matter arises from a general misunderstanding, explained fully by Leonard White (and ignored by most historians), of what was entailed in the settling of an account. In 1817 there existed unsettled War Department accounts dating back to 1798. The War of 1812 further aggravated the problem, and the number of untended accounts made a quantum leap into the regions of absurdity. From the inception of the republic, vouchers and receipts had been required in the maintenance of public business, with varying success. The greatest problem with such accounts was in collecting the money after they had been settled. When civilians were involved, the only avenue for collection from the recalcitrant debtor was by court action. White points out that not one, but

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142 John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, November 29, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:385. This report also received public recognition; see, *National Intelligencer*, December 16, 1823. See also Calhoun Biography, 25-26.

143 See, for one example, Weigley, *History of the U. S. Army*, p. 134.
two cases were often required: one to adjudge the settlement charged to
the account, and another to force the debtor to bring forward his records
for examination. In the matter of forcing the debtor to obey the settle­
ment of the account, the Secretary of War never had any authority over
the civilians and only the power of suasion (official disapproval) over
military debtors. That affair was left in the hands of the Treasury and
the government's attorneys. 144

Before the spring of 1817 the War Department's accounting opera­
tion was handled by several auditors. From the vouchers and receipts
submitted in justification of expenditures, the auditors, using criteria
in War Department regulations, then determined whether claims were
allowable. If the person submitting the account were unable to justify
his expenditures on the grounds of regulations or duties performed, he
automatically became liable for that amount. (One officer pleaded a
lack of vouchers because his desk had been hit by cannon fire during the
war.) Once a complete accounting was made, and once the auditor con­
cluded how much the agent owed the government (it was rarely the other
way around), the account was considered "settled," transferred to the
Treasury for collection, and thereafter to the courts, if necessary, for
resolution. 145

The number of unsettled accounts attracted the attention of a
House Committee in 1816. All of the departments of the executive branch
had mounds of accounts in arrears, as the congressmen found out when they

144 White, The Jeffersonians, pp. 162-175. Of course, no one
could be sure exactly what the amount of the unsettled accounts were
until they were, in fact, settled.

145 Ibid., p. 162.
advanced on a tour of inspection, "into a labyrinth, the intricacies of which increased at every step." At the same time, the secretaries of the departments applied themselves to the problem. In December, 1816, the report of the four secretaries recommended the abolition of departmental auditors, and the establishment of a central auditing operation in the Treasury. Furthermore, they argued, all power to effect final settlement should be vested in the Secretary of the Treasury, who could be armed with powers of summary judgment and confiscation. With the exception of this last recommendation, these provisions were adopted by the Congress in 1817; thereafter, William Lee and Peter Hagner, the Second and Third Auditors of the Treasury, would handle War and Navy accounts.

By the time Calhoun had to face the unsettled accounts, then, much of the settlement machinery was beyond his control. Only the administrative task of assembling the pertinent documents justifying accounts could be done within his department. With only a part of the means of settlement within his purview, all that was left for Calhoun and his clerks to do was climb what must have been mountains of paper. That they managed to clear away over ninety per cent of it in less than seven years is a testament to their eyesight and determination.

With the exception of revenues marked for the retirement of the national debt, the War Department used more of the government's money

146 Ibid., pp. 171-175. Over a year later Treasury Secretary William Crawford reiterated the need for some sort of summary power of coercion to assist in the settling of accounts. In a report to Congress, Crawford observed: "The views and opinions presented in those papers [his previous report of December 6, 1816] not only remain unchanged, but have acquired additional force from the experience of the past year." U. S., Annals of Congress, 15th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2349.
than any other branch. The greatest part of the War Department's budget was taken up by pay and allowances (and pensions), but the total of all the other expenditures was larger, and these had to do with fortifications, and equipping, supplying and moving the army. Regardless of the particular system under which such great sums were administered, abuses and fiscal malpractice were to be expected. Considering the number of officers and agents charged with protecting the public monies, it is noteworthy that most performed their duties with fidelity. Naturally enough, these agents went unnoticed by Calhoun; those who acted otherwise were of more interest to him.

The government's way of doing business sometimes aided fiscal abuses. The backlog of unsettled accounts meant that a case might not come up for years, and even then no resolution might be possible. The House committee formed to investigate accounts in 1816 pointed out frankly:

The conviction on the part of an officer that his accounts cannot or will not be settled for years presents a certain degree of impunity to embezzlement, and powerfully tempts to the commission of it.

Between 1817 and 1822 the War Department called upon the Treasury for about forty million dollars, averaging eight million dollars a year. By comparison, monies devoted to the retirement of the public debt in 1818 amounted to $12,600,000, while the War Department drew $6,000,000 from the Treasury, or 23 per cent of the total revenues for that year. "State of the Finances, November 24, 1818," and "Report of the Comptroller, November 26, 1822," in Walter Lowrie, Walter S. Franklin, and Matthew St. Clair Clarke, eds., American State Papers. Documents Legislative and Executive of the United States (1st through 25th Congresses, 1789-1838), Class 3, Financial Affairs, 38 vols. (Washington, D. C.: Gales and Seaton, 1833-1861), 3:275 and 4:2 (hereafter cited as ASPFA).

For a breakdown of War Department expenditures by year, see Secretary of War James Barbour's "Report to the Select House Committee on Retrenchment, March 3, 1828," ibid., 5:1078-1080.

The War Department had commonly advanced money to paymasters and recruiters in anticipation of vouchers during the war, and the practice of advancing money on government contracts was common as well. At the end of the war it was reported that 198 paymasters had outstanding accounts, and that during a two-year period only fifteen of these had been satisfactorily disposed of. Calhoun was given a list of paymasters whose accounts were in arrears, but since the auditors were then calculating that there were five thousand unsettled accounts, Calhoun could do but little. The Secretary sent the list of paymasters on to Congress and (doubtless with some relief) remarked that "this department does not possess the power to coerce persons" to pay what they owed to the government.

Moreover, the system for monitoring current accounts in the War Department was still rudimentary. Paymasters (and any other officer who disbursed money) could simply take their advances and mix them with their own money in local savings accounts and draw interest on the whole until such time came that they actually had to pay the money out. This practice was probably widespread and was seen merely as a perquisite of office. Calhoun was convinced this was so serious that he took the trouble to issue a general order, requiring that officers keep public and private monies in separate accounts in the localities, and that


wherever possible, in the branches of the Bank of the United States. At the same time, Calhoun instructed his bureau chiefs to watch over large cash advances more closely in the future. Thereafter, those whom the government owed would have to wait until vouchers arrived in the War Department and were approved; the overall effect would be greater fiscal control at the expense of local convenience.

Calhoun's attempts to deal with current accounts were further complicated by the chaotic monetary system of the country. Government bills of credit were very like bank notes, and they did not carry uniform value in different parts of the nation. These bills of credit could therefore become objects of speculation, fluctuating against local bank notes, and usually they did poorly by the transaction. Bills of government credit were usually discounted on the frontier because of the sheer delay in redeeming them for specie and also because of the poor credit reputation of the War Department. This meant that prices to the War Department had the local exchange added, plus an allowance for a considerable (some said inevitable) discount. The loss to the department was considerable. The situation was described for Calhoun by William Cummings of Georgia:

You will ascertain on enquiry that Q. M. Certificates within six months have been sold at great discount; & yet that the sellers have scarcely been the losers, as they added to the ordinary charges a liberal allowance for this probable or rather inevitable discount. The bad credit of the Department must I think exceed all its other

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152 John C. Calhoun to Thomas S. Jesup, November 11, 1819; John C. Calhoun to George Bomford, March 12, 1818; John C. Calhoun to Robert Brent, March 12, 1818; and John C. Calhoun to Daniel Parker, March 12, 1818, ibid., 3:484; 2:186-187.

153 Ibid.
evils together. It is improbable that the total loss from other causes would equal 10 per Cent on the whole necessary expenditures; while in fact Q. M. Certificates have been repeatedly 20 & 30 per Cent below par.\textsuperscript{154}

As much as Calhoun tried to minimize this sort of speculation, there was still ample opportunity for agent speculation on exchange futures, and he knew it. Calhoun told a friend:

I have been taking the most effectual measures to take it out of the power of the officers, to commit a fraud on the government by pocketing the exchange. Prevention is better than punishment. I do hope and believe that the new arrangement of the staff will enable me another year, to bring the Disbursements of the Army into very exact method. The publick has a right to expect it, and if my health and abilities will permit, it shall be done.\textsuperscript{155}

How this speculation damaged the War Department's image and credit came to Calhoun's notice shortly after he arrived in office. The assistant quartermaster for east Tennessee, Major John Rogers, had apparently been selling fraudulent claims against the government. In December, 1817, Rogers asked Senator John Williams to intercede on his behalf with Calhoun for the advancement of more funds. When Williams inquired of the Secretary about Rogers' affairs, he was told that no more advances would be made on Rogers' account until his outstanding claims had been approved.\textsuperscript{156} This news, when it reached Knoxville, forced Rogers' resignation. With speculators concerned, the accounts of East Tennessee in a jumble, and the Tennessee congressional delegation calling upon Calhoun to settle these claims quickly, Calhoun took the

\textsuperscript{154}William Cummings to John C. Calhoun, April 27, 1818, ibid., 2:262.

\textsuperscript{155}John C. Calhoun to Abner Lacock, August 26, 1818, ibid., 3:70.

\textsuperscript{156}John C. Calhoun to John Williams, December 27, 1817, ibid., 2:42.
best step. He essentially stopped all business by the government in that area in order to give a new quartermaster time to arrive on the spot. The new agent was to gather all the claims and vouchers he could and transmit the lot of them to the Third Auditor, who would pass on the validity of the debts. One-third of all the east Tennessee claims had been bought up by merchants, and it was entirely possible that Rogers had some of his own as well. Much disgusted by the affair, Senator Williams told Calhoun: "The reputation of the Government has been injured among the common people by the Petty vilanies [sic] of our Q masters." The claims approved by the auditor were eventually paid. With men like Rogers gone from the service, and the new system of accountability being taken more seriously by the military, Calhoun's days in the War Office were made easier.

IV

Quite clearly, some War Department business was beyond Calhoun's ability to control from his office in Washington. Regulations, once promulgated, could be either ignored or manipulated to one's advantage. Policies carefully set in the War Department or decided upon in the cabinet or Congress could be made a shambles when they were executed. To his credit, Calhoun never despaired of bringing the unwieldy military establishment to heel.

157 William Blount, John Rhea, and Francis Jones to John C. Calhoun, December 30, 1817, ibid., 2:45.


It was perhaps an index of how poorly run the previous War Department administrations had been that considerable authority had seeped away to the localities and attached themselves to figures who were technically under Washington's control. One of these figures who had arrogated considerable authority unto himself was General Andrew Jackson, and he posed problems for Calhoun of a kind the Secretary did not face elsewhere.

Well before Calhoun took office, a dispute had been brewing between Jackson and the government over the transfer of one of Jackson's officers without the general's permission or knowledge. Monroe and the acting Secretary of War, George Graham, had handled the affair badly and had succeeded in elevating a minor communications problem to a matter of principle of civilian control over the military. For his part, Jackson had been neither temperate nor skillful in his dealings with Monroe and Graham. By October, 1817, Monroe had been forced into telling Jackson that "this order involves the naked principle, of the power of the Executive, over the officers of the army, in such cases, for the department of war cannot be separated from the President." By that time, however, Monroe had temporized considerably by telling Jackson that while the principle stood fixed, as a matter of practice orders should follow the chain of command. Jackson would not be conciliated, and Calhoun, arriving in office, was instructed by Monroe to write to Jackson, reiterating the administration's position, but telling him also

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160 Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, March 4, 1817; James Monroe to Andres Jackson, June 2, 1817, August 4, 1817, October 5, 1817, Bassett, Jackson Correspondence, 2:281, 296-297, 319, 329.
that thereafter all orders would be issued through divisional com-
manders. 

This was hardly a victory for civil control of the military, as 
some writers have represented it. At least Jackson thought not; 
Calhoun's letter of December 29 explaining the "new policy" bears a note 
in Jackson's hand: "adopting the principles I contended for." Certainly no other officer in the American army was willing to go so far in 
defying civil authority, nor was one likely to be so successful in doing 
so. Neither Monroe nor Calhoun (and indeed few others in Washington) 
was willing to deny that Jackson, as an authentic American hero, was 
jealous of his prerogatives. The conciliatory letters written by Monroe 
and Calhoun are sufficiently convincing on that point, but Calhoun could 
not have been altogether satisfied by the position Monroe had ordered 
him to take in this affair. Subsequent events proved that Calhoun was 
extremely sensitive to military presumptions of independence of any kind, 
regardless of their origin.

Although Calhoun got along with Jackson thereafter, the Secre-
tary's private opinions about the hero of New Orleans became progressively 
more jaundiced. When Calhoun and the rest of the Cabinet met to consider 
the official reaction to Jackson's illegal invasion of the Spanish 
territory of Florida, Calhoun was for all but cashiering the impetuous

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161 James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, December 2, 1817, ibid., 2:336-337.

162 W. Edwin Hemphill, "Introduction," Calhoun Papers, 2:lix; 
Weigley, History of the U. S. Army, pp. 136-137.

163 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, December 29, 1817, note 
appended to letter in Jackson's hand, Bassett, Jackson Correspondence, 
2:343.
general. The Secretary was "extremely dissatisfied" with Jackson's actions in Florida, and he recommended that the President absolutely disavow the general's activities there. Later, in a conversation with John Quincy Adams about Jackson, Cahoun remarked, in Adams' words:

He had no doubt that Jackson's intentions were perfectly pure and upright; but his disposition was to exercise to its utmost extent every particle of power given to him. He had not sufficient regard to the genius of our institutions and to the popular opinion.

No such hero's mantle as Jackson's hung on General Moses Porter. Less than one year after the administration's dispute with Jackson over chain of command, Porter was complaining to Calhoun of the very same problem and defending the same principle of non-intervention in command that Jackson had espoused. By this time, however, Calhoun apparently had decided that if Monroe had not meant to single Jackson out as a special case, the same procedure should be followed in this one. The Secretary of War acknowledged that all orders should be sent through the field commanders and apologized to Porter for not having done so.

Calhoun's reply to Porter clearly indicated that the administration had moved away from its original stand of absolute civilian supremacy.

On yet a third occasion, Calhoun was forced to consider, and then to temporize, his obvious feelings on civil-military relations. During a Fourth of July oration at Boston in 1819, a speaker (one of Boston's selectmen) made some indirect and disapproving comments about General Jackson, and a young officer, James Scallan, who had served with Jackson and who was present, took umbrage at the remarks. The


166 John C. Calhoun to Moses Porter, April 9, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:237.
officer dispatched a letter to the Selectmen of Boston, demanding a retraction of the slur.\textsuperscript{167} Apparently, the letter was couched in no uncertain terms; the Selectmen promptly informed Monroe of the contretemps, and the matter became the subject of several cabinet meetings.

Calhoun was outraged. He recommended to Monroe that Scallan be cashiered immediately from the service. In Calhoun's opinion, this was not a fit subject for a court-martial, but "a military offense against the civil authority." Monroe called for the opinions of all the cabinet officers. Calhoun's stern line did not prevail: he was instructed by Monroe to make known to Scallan and the Selectmen of the President's "decided disapprobation," but no further action was taken.\textsuperscript{168}

It was true, then, that Calhoun was ambitious for his country, for the army, and indeed for himself, but it is also true that he was a slave to none of these ambitions. The results of the war which Calhoun talked about so fondly merely meant to him that the nation could not get on to greater things: prosperity and expansion. He believed that the military establishment, so long merely the nation's unwelcome guest, could aid in that expansion and national improvement, but only if it could be brought under control and manipulated to that end. This last effect was Calhoun's main goal as Secretary of War. It was made all the more desirable by the fact that any successes he had would redound to his credit. After all, the shortcomings of the military establishment were familiar enough to all as shortcomings of the nation's own making.

\textsuperscript{167} Adams, Diary, 4:408-412.

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. John C. Calhoun to James Scallan, John C. Calhoun to the Selectmen of Boston, August 21, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:263.
CHAPTER III

THE TRANSIT OF MILITARY NATIONALISM

Considering the endemic tension between nation and army, the survival of the army during the republic's first years was as surprising as the survival of the nation itself. In a nation relying upon reaction rather than anticipatory defense, impulses tending toward independence in military thought were stunted. Military policies were set more by political intuition than by rational considerations of national needs, capabilities, and resources. Military policy became at any given time, therefore, an index of the vitality of old republican ideas about a standing defense.

This being so, traditional enmity toward preparedness began to fade with the first urgings of nationalism after the American Revolution. The United States was anxious to obtain all the implements and accouterments of nationhood: a stable government, a reliant economic structure, and an inventive cultural life. These things were the work of generations; military accouterments, accomplishing the same result, could be more easily obtained.¹

¹Obviously, much more is involved here than the evaluation and adoption of military ideas and implements. In this view practicalities become of only secondary importance: it is the image that counts. One need only look at the fantastic defense expenditures of certain developing nations today to understand that defense is not the only reason for a sophisticated military establishment. The importation of military knowledge and accouterments by underdeveloped nations which have no real need of them will have to be explained in other than rational terms. In
The military image which most effectively portrayed nationhood at the turn of the eighteenth century was the fortress, or more particularly, the fortresses of France. The man most often associated with the system of French fortifications was Sebastien de Vauban, who had done his work nearly a century before for Louis XIV.\(^2\) In the early nineteenth century, however, Vauban's work had less to do with military policy than with the symbolism of national wealth and international prestige. Militarily, fortresses had long since been redundant.

Americans, however, looked upon the great coastal fortresses of Cherbourg and Brest as the penultimate in military protection. Coastal defense had long been a national preoccupation. Before independence there had been British-built gun platforms or earthen redoubts protecting several American ports. During the Revolution the American coastline was, for all purposes, an open one, since no American navy existed to act in conjunction with any of these rudimentary defenses. Although a lack of time and meager resources accounted for this poor preparation, there was a lack of mental resources as well: French

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engineers were imported during the struggle and at the end of the Revolution, the "American engineers" contained only one American out of fourteen experts.

The French general in charge of the American engineers, Louis Duportain, attempted unsuccessfully to establish a school where native engineers could be trained, but this resistance to military education curiously did not extend to fortifications themselves. In 1794 Congress passed the Naval Act which inaugurated a program of fortifications that continued for several decades thereafter. That year eight civilian engineers were hired to oversee the project; only two did not have Gallic names. When Congress recommended so much money for fortifications that the program actually outstripped the nation's technological capacities, then clearly fortifications meant something other than the mere improvement of the military establishment. The Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, traveling through the United States in 1799, noticed what happened when advanced military technology was embraced by an underdeveloped nation:

Those [fortifications] which the Union erects and keeps up are few, and almost all are incomplete. Good engineers being scarce, the Americans are obliged to employ such as they can get, who are generally foreigners who do not half understand their business, and who are generally more attentive to their own interest than that of the United States. Great plans are drawn, the works are begun at great expense; there is a want of money the following year; and the fortifications are either entirely relinquished, or reduced to so small a scale that they are either good for nothing or at least defective, so that the money spent the preceding year may be said to be thrown away.  


4 "Instructions of Secretary of War Henry Knox to Bechet Rochefontaine, March 29, 1794," ASPMA, 1:73; Weigley, History of the U. S.
Rochefoucault was correct only in part, however; there was a great deal of money being allowed by the government for fortifications. Between the Naval Act and the advent of the Jeffersonians, more than half a million dollars was spent on eighteen different coastal installations, and only in 1796 and 1797 did the money expended decline.\(^5\) While expenditures for fortifications generally increased during this period, the total expenses of the military establishment remained fairly constant, averaging two million dollars annually.\(^6\) Fortifications, in other words, were absorbing more and more of the total military budget of the United States. At the same time, the nation still relied upon the citizen militiaman for the bulk of its defense establishment.

The question thus remains: why was a fledgling nation so anxious to prevent the growth of a standing army developing a military building program beyond its capacities to maintain? Considering the relative rates of expenditure on fortifications and the military establishment, one answer presents itself: fortifications did not directly threaten military amateurism, large standing armies did. But these figures tell, as no political rhetoric can, that the nation's makers of military policy were beginning to doubt that the militia could serve the

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\(^5\)"Statement of Moneys applied for the defence of certain Ports and Harbors in the United States, in Pursuance of the 'Act to provide for the Defence of certain Ports and Harbors in the United States,' passed the 20th of March, 1794, distinguishing the moneys expended for the Fortifications of each Harbor to the 16th of November, 1801, inclusive," ASPMA, 1:153.

\(^6\)"Military and Naval Expenditures, from 1789 to 1810, April 3, 1810," ibid., 1:268.
requirements of defense entirely unaided. The ethic of the citizen at arms was already being subtly eroded. Simultaneously, the fortifications acted as physical symbols of the nation's ambitions.

All this had little enough to do with the effectiveness of fortifications on the American coastline or anywhere else. Twelve years and considerable expenditures after the passage of the Naval Act, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn reported to Congress that, of twenty different locations (some of which had more than one installation), only two--Fort Independence in Boston Harbor, and Fort Trumbull at New London--did not need extensive repairs. Five of these, Dearborn said, were either militarily or geographically impractical. Forts Adams and Wolcott (near Newport, Rhode Island) were wrongly placed to begin with, and, said Dearborn, "would not, in the smallest degree, annoy ships of war, but in one of three open and convenient passages by which Rhode Island may be approached." At Charleston three sites had been destroyed by a storm in 1804, and Savannah's Forts Green and St. Mary's were flooded, apparently in perpetuity. All work on these forts had stopped, and it was believed that they would have to move to an altogether different location, once the Georgia legislature saw fit to cede lands for that purpose.

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7There was a growing awareness among military men on both sides of the Atlantic that militiamen did not operate as well independently as when they were supported by regulars, increased artillery, or fortifications. Simon Bernard expressed this view in a letter to Wolfe Tone, August 3, 1820, Vandeventer Papers, which was an extended treatise on American artillery. Bernard argued for an increase in the artillery arm of the standing force precisely because of the number of amateurs in the defense establishment. See David Chandler's discussion of how Napoleon dealt with a large influx of volunteers in constructing La Grande Armée, in The Campaigns of Napoleon (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1966), pp. 332-333.

8"Report of the Secretary of War on Fortifications within the United States and Territories," ASPMA, 1:192-196.

9Ibid., p. 195.
Dearborn's remarks on fortifications deserve to be noticed further, because he was interested in military affairs and at least had some claim to understanding them. That he was skeptical of the modern practicality of fortresses is evident from his reports as a Secretary of War. To a Congress which seemed more than willing to spend huge amounts of money on these military artifacts, he pointed out that warships were no longer hesitant to engage coastal batteries in order to force a passage. Referring to the fortifications around the harbor of New York, Dearborn said:

So many instances [have] occurred of ships of war not only having passed the best batteries within even point blank shot (which is less than 500 yards) but of presenting their broadsides to such batteries, with springs on their cables, and sustaining the fire for a considerable length of time, and even, in many cases, of silencing the batteries.10

This sort of thing had happened recently, he said, between British warships and the harbor defenses at Copenhagen.11 The impression Dearborn's remarks conveyed was that American batteries could not hope to accomplish what the fine Danish batteries had failed to do. And yet, after all of this, "notwithstanding the experience of the ages to the contrary," authorities at New York had persisted in emplanting fixed gun batteries solely to protect the entrance channels to the harbor.12

Dearborn's protests went unheeded, and as the War of 1812 broke out Congress showed no inclination to economize on coastal defenses. In 1812 more than $750,000 were given over to military building, with the greatest part going to forts. During the following year, Congress approved one and a half million dollars for this single item—the largest

10 Ibid., p. 193. 11 Ibid. 12 Ibid.
outlay for fortifications in the history of the republic. In the last year of the war, only three hundred thousand dollars were authorized, suggesting that even though the money was available, there was simply not enough time or skill to spend the sums allotted the year before.\textsuperscript{13}

The Chesapeake emergencies of 1814 proved this to be the case; defenses along the bay were in various states of disrepair. James Monroe was in the thick of the action, both bureaucratic and military. The future president saw an undefended coast, due, he thought, to Secretary of War John Armstrong's stubborn resistance to preparation. Monroe then witnessed a government in sorry flight, and the capitol sacked, while well-defended Baltimore stood the British raiders off. Perhaps as much as any other event, the defense of Baltimore kept the fortifications program alive when Monroe finally became President.\textsuperscript{14}

Ignoring all contrary lessons of the war, Monroe threw his support behind an extensive program of postwar defensive building. Probably at Monroe's urging, President Madison appointed a Board of Engineers to devise a system of coastal fortifications. The promises held out by the creation of the board encouraged one young officer then on a tour of the continent. Ex-artillerist James Renwick wrote to Chief Engineer Swift: "I am glad to see a disposition on the part of the Secretary of War [Monroe] for fortifications. . . . An inspection of the ports of

\textsuperscript{13}"Expenditures for Fortifications of all categories, including arsenals, by year, 1812-1820, February 16, 1820," ASPFA, 3:489.

\textsuperscript{14}Ammon, Monroe, pp. 318-337. Armstrong had repeatedly resisted preparing defenses for Washington and the Chesapeake Bay because in his view, neither was of any military importance to the British. All of which, of course, was true enough, if one neglected the psychological value attached to a nation's capital if not by the citizenry as a whole then by its powerful residents. See also Harry Coles, The War of 1812 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 172-186.
France and Holland made me blush at the small expenditure of money to which we have been willing to limit the defence of places of infinitely greater importance."  

When Monroe became President, he announced his intention to continue what had been started under Madison's administration. The new President's ostensible reason for his northern tour during the summer of 1817 was to inspect that frontier's military defenses (he was perhaps as much interested in Federalist political defenses, however), and he took care to lecture the northerners on the need for extensive coastal fortifications. Appropriations in Congress kept pace (for the time being) with Monroe's plans. Considering the time, money, and energy which Calhoun eventually devoted to fortifications, it was easily one of the most important programs. Monroe thought so. He told John Quincy Adams that the new system of fortifications was "one of the great objects by which [my] administration may be signalized in the view of posterity." It was also significant that virtually the first high-ranking officer whom Calhoun met as he entered on his official duties was the Chief of the Corps of Engineers.

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17 See Monroe's remarks to the citizens of Baltimore in Narrative of a Tour, p. 18.

18 For the five years immediately following the end of the war, appropriations for the coastal defense program were at least half a million dollars annually. "Expenditures for Fortifications of all categories, including arsenals, by year, 1812-1820, February 16, 1820," ASPFA, 3:489.

19 Adams, Diary, 5:331.
If Calhoun was the least hesitant about supporting this grand program, he did not show it. With the President so enamored of fortifications, Calhoun would not indulge the slightest doubt that fortifications were what the nation needed before any other military implement. The new Secretary carefully did not intend to take the same position as Monroe's wartime nemesis, John Armstrong, who had a low opinion of fixed defenses; and yet Armstrong was right: the day of the great fortress had gone by. Watching the new program develop from his exile in New York, Armstrong wondered when the expensive folly would end. He wrote to his friend, Chief Clerk Vandeventer:

A hundred years ago, Europe was fortification-mad and so long as this disorder lasted the Art of War was retrograde--Frederich saw all this folly and directed his efforts to perfect his field artillery & his infantry and accordingly left all other powers of his day far behind him; but it was the war of the French Revolution and the men found in it, who completely broke down the fortification system, by shewing in its extreme expensiveness & 2d its nothingness --that it saved no province or kingdom and that strong armies stood in no need of it as a friend and dispised it as an enemy. When will our eyes be open to these truths?20

Having no such qualms, Calhoun embraced the fortifications program as ardently as did his President. In one of his first reports to Congress Calhoun pronounced "the existing fortifications . . . wholly insufficient in the event of a future war." The new Secretary also gave it as his opinion that the Regular Army was barely sufficient just to maintain the few defenses then existing, much less to fend off any sort of attack. In the absence of a suitable army, fortifications would have to suffice.21 Moreover, Calhoun's acceptance of Monroe's ideas on this

20 John Armstrong to Christopher Vandeventer, November 21, 1819, Vandeventer Papers.

21 John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, December 17, 1817, Calhoun Papers, 2:25.
matter (as on others) was politically expedient: the Monroe-Calhoun collaboration was a case of nationalists closing ranks.

Once the policy was set, all that remained for Calhoun to do was manage it. He fortunately arrived on the scene when a general re-evaluation of the system was occurring; Madison had suspended all new work on defenses until the Board of Engineers could finish their survey of the coastal areas. Thus, Calhoun was able to concentrate first on those works which were already in progress, leaving the additions the Board might recommend till later.

For the greater time Calhoun was in office, most new building was done in two strategically important areas. The first of these was the Chesapeake Bay. As an avenue of attack which gave onto some of the most important centers of the nation, the bay was the most valuable point on the eastern coast. The bay's importance had not escaped the notice of the British in 1814, of course, although they had not taken full advantage of it. Four works for the area were in the planning stages in 1817: Fort Delaware, on the Pea Patch Island in the Delaware River, protecting approaches to Philadelphia; Fort Washington, above Alexandria on the Potomac River; Fort Monroe, at Old Point Comfort; and Fort Calhoun, one mile offshore on the Rip Rap shoals. Each of these was to be of stone construction and pentagonal design; the smallest of the four, Fort Washington, was designed to mount 140 guns.

The second area of defensive importance was the western Gulf Coast, which had been the scene of a considerable landing by the British

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22 Joseph G. Swift to John C. Calhoun, December 8, 1817, and Walter Armistead to John C. Calhoun, November 6, 1820, ibid., 2:4-6, 5-241-242.

23 Ibid.
in 1814. Only two defensive works existed there when Calhoun came to office: Fort Bowyer on Mobile Point; and Fort St. Philip, along the Mississippi below New Orleans. The Board of Engineers had few kind words to say about these two installations: Bowyer "could not hold out three days against an attack," and Fort St. Philip was "much too small and weak to defend the Mississippi." 24

With several new fortifications in the offing and a number of other works needing repairs, the strain on the tiny Corps of Engineers was considerable. Calhoun had not yet issued his regulations requiring a supervising engineer for each project, and it was just as well: there were only twenty engineers in the entire corps, not all of whom were available for fortifications projects. A report by General Swift just before he resigned in late 1818 showed that only twelve engineers were available to oversee the construction of seventeen planned installations. 25 The practice in the field became quite different from what Calhoun had planned, then; the engineers were forced to supervise more than one site at a time. The lack of trained and accountable personnel added to Calhoun's difficulties in making Monroe's dreams of a fortress America come true.

The amount of money which the administration contemplated spending on the fortification system was staggering by the standards of peacetime military operations. General Bernard's Board of Engineers


25 Joseph G. Swift to John C. Calhoun, September 30, 1818, December 8, 1817, ibid., 3:175, 2:7. See also, "Engineer Regulations," April 7, 1818, Letters Sent, SWMA.
reported in 1821 that eight million dollars should be enough to finish a complete system. Of necessity, civilians would have to be contracted to do the actual building of the fortresses; this left the door open for all sorts of problems which Calhoun would eventually have to cope with. When news of the Gulf coast projects at Mobile Bay (Mobile Point and Dauphin Island) became public, an immediate speculation in coastal lands broke out. "The Speculators even anticipate governmental operations," one informant told Calhoun, "the system of defense determined upon by the Executive has awakened all their speculative feelings." The lands intended for the defense program's use were otherwise worthless sand hills and swamps, but when the public learned of the government's plans, claims suddenly appeared which threatened to engross the whole Gulf coast.

The practice of advancing money to a contractor against the fulfillment of the contract was a long-standing and fully recognized evil, and one that Calhoun was decidedly against. Although he avoided making advances whenever he could, specie was in short supply in the West, making the practice all the more necessary if the government was to use any western contractors at all. Monroe's government was sensitive to western complaints that eastern businessmen had first claim on the government's contracts, and Calhoun was thus forced to operate against his

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27 James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, June 25, 1819, ibid., 4:116-117.

28 Ibid.
All government contractors were required to post a bond to ensure their performance and to protect the government from outrageous losses, but Calhoun was put on his guard when he was told by an engineer officer in the West that the civilian businessmen there looked upon "any government undertaking as a lottery." The contractors believed, apparently, that a government which had been so lenient with defaulters would not now begin to take up bonds for failures.

The fortifications about Mobile Bay were therefore representative of the problems arising from the fortifications program at large. The contract to construct two forts—one at Mobile Point and another at Dauphin Island—had been won by Benjamin Hopkins. The project engineer was Captain James Gadsden. There were difficulties from the beginning. Gadsden did not believe that the firm of "Hopkins and Hanes" had any business winning the contract in the first place, since they were entirely ignorant of the techniques of military building. Hopkins and Hanes, Gadsden told Calhoun, "have never been engaged in any pursuits [sic]..."

29 Representative Richard Mentor Johnson of Kentucky was, as ever, interested in encouraging western business (primarily his own). In late 1818 and early 1819 Johnson and Calhoun exchanged several letters having to do with the encouragement of western manufacturing. Johnson was of the opinion that western businessmen should be given contracts lasting more than a year because of the difficulties of transportation, and secondly, that the government, not the western businessmen, absorb the costs of transportation. Johnson had particular reference to the encouragement of a fledgling textile establishment in the west, but Calhoun's tempered replies indicate that Calhoun was anxious, in harmony with the rest of the administration, to accommodate the westerners if he could. Monroe's sentiments regarding the west were illustrated by the fact that it was in that region that he searched first for a Secretary of War. See Richard M. Johnson to John C. Calhoun [c. January 3, 1819]; and John C. Calhoun to Callendar Irvine, January 5, 1819, ibid., 3:411, 450, 452-453.

30 James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, June 25, 1819, ibid., 4:116-117.
which could possibly prepare or qualify them for their present undertaking.\textsuperscript{31} Second, although the contract allowed no advances, Hopkins and Gadsden fell out over whether the government should pay in advance for the construction of a brickyard in the vicinity. Fearing that the project would come to a complete halt, Gadsden reluctantly authorized Hopkins to draw upon the government, and Gadsden did so with the certain knowledge that if the accounts were not allowed by the Secretary of War, he would stand liable for every penny.\textsuperscript{32} Gadsden was so vexed by the dispute that he requested a transfer from the engineers altogether.\textsuperscript{33} As for Hopkins, he took his vexations to the grave, or rather transferred them to Calhoun, for the contractor was carried off shortly by the "bilious fever."\textsuperscript{33}

Calhoun did not believe Hopkins had died. Amid rumors that the contractor was about to fail and go into bankruptcy, the news of Hopkins' death was altogether too fortuitous. The Secretary had first learned of Hopkins' death from Joseph Swift at New York. Swift had got the information from a ship's captain in the harbor. Calhoun promptly sent off a query to the ex-general:

> As it is a matter of some importance that the fact should be accurately ascertained, if it does not give you too much trouble, I would be glad if you could see the Capt. of the Vessel who brought the Intelligence, & learn the fact from him. I do not put much confidence in the character of Hopkins and the whole may be a sham as the government is considerabley [sic] in advance to him.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31}James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, June 27, 1819, ibid., 4:122-123.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33}James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, August 7, 1819, ibid., 4:215.

\textsuperscript{34}John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, August 6, 1819, ibid., 4:215.
Only bad news followed. Less than three weeks after he learned of Hopkins' death, Calhoun found out that Hopkins had "farmed out his contract to several sub-contractors" who had done their work as agreed but had received no money whatever from Hopkins. A clerk working for the firm at Mobile Bay believed that the project was about to fail and that the bonds Hopkins had put up were insufficient to protect the government. 35

Calhoun was so incensed that he refused to believe that Hopkins was actually dead. In September, 1819, Calhoun told his friend Swift: "I fear Hopkins has had fraudulent views from the first, yet I will not permit my mind to receive any impression to throw embarrassments in his way unless they become absolutely necessary to secure the government." 36 In October Calhoun finally found out that Hopkins' death was not simply a low trick, but the Secretary was not relieved. 37 By the end of the year Gadsden was asking for money to cover advances and pronouncing the Mobile Point fortification "paralyzed" by the contractor's death. Gadsden was so disgusted by the entire affair that he recommended to Calhoun that the government abandon the Gulf projects. 38

35 Christopher Vandeventer to John C. Calhoun, August 23, 1819, ibid., 4:268.
36 John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, September 29, 1819, ibid., 4:351.
37 Calhoun learned from a former officer in October that reports of Hopkins' death were not merely a subterfuge, as the Secretary had expected. James Mullany took ship at Mobile, bound for Philadelphia; the fever swept the ship, which was forced to put in at Havanna. Hopkins was on board; he died at sea. James Mullany to John C. Calhoun, October 7, 1819, ibid., 4:362-366.
38 John Lind Smith to John C. Calhoun, November 22, 1819; James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, December 2, 1819; and James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, December 4, 1819, ibid., 4:427, 461-462, and 462-465.
At this point, the cast of characters changed. Richard Harris, Hopkins' surviving partner, sold part of the contract to a group of Virginia businessmen, led by Nimrod Farrow. The government seemingly had no control over such subsequent contractual adjustments; only a renegotiation of the Hopkins' bond was required to satisfy the government. Former General Swift had a hand in this interesting transaction. Farrow had chanced by Swift's New York office at the very time the ex-general was writing Calhoun about Hopkins' death; it is thus possible that Swift was a silent partner in the new contract.39

But Richard Harris did not find his new guarantors very congenial; he and Farrow, who went down to Mobile shortly, fell to arguing, and Harris complained that Farrow seemed bent on killing the project.40 But the construction at Mobile had already become nearly inert: although the government eventually advanced more than $162,000 to the contractors, the project showed few signs of improvement. Subsequent official reports showed that the value of the work actually done at Dauphin Island was worth less than one-third of the advances.41

39 Nimrod Farrow and his associates executed a bond in August, 1819. It guaranteed the completion of Dauphin Island under the provisions of the original contract. That the securities for the contract were re-negotiated after Hopkins' death indicated official nervousness that Hopkins' old bond was insufficient. Thus Farrow became Richard Harris' partner in the works on Mobile Bay. Harris was not consulted about this transaction, and therein lay the trouble between the new contractor and the old. "Performance Bond of Nimrod Farrow," August 2, 1819; James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, December 2, 1819, ibid., 4:198, 461. See also Swift's letter to Calhoun confirming Hopkins' death in which he adds the postscript: "Mr. N. Farrow has just called at my office." Joseph G. Swift to John C. Calhoun, September 11, 1819, ibid., 4:319.

40 James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, January 20, 1820, ibid., 4:461.

At this point, Congress became involved, and in a most circuitous way. General Bernard and his team of engineers had originally reconnoitered the area around Mobile Bay. He placed a high strategic value upon the position: it would, he said, protect the channel giving onto the bay; Dauphin Island could further protect the coastwise trade from Pensacola to New Orleans and prevent the latter city from being invested from the east. Yet there was a great deal of shoal water here, too shallow to handle ships of war. Thus, the entire bay need not be protected, but it was important, crucial in fact, that all the channels be charted and fortifications placed so that their guns controlled them. If somehow these entrance channels courséd out of gun range of any site on shore, then fixed batteries were of course useless. Apparently, Bernard had failed to chart and sound the bay. A naval chart appeared in Congress in early 1820 which showed the bay cut by channels far away from either of the fortifications under construction. 42

This alarming development occurred just as Samuel Smith of Maryland, chairman of the House Ways and Means committee, was considering new appropriations for the coastal defense program. Disturbed by the rumors, Smith's committee recommended that all funds devoted to the

42 Bernard's strategic assessment of Mobile Bay was evident in a report submitted to Calhoun by Colonel Walker K. Armistead, then chief of the Corps of Engineers, in 1820. See Walker K. Armistead to John C. Calhoun, November 6, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:423. The House Committee on Military Affairs which investigated the Mobile defenses, at which time the original chart was compared with the soundings on a civilian pilot's chart. Both charts agreed that the ship channel into the bay ran two and a half miles away from Dauphin and, in the words of the committee, "no ship of war larger than a sloop can pass the bar or approach the city of Mobile nearer than twenty-five miles." "Fortifications for the Protection of Mobile; Report of the Committee on Military Affairs, February 28, 1822," ASPMA, 2:345-346.
Dauphin Island installation be cut off. At the same time the committee voted other monies—$800,000 in fact—for the remainder of the program, a clear indication that neither Smith nor his fellow committee members were hostile to the idea of forts in general.\textsuperscript{43}

Calhoun could not believe that it was possible that an experienced engineer such as Bernard could make such an "incredible" mistake, or that the other board members, Elliot and Totten, were wrong. The Dauphin Island case was brought up before the cabinet for discussion. Both Monroe and Calhoun were displeased by the preemptory demands of Smith's committee; obviously, by designating how monies could be spent within a particular program, Congress could go a long way toward controlling the Executive. Against the advice of William Crawford and John Quincy Adams, Monroe and Calhoun resolved to fight back.\textsuperscript{44} In a defiant letter to Smith, Calhoun explained that the President would decide how the $800,000 appropriation would be spent and that Dauphin was deemed a most important point on a defenseless coast.\textsuperscript{45} During the following year Calhoun shifted money which the Ways and Means Committee had designated for other installations and applied it toward the building of the Mobile forts.\textsuperscript{46} This was the rankest sort of opposition to congressional

\textsuperscript{44} Adams, \textit{Diary}, 5:331-333.  
\textsuperscript{46} See W. K. Armistead to John C. Calhoun, January 9, 1821, ibid., 5:543-546. Armistead's report to Calhoun was intended to answer an anticipated request for information from the Ways and Means Committee. The report admitted that neither Mobile Point nor Dauphin Island would be finished by the times stipulated in their contracts, and thus would
demands, and it earned neither the administration nor its coastal defense program much good will.

While Calhoun was jousting with Congress the project limped along much as before. In October, 1820, Richard Harris, apparently fearing for his investment because of congressional attention, divested himself of the contract. With War Department approval, Harris sold his contract to Colonel Turner Starke. Starke had bought into a losing project; Harris' move was that of a keen businessman. 47

Finally Congress drastically cut all funds for fortifications in the spring of 1821, and Dauphin Island was the first to go: the generous $800,000 of the year before had been slashed to a little over $200,000, and that, Calhoun said, "distributed in such a way, as to abandon [sic] Dauphine [sic] Island, one of the most important position [sic] on the Gulph [sic] frontier." 48 As Calhoun found that year, he was now dealing with a very different sort of Congress than the one which had allowed him to write his own bills his first year in office. Retrenchment was the theme in 1821, and retrenchment conveniently satisfied motives far beyond the economic sense that it made then. Dauphin Island, a project doomed from the beginning by mismanagement and a fair amount of chicanery, default. The report further detailed Calhoun's intention of using unexpended balances from previous appropriations on the Gulf coast by applying them to Dauphin now. Armistead also reported that the security for Dauphin Island was valued at $211,951. Whether this sum included the original bonds of the deceased Benjamin Hopkins, the report does not make clear. Obviously Armistead is interested in showing the works to be fully secured and posing no danger to the government.


48 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, March 7, 1821, ibid., 5:662.
was given only a slightly premature end. The government, having cut the funding for the fort, now stood liable to the new contractor, who pressed his claim to his eventual satisfaction. 49

Whenever the dishonesty or unethical practices of a contractor came to light, Calhoun's view of civilian businessmen dealing with his department was reinforced. The Secretary had come to have little regard for this species of capitalist early in his War Department career, "ever willing," as he said, to support his officers "against contractors." 50 But those who drew Calhoun's disapproval were the inept ones. The sums of money supporting War Department programs were too large not to attract those with real talent, and there is evidence to suggest that there was a group of men who knew much more of what they were about than the ill-starred Benjamin Hopkins. And these were men with whom Calhoun was closely associated during his time in the War Office.

With the possible exception of the Gulf Coast forts, the government was most interested in erecting a string of fortifications which could guard the approaches to the lower end of the Chesapeake Bay at the Hampton Roads. As Calhoun was coming into office, General Swift was engaged in a survey of possible sites, and Swift reported later that two fortifications, one at Old Point Comfort, and another at the Rip Rap Shoals, a short distance away, could be built for a total of three million dollars. 51


50 John C. Calhoun to Talbot Chambers, September 1, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:85.

51 Joseph G. Swift to John C. Calhoun, January 6, 1818, ibid., 2:61.
The contract for the first phase of building these installations—the laying of the stone foundations—was let in the summer of 1818 by General Swift in his capacity as the head of the Corps of Engineers. The defenses at Old Point Comfort were to be called Fortress Monroe; those located on the shoals would be known as Fort Calhoun. Although no law then demanded it, most large construction projects were let only after advertisement and competitive bidding had taken place. This was not the case with these works. As the facts later came to light, there were several questionable aspects of this project which threatened the reputations of Calhoun and some of his closest associates.

The man who won the contract to supply the stone for the foundations of these two works was Elijah Mix, a New York businessman with a dubious financial reputation. It happened that he and Christopher Vandeventer, Calhoun's chief clerk, were brothers-in-law. At about the time when General Swift (also a friend of Vandeventer's) was deciding upon letting out the contract, Mix appeared at Swift's Washington office to chat about the project. Swift already knew from various reports that this contract could not be filled successfully at a price lower than $3.50 a perch. Mix was anxious to have the project, even though he was so insolvent at the time he knew that no bondsman would support his

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52 The customs of advertisement and competitive bidding were observed in other cases both prior to and after the letting of the Mix contract. In the case of Mobile Bay fortifications contracts were announced three months in advance. Swift later testified that since the Chesapeake fortifications had received so much publicity anyway he did not think it necessary to release a special announcement. This, and other parts of the account of the Rip Rap scandal (as it was called) is drawn from "Contract for Stone at the Rip Raps and Old Point Comfort, May 7, 1822," ASPMA, 2:431-449.

53 Ibid.
application. Apparently without an inquiry into Mix's disreputable finances, Swift awarded the contract to Mix, and Major Vandeventer was obligingly present as a witness. Mix agreed to deliver not less than three thousand perches of stone per month at a price of $3.50 per perch. 54

But having won the contract, Mix still had to find a bondsman. In order to increase his financial respectability Mix prevailed upon his brother-in-law to buy into the contract. In the fall of 1818 Vandeventer bought twenty-five per cent of Mix's contract; the major later told a congressional investigating committee that he had first asked Calhoun in general terms about the legality of such an investment. Calhoun had reportedly said that Vandeventer's involvement in government business was not illegal, but that it might cause doubts about his reputation. Vandeventer, apparently not caring much for reputation, bought into the project. In April, 1819 Vandeventer bought yet another twenty-five per cent; he was now half-owner of the contract, although Mix was still liable for the fulfillment of the contract. 55

Vandeventer's service to Mix was considerable. His participation in the venture had enabled Mix to find bondsmen. Moreover, Vandeventer had paid off $18,000 worth of debts which the insolvent Mix had acquired. By the fall of 1819 Vandeventer saw the chance to divest himself of part of his holdings and win a profit; he sold twenty-five per cent (half of what he had) of the contract to the father-in-law he and Mix shared, Major Samuel Cooper of New York. 56

Sometime in early 1820 Calhoun learned that Vandeventer had not taken his advice (perhaps it was over-subtle for Vandeventer), and the

54 Ibid. 55 Ibid. 56 Ibid.
Secretary learned it from a most unexpected source: President Monroe. Monroe had received an anonymous letter spelling out the extent of Vandeventer's involvement with Mix. Shortly afterward Vandeventer sold the remaining shares of his contract. By that time the news of Vandeventer's indiscretions was out: the National Intelligencer ran an article on the Rip Rap affair in February, using the incident to impugn the fortifications program. On March 6, 1820, Congress became involved, calling upon Calhoun for a detailed accounting of how all contracts of this kind had been let in the past, to whom, their value, the current prices, and so on. Calhoun could only comply. The House Committee on Military Affairs made a report on the Rip Rap contract on April 4, but it was tabled, there to rest until two years later when the scandal could be put to more profitable uses.

After the committee's report in the spring of 1820 the Rip Rap affair dropped out of the public's view, but not from Calhoun's. Surprisingly, work was going well at the shoals. By the end of 1819 Lieutenant Colonel Charles Gratiot, the supervising engineer for the Hampton Roads, reported that the stone mole showed twenty-five feet above the waterline. Mix, however, was still juggling his contract:

57 Wilte, Calhoun, p. 205. I have been unable to locate this letter to Monroe.


59 National Intelligencer, February 4, 1820.


61 Ibid., p. 1951.

62 Charles Gratiot to John C. Calhoun, November 30, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:457.
he sub-let part of it yet again, and by 1821 there were at least two other firms involved in transporting stone from the York River quarries. In the course of settling a dispute over the legal status of the Mix sub-contractors Calhoun may have been startled to learn that his former Apothecary General, Francis LeBaron of New York, was a partner with both of the firms cooperating with Mix—Howes Goldsborough and Company, and Jacob Lewis and Company. 63 Thwarted in his attempt to win legal recognition from the War Department for his share of the work on Rip Rap, Lewis charged that an illegal combination existed between Chief Engineer Armistead, Swift, Mix, and Vandeventer. 64 Even though he was Lewis' sole partner, LeBaron claimed that he knew nothing about any such combination. 65 Because of the recent trouble with Vandeventer, Calhoun felt that he could not ignore such charges; he set an inter-departmental investigation in motion as quickly as he could, particularly calling upon Armistead for an explanation. 66 All the legal depositions taken during Calhoun's investigation predictably denied any collusion between the accused parties; and Calhoun, armed with these, dropped the inquiry, especially after Lewis was jailed in New York for avoiding his debts. 67

63 Elijah Mix to John C. Calhoun, April 23, 1821; Howes Goldsborough & Co. to John C. Calhoun, June 14, 1821; John C. Calhoun to Jacob Lewis & Co., June 14, 1821; Francis LeBaron to John C. Calhoun, July 1, 1821, ibid., 6:46, 188, 234.
64 Jacob Lewis to John C. Calhoun, July 25, 1821, ibid., 6:281.
65 Francis LeBaron to John C. Calhoun, July 1, 1821, ibid., 6:234.
66 John C. Calhoun to Walker K. Armistead, August 3, 1821; John C. Calhoun to Jacob Lewis, August 2, 1821, ibid., 6:312, 309.
67 Francis LeBaron to John C. Calhoun, August 6, 1821, Walter K. Armistead to John C. Calhoun, August 16, 1821, ibid., 6:318, 337.
Public men of apparent means and influence in Calhoun's generation habitually seemed to run close to financial collapse. President Monroe was so straightened for funds that he was trying to arrange for a secret high-interest loan from New York speculators after only a few years in office. Calhoun was obliged to keep up a standard of living (and his expenses were about to increase) which forced him to watch the commodities market closely all the time he was in Washington. There is little reason to think that either of these men would have taken outright advantage of their positions. But farther down the ranks it was a different matter: the opportunities thrown in the way of poorly-paid army officers must have been especially tempting. With large sums of money in their charge, casual accounting methods, and the quirks of the government's contractual arrangements with civilians, there was virtually no means of policing federal largess. Once charges were made it was seldom possible to prove malfeasance unless the thieves had fallen out.

The connections between Calhoun, Vandeventer, and Swift are particularly interesting. In Vandeventer's case it is obvious that the chief clerk was always ready to use his position to improve his career and not incidentally his finances. Swift's position after his

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68 See two very interesting letters from Monroe to General Swift, December 12, 22, 1822, Swift Papers, in which the President discusses the matter of a private loan from General [Robert] Swartweout [sic]. To my knowledge this aspect of Monroe's financial problems (then known in certain circles) has never been discussed by historians.

69 Vandeventer's ambitions were evident even before he took the chief clerk's job, which he saw as a stepping stone to a higher War Department position. See John Armstrong to Christopher Vandeventer, November 12, 1817, Vandeventer Papers. No one was more pleased than Swift when Vandeventer won the clerkship under Calhoun. Swift wrote to Sylvanus Thayer: "Van deventer [sic] is installed 1st clerk at the War Dept. Very good on all sides." J. G. Swift to Sylvanus Thayer, December 11, 1817, Thayer Papers.
resignation from the army was most intriguing: he won the position of Surveyor of the Port of New York, a job not obviously lucrative until one considers that this officer had a great deal of influence in locating new fortifications, docks, and wharves around the port.  

At the same time, Swift's friendship with Calhoun was a decided advantage to him in his new investment, the West Point Foundry, a company which cast cannon on government contract. The ex-general had also become involved with the Swartwout brothers of New York in their newest enterprise, the New Jersey Salt Marsh Company, which was then lobbying for preemption rights in that state. President Monroe obviously had this connection in mind when he wrote confidentially to Swift, asking the ex-general to intercede in his behalf with the Swartwouts for a loan. Clearly, Swift kept up his interest in fortifications, and his interest was not merely academic; his Memoirs dutifully record the money appropriated by Congress each year for defense building, and his fortuitous association with Nimrod Farrow throws an entirely different light on the troubles at Mobile.

That Swift was serving as an informal conduit for various kinds of War Department business is evident in an episode which occurred well after he had resigned from the army. One of Swift's old friends, General

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70 Thomas Hutchinson to John M. O'Connor, December 10, 1818, O'Connor Papers; Christopher Vandeventer to Sylvanus Thayer, June 4, 1816, Thayer Papers.

71 Ibid.


73 James Monroe to Joseph G. Swift, December 12, 22, 1822, Swift Papers.

74 Swift, Memoirs, p. 137, and passim.
Alexander Macomb, commanded the Fifth Military Department around Detroit until 1821. In his position, Macomb had limited control over military business in the area and was of course accountable for expenditures in his command; like any other departmental commander, Macomb also had some control over where he would locate his headquarters and was in a position to influence troop dispositions and strengths.

Beginning in 1819 Macomb started pressing the War Department for more troops. He argued that the presence of Fort Malden, just across the Detroit River in Canada, was much stronger, and that more troops were needed for an effective defense. As matters then stood, Macomb's own garrison was several miles up the river from the British fort; he asked that permission be given to locate directly across from the British installation.\(^75\) The delegate from Michigan Territory to Congress, William Woodbridge, also wrote to Calhoun, urging the establishment of a new military depot directly across from Fort Malden.\(^76\) Later that year Governor Cass added his voice to those of Woodbridge and Macomb. Calhoun understood well enough that there was some British activity in that area, but he decided to wait on authorizing reinforcements until the commander of the Northern Division, Jacob Brown, could inspect the region and report back to him.\(^77\) In August, 1819, Brown told Calhoun that reinforcement was "inexpedient."\(^78\)

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\(^75\) Alexander Macomb to John C. Calhoun, February 8, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 3:557.

\(^76\) William Woodbridge to John C. Calhoun, March 4, 1819, ibid., 3:630.

\(^77\) John C. Calhoun to Lewis Cass, July 26, 1819, ibid., 4:176.

\(^78\) Jacob Brown to John C. Calhoun, August 9, 1819, ibid., 4:221-222.
Macomb's interest in augmenting the military force around Detroit could thus far be considered as simply the exertions of a zealous officer. But in January, 1821, Macomb wrote to his old friend Swift, explaining that he had recently purchased 670 acres of land near the mouth of the Detroit—just opposite Fort Malden; it was, Macomb reckoned, "a choice spot." If the international boundary line then being settled gave the island in the mouth of the Detroit River to the British, then his land would be the only place for American ships to anchor. But more important, Macomb said, was that, "in a military point of view it is the best position for defending this position." The site overlooked Fort Malden; it was well timbered and thus would make an excellent naval depot. Macomb told Swift that he intended to move his "Head Quarters there taking with me my staff and endeavor to get a post office established at the place." When he did that, of course, land values would rise accordingly.

All this was bad enough, but Macomb's high hopes for encouraging a town on his new land did not stop there. He had already noticed that "there is abundance [sic] of lime stone in the immediate vicinity of this place." And then Macomb came to the real point of his letter:

If ever the Government make permanent works in this country they will be built at or near this position and if they had done so during the late war the country would not have fallen into the hands of the enemy. It has often been recommended as the most proper place for a fortification & military Depot for the frontier. If Mr. Calhoun could with pressing enter into the speculation he might

79 Alexander Macomb to Joseph G. Swift, January 12, 1821, Swift Papers.
80 Ibid. Just how long Macomb owned the land is not made clear by his letter.
81 Ibid.
serve his country & make his fortune too. Because if troops ever moved down to this place instead of keeping them at Detroit where they are exposed to every vice, the merchants would soon follow & our lots would sell immediately for any price.  

There is no evidence that Swift passed this offer on to Calhoun. Obviously, this does not mean that Swift was a model of rectitude, but only that he knew Calhoun far better than Macomb did. Two months to the day after Macomb wrote to Swift, Calhoun offered the command of the Corps of Engineers to General Macomb and Macomb accepted. Since the Secretary of War was then being attacked regularly by some members of Congress, it is unlikely that Calhoun would have appointed someone he knew had a tendency to use his place for personal advantage.

There is no reason to think that Calhoun ever knew of General Macomb's real estate deals, and that is the real significance of the affair. The Secretary regularly received reports from military officers which called for more troops in a particular area or which suggested a military post on this spot or that; there was no way to distinguish Macomb's letters from any other. Alexander Macomb was not particularly possessed of an original mind; if he could conjure a way to profit by his position, others could have also. Calhoun never gave any indication that more things were associated with military building than defense policy.

The Macomb letter demonstrates further how vulnerable the entire military establishment was during the era of good feelings to illegal

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82 Ibid. I am convinced that had Calhoun known about Macomb's proposal he would have forced Macomb from the service. The Secretary had already reprimanded Macomb in 1819 for some irregularities in the officer's accounts for that year. See John C. Calhoun to Alexander Macomb, March 27, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 3:698.

83 John C. Calhoun to Alexander Macomb, March 12, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 5:675.
and questionable dealings—dealings which sometimes stultified Calhoun's military programs altogether. From the halls of official Washington where policy was invented to the totals on the vouchers was a long way indeed, and although few cases of official malpractice were ever brought to light, a cursory examination of this feature of Calhoun's fortification program shows that technical and professional shortcoming endangered it as much as congressional hostility.

These problems illuminate a larger historical concern as well. Calhoun was anxious to create a professional military establishment—an army and all its accouterments—with qualities and functions which no other American army ever had. For nearly fifty years the United States had relied upon the arms of the amateur, and many of those sensibilities which characterized the professional military establishment still existed. Waste, inefficiency, divided loyalties—all were the most obstinate remnants of military amateurism, and Calhoun had only just touched on some of them before he left office.

II

The expansive (some said grandiose) nationalistic programs sponsored by Monroe and managed by Calhoun often carried certain liabilities. Whenever Monroe was committed to a certain program, Calhoun's latitude was circumscribed. Usually Calhoun's enthusiasm matched Monroe's, but as Calhoun was bound to observe departmental form, the President sometimes compelled Calhoun to take positions he undoubtedly would not have chosen for himself. Certain of these programs caught the public eye, too; and popular opinion always caused Calhoun a great deal of discontent: he knew neither how to ignore it nor how to use it, and mostly it vexed
him. When a program coincidentally served business interests, the liabilities increased. The involvement of private capital in a public program, as had been seen, usually meant spectacular success or a similar kind of failure. Calhoun came to know this all too well.

All these liabilities and more were inherent in the so-called Yellowstone expedition, a movement to secure America's possession of the lands between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains. At the end of the War of 1812 American authority barely extended beyond St. Louis up the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. In this fur-rich area the British trader still held sway, operating among Indian tribes generally hostile to the Americans and often supported by the great British companies, the North West and Hudson's Bay. British presence was actually strengthened in the postwar period by Lord Selkirk's establishment of a new colony on the Red River of the North, near Lake Traverse in what is now Minnesota. By contrast, American authority was represented here by a few hundred forlorn soldiers garrisoned along the southern edge of the Great Lakes. The Indians of the region indicated their disdain of the Americans by regularly traveling to Fort Malden, opposite Detroit, and other British outposts in order to trade and receive gifts.

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84 Adams, Diary, 5:361.

85 The St. Louis Enquirer, November 3, 1819, tacitly admitted that the area from the Upper Missouri to the Pacific was controlled by the British. The location of Selkirk's new colony was an important factor in Calhoun's decisions about troop movements and the location of garrisons in that area in 1818. See John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, October 17, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:215. For an account of the Selkirk colony, see Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State with Some Account of the Native Races and Its General History to the Present Day, edited by W. C. Morton (Rutland, Vermont: Charles Tuttle Company, 1972).

86 Lewis Cass to John C. Calhoun, August 3, 1819; Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, April 8, 1818; William Clark to John C. Calhoun, April 30, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:200-203; 2:234-235; and 4:42-43.
James Monroe had adduced this hostility in 1815 when he argued for a large standing army before Congress, and when he became President, Monroe's interest in the region had been made even more acute by subsequent reports he had received. By late 1817 the United States had begun to move slowly into the area: an arc of outposts stretched from Green Bay (Fort Howard), which guarded the Fox River, to Prairie du Chien (Fort Crawford) at the junction of the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, southward to Fort Armstrong, where the Rock River met the Mississippi. The westernmost outpost was Fort Osage, at the great bend of the Missouri.

Calhoun meant to extend the power of the United States beyond this arc of garrisons if he could. In the spring of 1818 Calhoun inaugurated what came to be known as the Yellowstone expedition, with Monroe's enthusiastic support of course. St. Louis was the launching point for the expedition. On March 16, 1818, Calhoun ordered General Thomas A. Smith to prepare for the movement. Extra men were to be recruited in Ohio and Pennsylvania and marched to St. Louis, where they would be taken into the Rifle Regiment which Calhoun expected would form the expeditionary detachment. Although Calhoun wanted the force to ascend the Missouri to the Mandan villages (near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota), he recognized that the objective would probably not be reached

87 James Monroe to William Branch Giles, February 22, 1815, Monroe Papers, LC.
89 John C. Calhoun to Thomas A. Smith, March 16, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:194-195.
until sometime the next year. In the meantime, he ordered Smith to establish staging areas along the Missouri and thus a line of communications once the Indian villages were finally reached. As to the purpose of the movement and the conduct required of the troops, Calhoun left no doubt in his instructions to General Smith. Calhoun wrote:

You will instruct the officer who may be detailed to command the detachment, to use every means to conciliate the Indians, and impress on them the belief that our intention is friendly towards them. It is expected the English traders will take unusual pains to make a contrary impression. They have great advantages in controlling the savages through their commanding station of Red river [sic], and as our contemplated establishment at Yellow Stone, will greatly curtail their trade towards the head of the Missouri, we must expect every opposition from them. No pains must be spared to counteract such efforts.

The Yellowstone expedition was actually part of a two-pronged movement into the areas of British influence. While preparations were in the making in St. Louis, Calhoun ordered General Jacob Brown to establish a new garrison at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota [then called the St. Peter's] rivers. Because of the proximity to Selkirk's colony and the Sioux tribes, Calhoun recommended that an entire regiment hold this position. From here, overland communications could be established with the projected garrison at the Mandan village.

If these plans won favor with the government, they were no less popular with the western public. Because it was the more spectacular of the two, attention focused upon the Yellowstone expedition. Romance had little to do with the expedition's popularity: the troops would be opening up a lucrative trading area which had been formerly denied to Americans. An editorial in the St. Louis Enquirer estimated that the annual trade in furs from this area alone would come to a million dollars.

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90Ibid.
91Ibid.
and called the Indian trade of the region "the most lucrative internal commerce in North America." An added dividend for those adventurous few who wished to press beyond the projected American posts into the Oregon country was also expected: if one included the Russian fur trade in that area, the value of the trade west of the Mississippi would double. "The establishment of this post will be an era in the history of the west," said the editor of the Enquirer.

As the season approached in early 1819 when the expedition could get underway, Calhoun's own reputation began to soar in the West. Doubtless the Secretary was pleased, but this meant at the same time that the stakes of the expedition's success were now personally high. Concerning part of the expedition, Calhoun wrote Joseph Swift: "It has excited too much interest to fail, without producing unhappy consequences."

But the Yellowstone expedition did fail. It is known today more modestly as the Missouri expedition, for after more than a year and a half of activity on the part of Calhoun and his department, the intercession of President Monroe and several other high officials in the West, and several hundred thousand dollars, the detachment of troops only managed to ascend the Missouri four hundred miles from St. Louis to the Council Bluffs, there to remain. The failure of the expedition had

93 St. Louis Enquirer, January 12, 1822.
94 National Intelligencer, August 14, 1819.
95 St. Louis Enquirer, September 4, 1818.
96 Ibid., April 23, and October 2, 1819.
97 John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, August 29, 1819, Swift Papers.
little to do with the resolution of the troops or their officers, but with the coincidental political and business interests which the movement excited.

The immediate cause for the misfiring of the expedition was the dubious financial operations of the western businessman, James Johnson. Johnson was a Kentuckian who had been in the business of army rations and transportation contracting since the war, and in late 1818 he won the contracts for the Yellowstone expedition. Johnson was also the brother of Richard Mentor Johnson, a hero of the late war, and now a member of Congress who was close to Monroe, Calhoun, and a host of other politicos. When word went out that the War Department was looking for rations and transportation contractors, Calhoun began to receive letters recommending Johnson.98

Aside from demonstrating the range of Johnson's influence, these letters of recommendation tell a good deal about western business at the time, and the prospects Johnson's supporters thought the impending expedition had. Several letters, including one from Henry Clay, advised Calhoun that this movement was altogether too important to allow the usual competitive bidding and consequent speculation. The implication was that any government contract which was let in the West under these conditions was sure to fail; this Calhoun was already finding out in his dealings with the fortifications at Mobile.99

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98 T. Quarles to John C. Calhoun, August 27, 1818; W. T. Barry to John C. Calhoun, September 14, 1818; Robert Wickliffe, September 14, 1818; Amos Kendall, September 23, 1818; John T. Mason, Jr. to John C. Calhoun, October 1, 1818; and Armistead T. Mason to John C. Calhoun, October 25, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:72-73, 129, 152-153, 180-181, 233-234.

In late November and early December, Johnson and Quartermaster General Jesup were working up the details of the unusual contract. This contract did not specify the amount that Johnson would receive upon completion; rather, the instrument provided for "fair payment" once Johnson had done his job. The contract also called for Johnson to purchase two (and possibly four) steamboats to use in carrying the troops up the Missouri, even though the first such vessel had yet to navigate that river.  

Suffering from the shortage of specie which seemed to plague every western businessman, Johnson was to draw upon the government for advances in order to complete the business. This blank check was a provision which would cause Calhoun no end of trouble.

Within six months Johnson had alienated most of the army officers, the citizens of St. Louis, and not incidentally Calhoun himself by his repeated delays, breakdowns, and pleas for money. Calhoun had come to have so little confidence in Johnson that he dispatched Quartermaster General Jesup to St. Louis to oversee the operation, but Jesup's presence did not seem to help.  

By the middle of the summer, Colonel Henry Atkinson, the putative commander of the putative expedition, had grown so impatient with Johnson that he set his men off without the steamboats (and many of the rations they were supposed to carry). Johnson's steamboats were becoming the joke of the Missouri. Of five in all, only

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101 Such a body of correspondence developed between the Johnsons and Calhoun that a "James Johnson file" was established in the War Department. One example among many is James Johnson to John C. Calhoun, February 12, 1819, ibid., 3:570-571.

102 John C. Calhoun to Thomas S. Jesup, March 27, 1819, ibid., 3:697.
three actually attempted to navigate the river, which was still in full
flood above Cantonment Bellefontaine. The problem was not so much the
river itself as the steamboats; in May a steamboat not owned by Johnson
had already navigated the river. In August the St. Louis Enquirer
reported to its readers: "The sentiment of the country, from the day of
the arrival of Col. Johnson's steamboat, was unanimous that these boats
were unfit for the Missouri. The truth of that sentiment is now made
manifest."  

Meanwhile Calhoun, alarmed by the vast sums Johnson had drawn in
advance on his open-ended contract, had been attempting to limit
Johnson’s expenditures. It was during that summer that President Monroe
was visiting Kentucky, however. At Lexington Monroe was set upon from
all sides by interested westerners, including, of course, the Johnson
brothers, all of whom explained that the Yellowstone expedition was too
popular in the West to fail for want of government support. Ever
solicitous of western interests, Monroe authorized still more advances
to the Johnsons, even though at the time officers at St. Louis were
advising Calhoun not to allow more funds. Calhoun knew by then that the
entire Quartermaster’s account in the War Department had been drained

103 Thomas S. Jesup to John C. Calhoun, July 8, 1819, ibid.,
4:139.

104 St. Louis Enquirer, July 14, 1819.

105 Ibid., August 11, 1819.

106 James Monroe to John C. Calhoun, July 5, 1819, Calhoun Papers,
4:135-136. Several prominent citizens who went to Lexington to see
Monroe drafted a joint letter to Calhoun, urging support for Johnson.
See Isaac Shelby, Andrew Jackson, W. A. Trimble, John T. Mason, Jr.,
Robert Wickliffe, James Morrison, W. T. Barry, and Thomas Bodley to
by the Johnsons, but he nevertheless followed the President's instructions. Monroe had authorized another $50,000 in advances for the Johnsons, but by the end of the year the brothers had gone well beyond that. A Treasury auditor eventually reckoned that the total monies advanced to Johnson was $229,000.

By the end of 1819 rumors were flying in the East that the Johnson contract was about to fail. John Quincy Adams confided to his diary that he had heard remarks even in Boston to that effect. A Kentuckian had written him: "Let the Administration be prepared to be attacked about the Yellowstone expedition." Calhoun still believed, however, that the government was protected against ultimate loss by Johnson's bonds. True to the Kentuckian's prediction, on December 21 Congressman John Cocke of Tennessee called for a report from the War Department on both the object and expenses of the expedition. Calhoun replied on December 29, but he was careful to remark only upon the benefits that the expedition promised; that part of his report dealing with expenses was left to charts which told little about the insolvency of the Johnson brothers. Perhaps because the troops had at last moved to Council Bluffs (without Johnson's help), Calhoun still hoped

107 John C. Calhoun to Thomas S. Jesup and Eleven other Officers, July 19, 1819, ibid., 4:157-158.
108 Peter Hagner to John C. Calhoun, January 28, 1820, ibid., 4:611.
109 Adams, Diary, 4:472-473.
111 John C. Calhoun to Alexander Smyth, December 29, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:519-523. See this report, complete with attachments showing expenses, in "Expedition to the Mouth of the Yellowstone, January 3, 1820," ASPMA, 2:31-37.
that the expedition would succeed. Dissatisfied by the Secretary's report, Congress called for even more information, and with this new data which Calhoun grudgingly supplied, the legislators voted to stop funds for the expedition in March, 1820.\textsuperscript{112} Calhoun told Colonel Atkinson the news shortly afterward. The expedition to the Yellowstone got no farther up the Missouri; the grand movement into the Northwest was halted.\textsuperscript{113}

The military programs which Calhoun was charged with managing were of a cost and a magnitude unprecedented in the history of the republic. Never before during a time of peace had the nation supported such an enlarged military policy as the one that Calhoun watched over. Projects under his control literally reached from one end of the nation to the other, and in the West these projects outstripped the pace of settlement itself. The total cost of this military policy placed more of a burden upon the national revenues than any that came before, and while he administered the program and the money, Calhoun was required to depend upon a larger number of subordinates than had ever operated under the War Department's aegis in time of peace. More civilians involved themselves in the War Department's business, and Calhoun was answerable for their activities even though he did not exercise the authority over them that he obviously would have preferred.

As these various programs took shape, the young man in the War Department gained in reputation. What had at first been President


\textsuperscript{113}Ibid.

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Monroe's policy became Calhoun's policy. When newspapers praised or condemned a program or policy, it was Calhoun rather than Monroe who was increasingly identified with it. The cabinet member who Senator King had originally thought would not have much influence had become an important public figure. What mattered less to the public was that Calhoun exercised very little control over some matters, and it was an important thought for Calhoun's enemies to bear in mind as well.

Throughout it all, Calhoun's military programs depended upon the goodwill of Congress as well as the dedication of his own subordinates. Either of these groups could fail him, or betray him, and time and the stresses of enacting an expansive military program chipped away at what otherwise would have been solid achievements.

III

As the United States settled into the long peace, the rationale for supporting the military establishment became less and less compelling. Whether Calhoun realized what was happening is unclear; he was still concerned about Great Britain's activities in the western hemisphere. 114 Certainly, he did not think that the millennium had arrived, and he was never beyond averring to foreign dangers when he justified his military programs.

But Calhoun sensed that America's military establishment could not be maintained forever by intimidating the nation with suspicions of war. The practice of associating the military with constant danger had been partially responsible for the continued alienation of the army from

114 Adams, Diary, 6:138.
the nation. As a result, the exact place and function of the army—the role of the army in a democratic republic—had yet to be agreed upon. If somehow the army could be transformed so that it would become associated with national progress rather than national danger, then Calhoun would have come to grips with the fundamental problem of how to arm and protect a democracy.

Calhoun was a nationalist, a civilian, and (aside from the President himself) the highest official in the military establishment, and it was in his combination of these roles that Calhoun was most creative during his War Department years. A large part of Calhoun's nationalism had to do with the idea of internal improvements, the building of roads, canals, bridges and such with federal sponsorship. Public men disagreed fervently on what the constitution would allow, but for Calhoun the question turned not so much on the constitution as the obvious benefits of such programs, benefits which should of themselves remove all objections. He believed while he was still a congressman that Congress had the power to sponsor improvements, but the states would approve these projects nonetheless in statesmanlike cooperation. There was "room enough," Calhoun said, "for all . . . to exert their resources."115

Others were not as ready to give up the dispute as Calhoun. When President Monroe strongly favored internal improvements in his first message to Congress, he asked at the same time for a constitutional

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116 Ibid., 1:399.
amendment in order to eliminate the question altogether.\textsuperscript{117} Congress' response to this was confusing: Henry Clay indulged himself with pettish remarks about the President's usurpation of legislative prerogative because Monroe had delivered himself of opinions in advance of congressional action. Money was voted for improvements in early 1818, but there was no hint that its use was actually authorized. It was as though all were holding their breaths, waiting for someone to speak. Congress called upon Calhoun for his opinion of the issue in April, knowing well that the Secretary's ideas were even more progressive than Monroe's.\textsuperscript{118}

Calhoun was confident that he could follow his constitutional scruples and remain in the administration. He wrote to a friend, just before Congress called for the report, stating that he thought "the question had been decided before my arrival at Washington. My sentiments are so well known in relation to the constitution, that he [Monroe] must expect in any question of that nature, I will act in conformity with my established opinion."\textsuperscript{119} But the Secretary did alter his opinion; when Calhoun presented Monroe with the report to Congress, it was in conformity with Calhoun's ideas, but not Monroe's.\textsuperscript{120} The final version of the report avoided the constitutional question altogether.\textsuperscript{121}

John Quincy Adams believed that Congress had asked for Calhoun's opinion on internal improvements out of a spirit of hostility, and he

\textsuperscript{117}James Monroe, "First Annual Message," December 2, 1817, Hamilton, Monroe Papers, 6:33-34.


\textsuperscript{119}John C. Calhoun to J. G. Jackson, March 31, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:216.

\textsuperscript{120}Adams, Diary, 4:218.

\textsuperscript{121}John C. Calhoun to Henry Clay, January 7, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 3:472.
implied that Clay's disappointments were behind it all. Yet in one sense the congressional resolution was a friendly one: it asked Calhoun to devise a plan to facilitate military defenses by "such means as are within the power of Congress." The use of the military in internal improvements for the expressed purpose of defense was just one of the several wedges which had been driven in the application of strict constitutional interpretation of this question. When Monroe took his inaugural tour of the North in 1817, he had personally authorized the building of a "military road" from Sackett's Harbor to Plattsburg, New York. As Clay happily pointed out, Monroe's view of the constitutionality of improvements did not exactly comport with his building of this road, military or not.

Whereas President Monroe was confused on the issue, Calhoun was not. Certain already that it was the duty of Congress to use its powers in an expansive fashion, Calhoun saw in the use of the military for such projects several interesting prospects. The apology that the improvements could be used for defense seemed a pertinent one to him; it was a means by which constitutional objections could be avoided: if internal improvements were rationalized on military grounds, perhaps the more ardent defenders of the Constitution would not be so alarmed.

This was no theoretical argument; opponents of internal improvements were already presented with faits accompli. Calhoun merely set

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124 Ibid.
out to justify programs already in effect. The late war had demonstrated the need to concentrate large forces quickly and the consequences of failing to do so. The very roads and canals which served the civil public could answer a military purpose also. Calhoun therefore made no attempt to argue for the civilian uses of construction; he concentrated on the military arguments alone.

His first appeal was to frugality, a notion dear to the hearts of the most hide-bound Republicans. Small and dispersed armies such as America's, Calhoun said, were "under the best management . . . more expensive, even were our supplies equally cheap, than European armies collected in large bodies, in the midst of populous and wealthy communities." Some of this cost could be avoided by building military highways to link all the military commands. Even more could be saved by using troops to do the labor where possible: an officer supervising the Sackett's Harbor road reported that the cost of one year's labor in completing fourteen miles of the road was $13,000, whereas locals estimated that civilian labor would cost twice as much and take longer. By the end of 1818 two other roads were being built: one from Detroit to Fort Meigs, Ohio, and another from Muscle Shoals, Tennessee, to Madisonville, Louisiana. One of the most assiduous of the military road builders was Colonel Henry Atkinson, who, soon after arriving at Council Bluffs in 1819, began cutting a road from there to Bellefontaine.

125 "Reduction of the Army Considered," December 11, 1818, ASPMA, 1:781.

126 Henry Atkinson to John C. Calhoun, January 22, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 3:511-512.

Atkinson planned even more roads to link his command with other military units up the Mississippi. Calhoun could not have approved more enthusiastically: "The troops cannot be more usefully employed than in such works."\(^{128}\) All this activity, apparently, had taken place entirely without the approval of Congress.

Encouraged by what he had seen so far, Calhoun finally sent his report on internal improvements to Congress in early 1819.\(^{129}\) It was couched in military arguments only. He asked for authority to build a military road from Maine to Louisiana, with a canal paralleling it as far south as Savannah, Georgia. He also recommended linking the main eastern cities with the Ohio valley by so many "Cumberland roads," and canals from Albany and Pittsburg to Lake Erie.\(^{130}\)

Hidden away in the report, and unnoticed by most, was a subtle appeal for a larger military establishment in order to carry these programs into effect. After remarking at length on the savings that were possible from using military labor, Calhoun wrote:

> We ought not to be sanguine in the expectation of the aid to be derived from the army in the construction of permanent military roads and canals at a distance from the frontiers . . . thinly scattered along so extensive a frontier, it will be impossible, I fear, without leaving some points exposed, to collect any considerable bodies in the interior of the country to construct roads and canals.\(^{131}\)

A larger army was, then, the price that Calhoun was asking for internal improvements. In return the army could perform useful and

\(^{128}\)John C. Calhoun to Henry Atkinson, February 7, 1820, ibid., 4:646.


\(^{130}\)Ibid.  
\(^{131}\)Ibid.
efficient services—positive services—for a progressing nation. The Secretary of War clearly wanted to weld the nation and the army together for their common benefit. Aside from the obvious desirability of his goal of cutting the costs of the army and increasing the professionalism of the officers, Calhoun wanted to transform the military establishment into an institution which was consistent with the requirements of the democracy. It was in this spirit that Calhoun reprimanded an officer whose extravagance had been found out: "Nothing is so calculated to render the Army unpopular."¹³² In the same spirit Major General Jacob Brown wrote Calhoun to congratulate him on his report on internal improvements:

> I believe that we shall not again here [sic] of an opposition to the Army making military Roads; but we may flatter ourselves with the hope that our fellow citizens of the military establishment will achieve a victory over some of the prejudices of the country by their useful labours in peace if they could not by their deeds of arms in War.¹³³

Brown and Calhoun assumed much on the basis of a slender performance. At this point the military building program was quite small; a guess would be that less than a thousand soldiers were engaged in construction at any one time.¹³⁴ For his part Calhoun miscalculated the popularity of internal improvements; he believed that improvements were universally sought after in the West, but a study by Charles Wiltse has shown that the West was surprisingly divided on the issue. The strongest support of all came from New York and Pennsylvania.¹³⁵

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¹³²John C. Calhoun to Alexander Macomb, March 27, 1819, ibid., 3:698.
¹³³Jacob Brown to John C. Calhoun, June 11, 1819, ibid., 4:99-100.
¹³⁴This is an educated guess. There are no figures on military labor which separate the number of men working on roads from those engaged in other, more traditionally military projects, such as the construction of barracks and fortifications.
¹³⁵Wiltse, Calhoun, Appendix B, p. 406. See also John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, October 1, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:311.
However chimerical Calhoun's ideas on internal improvements may have seemed in the light of the politics of the time, his idea of endearing the army to the republic was well founded. Already military explorers had caught the nation's attention, navigating the Missouri far beyond the ill-fated Yellowstone expedition. Still making their surveys along the coastline, the Board of Engineers were doing work of national as well as military importance. Even if Calhoun's dreams of a vast network of interior communications could not yet be realized, there was still a great deal the army could do for its reputation. By increasingly involving the army in affairs associated with the growth of the nation, perhaps the identification eventually could be made between national and military progress.

Many of the officers Calhoun used on these programs were engineers, the elite corps of the military establishment and in many ways the model for the kind of institution Calhoun wished to make of the entire army. The Corps of Engineers had the distinction of having been the only part of the military establishment singled out for legislative protection from reductions since its creation in 1802. The more technical aspects of war had long since excluded even the gifted amateur, and the new appreciation of warfare as a professional matter naturally increased the stock of those most clearly identified with military knowledge as were the engineers. But the engineers had the added advantage that their skills were readily translatable to civil tasks such as internal improvements.

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American engineers were aware of the distinction they held, both within the army and the nation. They considered themselves a class apart from the ordinary officer, who may have owed his appointment to influence alone. Such men, the professionals believed, did the army no honor; indeed, as one professional put it, they caused a great deal of harm:

I honor an intelligent and scientific officer as much as I despise the puppies who consider their uniforms as giving them the right to be insolent & impertinent of which character I am sorry to say I have seen too much in the new levies of our American army.137

Thus when General Bernard was imported from France, American officers full of their new-found confidence were sorely offended. One young officer, while complaining about the Bernard appointment, showed that he understood that the Corps of Engineers had achieved a unique reputation for a part of the military establishment. Christopher Vandeventer, while still attached to the engineers in New York, wrote to Sylvanus Thayer in Europe:

The truth is, the Government is hostile to an Army—and the Corps of Engineers having done more and deserved more both from its achievements and abilities, it becomes necessary for their purpose, to degrade it. The nation have uniformly made this corps an exception from the censure bestowed on the Army; and all parties seemed to unite in acknowledging the necessity of educating the most promising youths in the country to the higher grade of the Military profession. Whenever the Army has been assailed for ignorance and deficiency in Science, the Corps of Engineers have always been exempted. To it the friends of a respectable Army have constantly pointed as a proof of the usefulness of well educated officers.138

Vandeventer was overstating. Some of the harrowing experiences of the war had left political leaders convinced of the necessity of

137 James Renwick to Joseph G. Swift, January 4, 1816, Swift Papers.

138 Christopher Vandeventer [?] to Sylvanus Thayer, June 4, 1816, Thayer Papers.
"preserving the science of war," the science which distinguished both the
Corps of Engineers and the school of the corps, the United States Military
Academy at West Point, New York. Just as Calhoun was making ever more
varied use of engineer officers, the Military Academy was entering upon
its most expansive period of development up to that time, much of which
took place under Calhoun's administration.

Calhoun understood the academy's potential, but he also saw that
the academy had far to go to fulfill it. The school was as yet a pitiful
outpost along the Hudson River, and it had led a fitful existence since
its establishment in 1802. The first Superintendent of the academy,
Jonathan Williams, decrying the government's lack of patronage, told
Congress that the school was like a "foundling" in the wilderness.139
This was much too romantic a description. One of the academy professors
was closer to the mark: the place, he said, looked like "a desert camp
of Arabs," with its ramshackled buildings, and civilians, horses, and
cows spreading their offal where they would.140

The education provided at the academy was at best mediocre.
Cadets, some of them as old as 30, came and went much as they pleased;
instruction was lackluster when the professors deigned to teach. There
was little equipment and few books. The nominal head of the academy was
the Chief of the Corps of Engineers; but when the War of 1812 came,
Joseph Swift had duties elsewhere, and so, as it happened, did the cadets,
who were regularly requisitioned by the army to fill gaps in the officer

139 "Report of Colonel Jonathan Williams, to the Secretary of
War," March 4, 1808, ASPMA, 1:22.

140 Jared Mansfield to Sylvanus Thayer, March 27, 1817, Thayer
Papers.
corps. Captain Alden Partridge was left in charge of the post while Swift was away, and since Swift never returned thereafter when he could avoid it, Partridge inherited the position of commandant by default.\footnote{Swift, Memoirs, pp. 141-142.}

The extraordinary situation which Calhoun found existing at West Point upon entering office had been in the making for some time: a recently contested change of command, with the former commandant in uncertain exile and the incumbent assailed by a mutinous student body; a professoriat to whom factional loyalty was more important than their duties; and a welter of courts-martial, finished, or in the offing. There was a pretender to the command who had been entirely passed over and who was still searching for a way to win the prize.

The focal point of all this sordid activity was Alden Partridge. After the war William Crawford, then Madison's Secretary of War, turned his attention to improving the school, and he first decided that Partridge had to go.\footnote{Two newer works which cover the history of the academy are Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country, and Thomas J. Fleming, West Point: The Men and the Times of the United States Military Academy (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1969) (hereafter cited as Fleming, West Point). Both contain errors of consequence and are clearly favorable to the institution and its graduates. A more critical examination of the institution is Joseph Ellis and Robert Moore, School for Soldiers: West Point and the Profession of Arms (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). The literature of West Point probably surpasses that on any other education institution in the United States, and most of it is favorable to the academy. Beginning with George Washington Cullum's works, West Point has had an excellent "press," sometimes at the expense of accuracy. To my mind, a critical history of West Point has yet to be done.}

The academy was in a generally deplorable condition, thought Crawford, but apart from that very good reason, the Secretary had a positive dislike of Partridge himself. He considered the captain
uncouth, considerably lacking in style and social grace. Crawford began pressuring General Swift to replace Partridge in 1816, but Swift resisted, saying the most self-respecting officers considered the position a dead end. Having just learned of Simon Bernard's appointment, Swift was not on friendly terms with the secretary either.

In the meantime there had been considerable trouble between Partridge and the professors. Captain Partridge and the senior professor at the academy, Jared Mansfield, had seemingly despised each other at first sight. When Mansfield first arrived at the school Partridge had at first refused him quarters on the post, "all this," Mansfield fumed, "forsooth, because he happened to have company, or because he foolishly supposed, he might trifle & sport with me his [sic] superior in rank, age, & I hope in moral & intellectual requirements." Partridge had another enemy in Captain John M. O'Connor, who was then on the post translating Vernon's treatise on fortifications. O'Connor had ambitions for the commandant's position, and with Mansfield's aid he set about trying to take it from Partridge.

O'Connor journeyed to Washington in early 1817 and there formed an alliance with William Crawford. The ambitious young officer was sufficiently convinced of Crawford's support to write to Mansfield from

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143 Ibid., p. 170. John Quincy Adams remarked in his diary that when the cabinet was discussing a matter at West Point, "there was some desultory conversation about Captain Partridge, against whom he [Crawford] told several very ugly anecdotes." Adams, Diary, 4:429.

144 Swift, Memoirs, pp. 141-142.

145 Jared Mansfield to Joseph G. Swift, August 26, 1814, Thayer Papers.

146 Jared Mansfield to John M. O'Connor, August 21, 1821, June 28, 1819, Mansfield Papers.
the capital, urging the professor "to strike the final blow." The final blow was coming, but not from the quarter O'Connor had expected, and not in his behalf. In May, 1817, President Monroe asked Sylvanus Thayer, who was returning from his sojourn in France, to take command of the school.

That summer there occurred, as Mansfield said, "the most extraordinary events." When Thayer arrived to take command, Partridge, with the moral support of a group of cadets, virtually ran Thayer off the post. Partridge had already placed the entire faculty under arrest for plotting against him. General Swift, being informed of the contretemps, stood by Thayer and ordered Partridge to give up the command; a series of charges, including mutiny, was levelled at Partridge.

Eventually Partridge was cleared of the most serious of the charges and allowed to resign his commission, but the entire incident was embarrassing to the institution and was hardly an auspicious beginning to Thayer's administration. The newspapers had not failed to notice the disturbance and were acutely sensitive to the possibility

147 Entries of May 14, 26, and June 15, 1817, O'Connor Journal.
148 George Graham to Joseph G. Swift, May 20, 1817, Thayer Papers. Swift finally received this letter in 1855, when Thayer sent it to him. Graham had neglected to actually send the order, but of course Thayer had been informed of the President's decision.
149 Jared Mansfield to Joseph G. Swift, August 30, 1817, The Papers of Alden Partridge, the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York (hereafter cited as Partridge Papers).
150 Alden Partridge to Joseph G. Swift, July 24, 1817, Thayer Papers.
151 Joseph G. Swift to Sylvanus Thayer, September 1, 1817, Thayer Papers.
that a mutiny had actually occurred at the school.\footnote{New York Columbian, September 1, 1817; Niles' Weekly Register, September 6, 1817; National Intelligencer, September 27, 1817; and New York Evening Post, September 29, 1817.} As for O'Connor, his plans were entirely thwarted by Thayer's appointment. Even Partridge and his friends were elated that Thayer, not O'Connor, had won the post.\footnote{Benjamin O. Tyler to Alden Partridge, August 17, 1817, Partridge Papers.} O'Connor went off to France the next spring, and Partridge began a new career of trying to destroy the academy. For the next few years Partridge was interested in any rumor coming out of the school and rushed into print with every accusation which had the slimmest evidence behind it.\footnote{Partridge was still criticizing the academy in 1830. That year he accused Claudius Berard, the French instructor, of selling cadets "very cheap watches" for six or seven dollars. Americanus [Alden Partridge], The Military Academy, at West Point, Unmasked: or Corruption & Military Despotism Exposed (Washington: Privately printed, 1830), p. 17 (hereafter cited as Americanus, The Military Academy).}

The confusion, divided loyalties, and outright hostility created by the feud remained for Calhoun to deal with. Swift most likely explained the affair to Calhoun, with the result that whenever Alden Partridge demanded court-martials of the faculty (as he did several times), Calhoun ignored him.\footnote{Joseph G. Swift to Sylvanus Thayer, December 11, 1818, Thayer Papers. Swift's part in the controversy was no doubt difficult for Partridge to fathom. Swift apparently told the captain at one time that if he could prove a cabal against him, he would support Partridge's demand for a court-martial of those responsible for his troubles. No doubt he suspected a plot himself, and so did Partridge. Proving collusion between Mansfield and O'Connor and others, however, was another matter. Partridge promised Swift that he would fight on until justice was satisfied. See Ambrose's account in Duty, Honor, Country, pp. 61-62. Partridge eventually preferred charges against his old patron Swift, but Calhoun disallowed them entirely. See John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, April 11, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:242.} Since Thayer's appointment, there had
been in effect two camps at the school: one loyal to the new regime, the other to Partridge.\footnote{Various letters among the correspondence of Alden Partridge described the divided academy after Thayer took over. It seems that the academic staff was generally on Thayer's side, while a few garrison officers and a faction of the cadets were on Partridge's. See E. J. Lambert to Alden Partridge, July 25, 1817, Alden Partridge Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as Library of Congress Partridge Papers). See also J. Wright to Alden Partridge, August 4, 1817, Partridge Papers.}

One of the first officers to owe his appointment to Thayer was Captain John Bliss, the new commandant of cadets, who was responsible for the discipline of the corps. After the lax discipline under Partridge, Bliss was sure to be unpopular, and to Partridge's favorite old cadets Bliss seemed representative of the Thayer command.\footnote{Expose of Facts, concerning Recent Transactions relating to the Corps of Cadets of the United States Military Academy, West-Point, New York (Newburgh, New York: Printed by Uriah C. Lewis, 1819), pp. 12-13, and Sylvanus Thayer to Walker K. Armistead, November 30, 1818, pp. 39-40 (hereafter cited as West Point Expose). This is a very rare pamphlet containing reproductions of much of the correspondence connected with this case. This copy is from Duke University Library.} For the better part of a year the cadets had been restless because of the unorthodox change of command.\footnote{Ruminating on these events in his old age, Thayer told George Washington Cullum that he believed the whole story of the famous change of command had never been told. He wrote: "In fact, the history of the Acad'y [sic] from 1813 to 1817 is sui generis. It requires a separate investigation & all parts of it should be viewed in connection otherwise [sic] much of it could not be well understood. It is altogether a queer history. It is covered with a thick veil. I do not pretend to have fathomed all its mysteries, but as before remarked I have had a peep behind the curtain & may raise it for you to take a look one of these days should I think it worth while, [revenous] a nos mou[n]tons." Sylvanus Thayer to George Washington Cullum, March 2, 1853, Thayer Papers.} Then Captain Bliss made the mistake of manhandling and cursing one of the cadets; a cadet grievance committee was formed, and it demanded redress of Thayer. Thayer could not tolerate insubordination: group action against authority now had occurred twice since his
arrival. Thayer dismissed the cadets from the academy pending a court of inquiry. In the meantime the suspended cadets unleashed a public relations campaign against Thayer and his new rule at West Point; eventually a congressional investigation was forced. Both the court of inquiry at West Point and the congressional investigation found that both parties had been wrong: Bliss for his temper and zeal, and the cadets for the manner in which they protested their mistreatment.

Calhoun, of course, had been following the matter of the errant cadets all along, keeping President Monroe informed. In 1819 the case came before the cabinet. The President was prepared to be lenient and reinstate the cadets if they seemed to be reasonably contrite, but the cadets presumed to carry their complaints to Monroe himself. This, said the President, was considered improper. After the cabinet discussed the affair for the better part of three days, Monroe called upon Attorney General William Wirt to render an opinion on whether the cadets were subject to martial law. The court of inquiry had side-stepped the issue, and although the cadets were suspended, their sentence had more to do with the academic rules of the school than with military law. Hardly conversant with military law himself, Wirt delivered himself of the opinion that the cadets were, like enlisted men, subject to military

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160 "Complaints Against the United States Military Academy, April 11, 1820," ASPMA, 2:138.

161 Ibid.

162 N. H. Loring, Thomas Ragland, W. M. C. Fairfax, C. Vining, and Charles R. Holmes to James Monroe [September, 1819?], West Point Expose, pp. 44-46. See also Adams, Diary, 4:424-427.
justice. President Monroe instructed the court of inquiry to reconvene with Wirt's opinion in mind; once again the court did not decide upon the question.  

Calhoun did not agree with Wirt's opinion; neither did the faculty at the academy. Jared Mansfield, still acting as spokesman for the professors, addressed several long and detailed arguments to Calhoun. Mansfield believed that the school should follow its own regulations, as indeed the academy had done since 1815. It is problematical that the Secretary was convinced by Mansfield's arguments. Calhoun held his view in common with John Quincy Adams, whose opinion he respected at the moment. Both men believed that the governance of the academy could best be accomplished by the regulatory powers of the War Department, rather than by legislation. The immediate case of the cadets' indiscretions had long faded from importance. When new regulations were drawn up for

163 See Calhoun's remarks to the House of Representatives on the matter of the governance at West Point in "Military Academy at West Point," February 25, 1820, ASPMA, 2:76. There is a good deal of confusion on this case in the standard secondary works. The case of the cadets did not end with Wirt's decision; in fact, the cadets' case was theoretically a separate affair. The judgment had already been made on them. Several works imply that after 1819 the cadets at West Point were under martial law, but Wirt's opinion did not make it so. The courts-martial were not obliged to follow an opinion of the Attorney General at that time. Compare Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country, p. 79; Fleming, West Point, pp. 43-44; Cunliffe, The Martial Spirit, p. 157. See also General Daniel Parker's order for a re-trial in "General Order," September 23, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:344-345. Concerning Wirt's lack of information on military justice, see his letter to Calhoun, asking for books on the subject, July 20, 1820, ibid., 5:227; and Calhoun's summation of the case to Henry Brush, February 2, 1820, ibid., 4:629-630.

164 For example, see Jared Mansfield to John C. Calhoun, May 31, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:138.

165 Adams, Diary, 4:424-427.
the army by General Winfield Scott in 1821, West Point's rules were included in the compendium. 166

Throughout the first turbulent years of Thayer's rule at West Point Calhoun had always taken the new superintendent's part. Both men had seen what had happened when Partridge had lost the confidence of the government: cadets and professors up in arms, newspapers crying military uprising, and the institution's reputation blemished. Thayer had much to make up for, and Calhoun was inclined to support the major. 167

The Secretary of War could not have asked for a more devoted superintendent. Certainly, Thayer took as long to become attached to West Point as the academy did to him. Nine months after he arrived, when it seemed sure that the congressional investigation would be launched, Thayer asked to be relieved of command. 168 Thayer's request was ignored, and he stayed at the school until 1833. These were the most formative years of the "desert camp of Arabs" on the Hudson. Not only did Thayer improve the discipline and academic system of the academy, but beginning in 1817 he and other friends of the school began building a formidable system of patronage and protection which transcended the administration of a single secretary of war.

166 Winfield Scott to John C. Calhoun, May 25, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:146.

167 In 1820 when the House Committee on Military Affairs was investigating the cadets' complaints, Calhoun saw to it that the head of the committee, Alexander Smyth, received unofficially a laudatory report by the Board of Visitors on recent improvements at the school. See John C. Calhoun to Sylvanus Thayer, January 15, 1819, and John C. Calhoun to Alexander Smyth, February 1, 1820, ibid., 3:500, 4:628.

168 Sylvanus Thayer to Joseph G. Swift, May 12, 1818, Thayer Papers.
From the academy's first days those associated with it had a keen sense of its uniqueness and were determined to see it prosper. Since the academy was in effect the government's university, West Point was susceptible to influences and pressures which were foreign to other institutions of higher learning. Officers who considered the matter did not necessarily see the academy's intimacy with government as dangerous; on the contrary, governmental patronage was considered essential for the school's growth and acceptance by the nation. Like Calhoun, General Jacob Brown, and other officers who sought to bind the army to the country, academy advocates were ever watchful for any opportunity to endear the school to the nation and its leaders. In part at least this meant that the academy's friends had to be sensitive to political and social influences. It was by just such a method that the European military schools had become important institutions. An academy graduate touring Europe remarked upon how this patronage could be won:

The Military School at West Point is a glorious institution, did it receive such patronage from our government as to make it, as it easily might be made, the best seminary of education in the United States were its advantages not confined to those who actually enter the service of the US [sic], but the children of the opulent admitted on the same terms as at other scientific institutions & their fees applied to the support of additional teachers, it would do more to spread a military spirit among us than anything else. The Military Schools of France & Germany are the favourite schools. 169

In the light of this need for patronage, William Crawford's objections to Partridge become sensible. Although Partridge did have a way with the cadets, he cared not for society, nor was he particularly interested in improving the image of the institution, physical or

169 James Renwick to Joseph G. Swift, January 4, 1816 Swift Papers.
academic. As a place where luminaries might visit, some friends of the school considered Partridge's neglect of "police" reprehensible. By contrast Sylvanus Thayer clearly believed that part of his duties was improving the appearance as well as the public image of the place. Thayer did not ignore any opportunity to enhance the academy's academic reputation, but he also saw to it that the school's progress to celebrity did not rely entirely upon well-educated graduates.

By all accounts Thayer was a natural master of public relations. Under his superintendence the academy was transformed into a showplace. Thayer took the corps of cadets on marches to show off his students, and he made himself far more accessible to society than Partridge had ever been. His students may have seen Thayer as a stern taskmaster, but his social companions found the new superintendent of West Point a gay addition to any gathering.


171 Thayer was quick to sense the value of allowing visitors on the post; after he began his superintendency there was a parade of American and foreign visitors, all of whom spread glowing reports about the school.

172 Jared Mansfield to John M. O'Connor, February 19, 1818, Mansfield Papers.

173 Fleming, West Point, pp. 51-52.

174 There are numerous testimonials from Thayer's friends about his affability when he was out of the sight of the cadets. More telling comments come from Partridge's friends. See, for instance, O. G. Burton to Alden Partridge, March 12, 1818, Partridge Papers. One disgruntled officer still at the Point told Partridge: "Thayer would count or unit in a French ball room much better than in the American Army but our Government is as fond of french [sic] manners as a frenchman is of Soup." J. Wright to Alden Partridge, April 10, 1819, Library of Congress Partridge Papers. For a well disposed view of Thayer, see Elizabeth Mansfield to Daniel Drake, March 8, 1818, Mansfield Papers.
In his campaign to increase the standing of the academy, Thayer was assisted by well placed friends. Joseph Swift, influential with Calhoun both before and after his resignation, was acquainted with Thayer when the superintendent was himself a cadet. Swift was the first graduate of the academy. Vandeventer was a graduate and a friend of Thayer's. When Calhoun was first appointed Swift and Vandeventer were the first two military officers he saw. After Vandeventer won the clerk's position Swift wrote triumphantly to Thayer: "Van deVenter [sic] is installed 1st [sic] clerk at the War Dept. Very good on all sides." The clerk reassured his friend Thayer when the latter was still surrounded by controversy over the change of command:

Whenever I can communicate any thing useful to you or the institution of course I shall do it: and shall especially be careful to prevent as far as representation can do it, the introduction of any measure which may be injurious to our Military 'almer mater.'

The most important protection West Point could acquire, however, was by appealing to the self interest of the nation's public figures. Because admission was based upon the candidate's parent's service to the nation, those in charge at West Point had to be alive to the influences which sustained the school through its students. When in 1816 acting Secretary of War George Graham heard complaints about punishment at West Point, his reaction was tempered by his sense of how important this form of patronage was; he explained to the academy's officers:

175 Sylvanus Thayer to Joseph G. Swift, October 16, 1818, Thayer Papers, asking about impending legislation.

176 Joseph G. Swift to Sylvanus Thayer, December 11, 1817, ibid.

177 Christopher Vandeventer to Sylvanus Thayer, February 2, 1818, ibid.
All such punishment must necessarily partake of disgrace; but in such an institution as the military academy, composed of the sons of the most respectable families of the country, and many of whom are destined to fill the highest military stations in the Army, they should not be degrading.\textsuperscript{178} Thayer's successful management increased the number of applications for places at the school. West Point had already become something of a refuge for privileged sons, however. On the eve of Thayer's arrival, the academy counted among its number the nephew of the President of the United States, two sons of former Secretary of War John Armstrong, a son of DeWitt Clinton, four sons of George Graham, as well as other representatives of the "first families" of the land, as one cadet recalled.\textsuperscript{179} Academic integrity suffered accordingly. Thayer put a stop to the admission of some of the more grievously unqualified candidates, but he and his entrance examination came into play only after the appointment had been made by the Secretary of War. Cadets could not be dismissed by unilateral action of the faculty; they could only advise the Secretary of War that the student was unacceptable.\textsuperscript{180} At the end of Calhoun's period in the War Department, statistics showed that many more prospective cadets had been accepted than rejected.\textsuperscript{181} By then the

\textsuperscript{178}George Graham to J. G. Swift [?], October 29, 1816, ibid.

\textsuperscript{179}Major General George Douglas Ramsay, "Recollections of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, 1814-1820," unpublished typescript, n.p., n.d., Library of the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, p. 18. Although there has yet to be done a comprehensive study of the lines of influence enjoyed by the academy during these years, enough research has been done by one scholar to enable him to declare flatly that "the institution in the second third of the nineteenth century had an importance for prominent American families far beyond its present standing." See Cunliffe, The Martial Spirit, pp. 161-166.

\textsuperscript{180}White, The Jeffersonians, p. 255.

\textsuperscript{181}Ibid., p. 256.
Secretary of War's exclusive hold over the appointments was already recognized as a valuable source of patronage, and while he was in office Calhoun benefited by it.\footnote{Adams, Diary, 6:106; and Niles' Weekly Register, March 16, 28, 1822.}

As if to reaffirm his faith in the value of West Point, Calhoun recommended in 1818 that several other academies should be created. In an attempt to make an elite academy palatable to the democracy, Calhoun and other of the academy's friends pointed out that the best protection against military despotism was for military knowledge to spread throughout the citizenry.\footnote{"Additional Military Academy," January 15, 1818, ASPMA, 1:834.} This was the image which the officers at the Point took care to convey to impressionable visitors such as Francis Wright. This usually realistic observer wrote after a visit to the academy:

> You will understand, from what I have said upon this military academy, that the object of the government, under whose eye and at whose expense it is conducted and maintained, is not to rear a band of regulars . . . the slender force which is maintained at the national expense and which is barely sufficient for the hard duties in which it is engaged . . . admits but of few openings to such as might be ambitious of so arduous a service. . . . There is little fear in these pacific states of any portion of the citizens acquiring a taste for military glory.\footnote{Wright, Society and Manners in America, p. 82.}

A great deal of such praise was romantic. The facts were that all of the cadet's training was directed toward convincing him that he was a class apart and above mingling with the nation's military amateurs. One cadet who learned this lesson well probably spoke for many of his fellows when he said, "They talk about 'these young gentlemen becoming officers of militia!' Hem! . . . If they ever see a Cadet among the
militia, I am very much mistaken." At the same time Fanny Wright was marvelling that "the army is the people," Calhoun's War Department had just announced that the lack of state militia returns made it impossible to give an accurate account of the civil force which could be called out for emergencies. If the militarizing of the entire nation had really been on President Monroe's or Secretary Calhoun's minds, there were plenty of opportunities for doing so; Monroe had received an extensive plan for upgrading the militia shortly after he reached the White House, and nothing came of it. Calhoun, especially, was not interested in militarizing the nation—he wanted to nationalize the military.

At no time while Calhoun was Secretary of War was the army or the academy threatened with utter extinction, even while the War Department itself was under constant attack. One congressman made a dubious reputation for himself recommending such a course, attacking the military institutions as anti-democratic, but he was not so popular because of it to prevent his defeat at the next election.

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185 Quoted in Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country, p. 85.
186 Wright, Society and Manners in America, p. 82; Niles' Weekly Register, January 16, 1818.
187 Monroe received an extensive and well informed proposal outlining how the American militia might be upgraded considerably shortly before the inauguration. See Major John Clark to James Monroe, December 16, 1816, Monroe Papers LC.
188 Congressman Newton Cannon of Tennessee, known as "The Tennessee Cannon," introduced several bills to abolish the United States Military Academy and upgrade the militia, all to no avail. He and Alden Partridge carried on a little correspondence during this time. See Newton Cannon to Alden Partridge, January 8, 1822, Library of Congress Partridge Papers, in which Cannon remarks: "I have always believ'd [sic] there were great abuses in the military academy at West point [sic] on the part of the officers. It savours too much of the aristocracy for my political notions and is not indeed the proper mode to infuse military science into the great body of the people, nor does it at all favour the principles of equality."
Alden Partridge became such an ardent critic of the regular army that he was (in most circles) thought of as a quixotic figure. Yet as he opposed the existence of West Point, he laid the foundations for the modern reserve officers' training corps.

West Point's immunity from serious or threatening criticism during the Calhoun years reflected a general agreement by members of government that the school served a purpose beyond that of educating an army. There were still politicians who dutifully attacked the military establishment as a rhetorical device, but the forbearance of these very same men concerning the academy showed that they saw the school in a very different light. Education, even of the military sort, could positively assist the growth of the republic. This was the status which Calhoun sought to achieve for the military establishment as a whole.

189 For two of Partridge's more notable attacks on the academy and the professional military establishment, see Americanus, The Military Academy, passim; and Alden Partridge, Captain Partridge's Lecture on National Defence (n.p., n.d.), pp. 1-14. At the same time that Partridge and Cannon were working together against the academy, an army officer in Washington informed Sylvanus Thayer that there was nothing to fear from the government. The officer was quite right. See Henry Stanton to Sylvanus Thayer, January 16, 1822, Thayer Papers. At various times when the War Department was under political attack, Thayer received letters from politically knowledgeable officers, assuring the superintendent that the academy was safe.

After Partridge was out of the army he established a private military school at Norwich, Vermont (the parent school of Norwich University). Hearing that two sons of a South American general were about to be transferred to Partridge's academy, General Winfield Scott had this to say about Partridge: "Now as I know that P[artridge] is cursed with genius & eccentricity in equal quantities, that he never did, a never can, impart more than a superficial knowledge of any branch of learning, & that he has not one practical military idea in his head, I am anxious to save these young Colombians from the mischief of falling into such hands." Winfield Scott to Christopher Vandeventer, March 9, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 7:510-511.

In each of the major programs which Calhoun oversaw, his confidence and ambitions outstripped his control. What began as an expansive, nationalistic military policy was stopped short of fulfillment. His attempts to associate the growth of the nation with military progress were the fullest expression of Calhoun's nationalistic thought, and indeed the fullest expression of military nationalism in the history of the republic. The combination of civil and military nationalism offered the army a place in American life that it had never had: deeply involved in national progress, the army could ingratiate itself to a suspicious nation in peace as well as war. These ambitions displayed Calhoun's best qualities as a Secretary of War.
CHAPTER IV

"TELLING WELL IN HISTORY": CALHOUN AND AMERICAN INDIAN POLICY

In 1820 the Reverend Jedediah Morse of New Haven undertook a commission from President Monroe to make a survey of the Indian tribes then living in the United States.\(^1\) The results of Morse's reconnaissance provided the most complete picture of these folk up to that time and verified what most makers of national Indian policy then suspected. From a prehistorical population numbering perhaps in the millions, the peoples who once had constituted a formidable human frontier to arriving Europeans had dwindled to near extinction.\(^2\) Morse counted a total of

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\(^1\)I am aware that some confusion exists presently over what name one should use in discussing the native people of America. Objections have been made that the term "Indian" unnecessarily homogenizes these people. This is a fair representation of what whites did in Calhoun's time, when observations of the aboriginal peoples were, at best, unscientific. The Indians of America had really only three features in common: they were aboriginal, they were pre-literate, and they had a "white problem." The pages which follow have much less to do with the Indians than with the whites and their misconceptions about the Indians, and I have therefore employed those terms in use during Calhoun's day, bearing in mind the views which informed them.

\(^2\)Estimates of pre-contact Indian numbers in the continental United States have ranged from slightly over one million to as much as twelve million. See a discussion of population figures and the pitfalls in making them in Francis Jennings, \textit{The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest} (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), pp. 15-31 (hereafter cited as Jennings, \textit{Invasion of America}).
less than half a million Indians. More telling than Morse's statistical tables, however, were his summaries of the natives still in the eastern states. He reckoned that in Virginia, "of these tribes [the Nottaways, Pamunkeys, and Mattaponies], twenty-seven of the former, and a still less number of the two latter, it seems are all that remain of those numerous tribes, who once constituted the formidable Powhatan confederacy." Morse found no Indians at all in Kentucky. There were none in Pennsylvania, where, Morse remarked, "they have been scattered and diminished in the manner that hundreds of other tribes have been before them."  

Morse drew a dismal enough picture, but compared to other estimates, his was optimistic. Five years after he made his report to the government, the War Department rendered an official statement showing that only about 130,000 native people lived in the United States and its territories, claiming for themselves a mere seventy-seven million acres. If the recitation of these cold figures were not enough, there was evidence aplenty that the natives of America were the victims of a precipitous cultural decline. A majority of whites seemed bent on hastening the Indians' destruction. Members of both races understood that the Indians could stave off extinction only by means of utter cultural surrender.

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5 Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, January 1, 1825, Calhoun Papers, 9:486.
Originally, the Indians of America had served whites in several valuable ways. They were wilderness tutors, military auxiliaries, and important consumers. They were also landlords. As the white population increased in size and confidence, the value of native functions was sloughed off gradually. By the last decades of the eighteenth century natives were no longer crucial to military action. Only their value as consumers and trading partners forestalled their wanton destruction, and even these relations were no longer conducted in an atmosphere of racial equanimity. When the whites arrived at this point, their claims of sovereignty over the Indians and their affairs were no longer hollow. Indeed, white demands of the Indians were met with such facility that there seemed to be a touch of the providential about the whole process; what happened seemed to whites to be sadly inevitable. Some whites began to consider how the Indians might be snatched from their fate. If civilization could bring the Indians to such a sorry state, civilization might be able to save them as well.

Such a view at least partially informed the earliest attempts of the Crown to regulate Indian affairs, and they had been resisted steadfastly by the colonials and their governments. At a time when centralization of any kind was held in the lowest repute, all parties in America

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6Jennings, Invasion of America, p. 41.

7This concern took the form of attempts to cordon off the Indians in a protected area of their own, free from white interference. The efforts of Sir William Johnson and other Crown officials after the French and Indian war to establish an "Indian country" are well documented. For a discussion of these attempts see the summary of Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834 (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1970), pp. 5-25 (hereafter cited as Prucha, American Indian Policy).
insisted upon dealing with the Indians just as they found them, individually. Relations between these two races were best left to the occasions of the frontiers, not to the protective attempts of some Crown agency. Despite the best efforts of Sir William Johnson and John Stuart, the first British Superintendents of Indian affairs for the Crown, American-Indian relations retained their chaotic and dangerous character.  

Once the American Revolution had succeeded, individual traders, land companies, and the various states all competed assiduously for sovereignty over the tribes in matters of land and trade. Leaders of the new republic found that resistance to official control over Indian affairs would not cease merely because one government had been exchanged for another. All these competing jurisdictions made the conduct of Indian affairs "incomprehensible," said James Madison. He argued that only the national government should deal with the natives. Eventually it became clear that any attempt by the government to monopolize the affairs of the Indians would advance only in the face of the stiffest resistance from the individual states and their frontiersmen.

It has been customary for scholars to portray the government and the frontier as having been somewhat estranged from one another on the question of Indian affairs. Yet the only real difference between the

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8 Ibid.


10 Arthur DeRosier, for instance, portrays Calhoun as a moderate on the Indian question, which he undoubtedly was, but DeRosier misconstrues the role of moderates in the whole scheme of Indian-white
two concerned the rapidity of the Indians' eclipse by civilization. The first Secretary of War, Henry Knox, came to the conclusion that violence against the Indians was simply inefficient. Natural forces then operating on the frontiers, he believed, could accomplish much more than punitive expeditions or wars of conquest. The subjugation of the Indian was inevitable because the march of white civilization was inevitable. To deny one would have been to deny the other. Thus, just as the government was about to launch a pacification campaign among the tribes of the Northwest, Knox told George Washington:

As populations shall increase, and approach the Indian boundaries, game will be diminished, and new purchases [of land] may be made for small considerations. This has been, and probably will be, the inevitable consequence of cultivation. 11

Several judgments were hidden in Knox's hypothesis. Presuming cultural superiority, Knox had no fear that this process would be in the least impeded by Indian resistance. Further, regardless of the policies set by government, the real policies would be played out on the frontier, not in the capital. Leaving matters to the frontiersmen, then, was practical and wholly within the means of the new nation for which Knox spoke.

Men of Knox's high position indulged themselves by seeming to disapprove of what happened between Indians and frontier whites. Lest relations. He and Professor Prucha see the government as fighting a sort of holding action against the perpetually genocidal frontier. I see a community of the attitudes held by the government and the frontier. See, in particular, Arthur DeRosier, The Removal of the Choctaw Indians (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), pp. 55-57 (hereafter cited as DeRosier, Removal of the Choctaws).

11 "General Henry Knox, Secretary of War, to the President of the United States, in continuation," July 7, 1783 [1793?], in Walter Lowrie and Walter S. Franklin, editors, American State Papers, Class II, Indian Affairs (Washington: Gales and Seaton), 1:53 (hereafter cited as ASPIA).
they be confused with the westerners and their unremitting avarice, these more leisured thinkers looked for exoneration. History would have to be satisfied.

In his remarks to Washington, Knox relied upon a theory which elevated the American experience to a principle of natural law. The Secretary traced the reason for the inevitable conflict between the races to their modes of subsistence. Whites long had been fond of depicting the Indian as an inveterate hunter, consumed by the excitement of the chase. The hunt was symbolic of the anarchic freedom and utter savagery of the Indian and most separated him from the qualities of white culture. Since Indian hunting was rarely a solitary business, but rather one which required group participation for a proper return, it enhanced that anathema of white social organization—the tribe. The fondness of the Indian for the hunt also seemed to explain the way in which the Indians regarded their lands: as vast hunting parks in which the value—the game which coursed over it—fluctuated and was mobile. Individualized possession of specific property being impossible, communal ownership was thereby reinforced. Because it appeared that the land was of subsidiary importance to the Indian, and because a vast amount was required for the poorest existence, it followed that this casual devotion to the soil was made doubly sinful by the inefficiency of its use. Yet all these notions were palpably erroneous, as even the most cursory observation told the whites. They served the cause of white expansion much more ably than they did the truth.12

12 None of the tribes east of the Mississippi River survived entirely by the hunt, but were in some combination hunters, gatherers, or agriculturalists. Far from being ignorant of the value of agriculture, the Indians of the eastern woodlands practiced a kind of agriculture that was considerably more efficient than that of the earliest white.
Civilized people were as committed to farming as savages were to hunting. So bound up, in fact, was farming with the idea of civilization that it became a basic quality of civilization itself. Savages, being so, could not possibly possess an attribute of civilization. Even if they did sometimes farm, it could not mean the same things to them that it did to whites. Whether Indians actually did farm or not, therefore, was quite immaterial.

These notions, although current for some time, were finally canonized in the eighteenth century by the French legal theorist, Emmerich de Vattell, in *The Law of Nations*. Accepting the farmer-hunter dichotomy, Vattell reasoned that there would one day be far more farmers than hunters, if only because farmers were more efficient producers of food. In a passage reminiscent of Malthus, Vattell hinted that one day mankind would not be able to afford the luxury of allowing hunting to continue. At any rate, hunters had historically made way for cultivators of the soil, and this process of replacement was nothing less than the law of farmers on the continent. Indian farming was based upon a balance between soil fertility, labor availability, and population. Only when the whites arrived, throwing off balance the third variable—population—was native agriculture itself endangered. Because of their partial attraction to farming, the Indians were far less mobile than white theorists believed at the time. Although tribal ranges sometimes numbered in the hundreds of square miles, the locus of tribal activity was always found around permanent villages where the annual tillage was done. A rough estimate of the duration of village occupancy among the eastern Indians indicates that soil fertility would give out once every ten years or so, at which time another village would be founded not far away from the original site. It was not unusual for a tribe to eventually return to the first site after having moved several times over a generation or two. This pattern of native activity was implicitly recognized by whites during the colonial period, when the burning of Indian crops by whites on the warpath was a favorite tactic. Whites fighting the Indians knew well enough the agrarian proclivities of their enemies. See Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, pp. 60-73, for a discussion of Indian farming.
nature in operation. Lands could therefore be taken justifiably from those who used them poorly.\(^{13}\)

When Vattell wrote, the Indians were still obstinately resisting white encroachment, and he did not bother even to consider that an endangered culture might be receptive to adaptation. His theories justified the most brutal sort of cultural imperialism. No wonder, then, that white Americans took to Vattell's theories so readily.\(^{14}\)

It would seem, considering this, that attempts by a few well-meaning whites to prevent the destruction of the Indians were inconsistent with the tenets of Vattell and the realities of the frontier. Surely most frontiersmen, not given to refinements of thought, considered them so. There is little doubt that these concerned whites felt that their ambitions for the Indians were more enlightened than those which the frontiersmen entertained. Yet the method by which whites hoped to protect the Indian depended utterly upon what the frontiersmen accomplished. Cultural reform was a continuation—albeit subtler—of the same process of destruction begun on the frontier. And although both parties liked to view themselves as competitors in determining the fate of the Indians, they were in fact cooperating in the same campaign. As the frontiersman sought to eliminate the presence of the native, the reformer sought to

\(^{13}\)This work was originally published in 1758 as Le Droit du Gens; ou, Principes de la Loi Naturelle. The translation most likely used in America was Emmerich de Vattell, The Law of Nations; or principles of the Law of Nature; applied to the conduct and affairs of Nations and Sovereigns [translator unknown] (New York: Berry and Rogers, 35 Hanover Square, 1787). See pp. 67 and 165 in this edition for remarks on the primacy of farming cultures.

\(^{14}\)American statesmen of the early nineteenth century, Calhoun included, showed a thorough familiarity with Vattell's work, and they regularly pressed his notions into service in their dealings with the Indians. Morse significantly included remarks on Vattell in his Report on Indian Affairs, p. 281.
eliminate his very identity. This is why there were few disputes between the forces of reform and interests in any of the Indian areas which threatened a real crisis of thought among the whites.

White humanitarians in America had long thought that the survival of the Indian depended upon the native's ability to imitate the society which was overwhelming him. Reformers had selected certain highly-valued elements of their culture which they felt were worthy of Indian adoption.

15 That men directly involved with the Indians on the frontiers took a less than philanthropic stand will be demonstrated later in these pages. As for the reformers, their comments about whites on the frontiers constituted a critique of their fellows in which frontiersmen were consistently portrayed as lower class, ill-educated, and generally avaricious. The presence of the missionaries in these Indian areas attested to the concern reformers had that only the "right kind" of whites could help the Indians out of their quandary. The only work that I am familiar with which addresses this question is Robert K. Berkhofer, Jr.'s, Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862 (New York: Atheneum, 1972), pp. 89-106 (hereafter cited as Berkhofer, Salvation and the Savage). Much work remains to be done on this interesting subject.

Bernard Sheehan's recent work is the most extensive on the question of Indian reform during this period. We disagree on the role which civilizing programs played in the over-all scheme of Indian affairs and policy. Sheehan takes these programs largely for what the whites imagine them to be: as philanthropic attempts to save the Indians from extinction. He accounts for the failure of these programs (and for their irregularity of application) by saying that "the main reason for the programmatic deficiencies of Jeffersonian philanthropy could be found in its basic optimism. The philanthropists had no more than an inkling of the obduracy of the task before them." This stand leads him to assert that there had long been a selfless desire by whites to convert the Indians, yet the work of Francis Jennings and Edmund S. Morgan has shown recently how programs of civilization in the colonial period were much more productive of subjugation than civilization. John Eliot's praying villages of Indians in Massachusetts and the so-called Indian college at Henrico, Virginia, serve as pertinent examples. Jennings' and Morgan's work, plus my own reading of the sources convince me that civilization programs were adopted precisely because they served the more important goals of dispossession and eclipse. Bernard Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), pp. 120, 122 (hereafter cited as Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction); Jennings, Invasion of America, pp. 240-244; and Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), p. 98.
Those most readily pressed into the cause of Indian protection were language, religion, and cultivation. Of these, Thomas Jefferson believed, cultivation promised the greatest return to the whites.\(^\text{16}\)

However beneficial whites believed their language and religion were to the Indians, it was evident that the immediate benefits to the whites of religious or linguistic conversion were small. The picture of ex-savages praying in English was doubtless an uplifting one, but the fondest sight of all was an Indian giving up his land. By transforming the native into a red yeoman, whites believed that they could strike at the heart of native solidarity. The newly-converted Indian would engage in the labor-intensive form of agriculture practiced by whites. Using "civilized" techniques, natives would begin to consume goods for which they had heretofore had the smallest use. The acquisition of new techniques and tools in turn demanded a different appreciation for the land they occupied. Needing only individual tracts rather than hunting parks engrossing miles of forest, the Indians' physical world would shrink to accord with that of the whites. The final dividend of a transformation by the means of cultivation was the ultimate destruction of tribalism. Being the obverse of white civilization, tribalism was the enemy of reform.

Reform had arisen in the first instance when whites became concerned by the rapid degeneration of the tribes who had been encircled by white settlements. These natives seemed simply to disintegrate, and by the 1820s many native areas in the East were little more than "slums in

\(^\text{16}\)DeRosier, *Removal of the Choctaws*, p. 28.
the wilderness," according to one close student of this period.\(^{17}\) Since Sir William Johnson's time, men had thought about somehow moving these endangered natives away from the deleterious effects of too intimate an association with frontier settlers. With the purchase of Louisiana, such a movement became possible. Prior to the purchase, Indians had ceded their lands in return for money or goods, both of which were quickly spent, leaving the Indians impoverished in their forest ghettos. It was suspected by white reformers that there would come a time in the degeneration process when it would no longer be possible to rescue the native from his decline and that extinction would soon follow. The presence of the Louisiana territory provided the time to arm the natives culturally against the white advance and its sorry effect upon them. New lands in the territory could be exchanged for threatened homelands east of the Mississippi River.

"Emigration"--as this notion was called--challenged neither the basic idea of civilization nor the ambitions of the frontiersmen to somehow wrest all lands from these Indians. President Jefferson believed that the very influences which had formerly convinced the Indians to cede land--the decline of game, the intrusion of white squatters, indebtedness, and social degeneration--could now be put to use to persuade the eastern Indians to move across the Mississippi.\(^{18}\)

Jefferson meant removal to be gradual and voluntary. Overt force was not to be used for the time being. Superficially, it appeared that


emigration was an idea born of the noblest intentions and thus was in direct conflict with the exterminationist sentiments on the frontier. In fact, emigration took its place in the white scheme of things and complemented these other notions. This gradualist policy justified all the more the necessity to extinguish every Indian claim east of the river, for Jefferson had no intention of giving Louisiana entirely to the Indians. If an exchange of land was to be the selling point in persuading the eastern Indians to move, the cost to the United States could be minimized by extinguishing land claims before the final exchange was arranged. In this way, fewer western lands would have to be given over to the Indians. Jefferson hoped that the eastern Indians would become indebted to the new government-supported trading posts. If the chiefs could be mired in debts, they would be all the more willing "to lop them [their debts] off by a cession of lands," Jefferson said. Thus, between removal by brute force and a happy jaunt to the west, there lay a range of coercive techniques which the whites had been developing for a good while and meant to bring into play in this case.19

The notions of civilization and emigration, although consonant with the less refined ideas on the frontier, constituted the most humanitarian view of the Indian and his problems in the early nineteenth century. From the American Revolution on, they were held with remarkable unanimity by white statesmen responsible for overseeing Indian-white relations. If their perceptions were so riddled with illusion and were conveniently self-serving, they nonetheless served as the foundation for beliefs which were acted upon with conviction and sincerity. Then as

19 Ibid.
now, however, the question was how effective a defense sincerity could be. Those who made Indian policy and formulated programs based upon these ideas took the only way they felt was open to them which would not bring down upon them the condemnation of history. Some editorial remarks by Hezekiah Niles in 1820 illustrate well the anxiety of enlightened convention to be vindicated by history. Niles wrote:

We do hope that a remnant of this people may be saved—that something may be done to stand as a monument of desire to prevent their extermination—to shew posterity, by irresistible evidence, that if our honest efforts to introduce them within the pale of civilization failed of success, the fault was in the character of the original possessors of the soil, not in ours.

We have several times spoken on this subject, for we are deeply interested in it, not more perhaps for the benefit of the Indians than on account of the national reputation. We desire to have something that will "tell well in history."^21

Thus the contest between white culture and history itself had been joined. All knew that the battle between civilization and savagism had been won.

II

The Superintendent of Indian Trade, Thomas L. McKenney, was in a hopeful mood. Having just spent some months working with the new Secretary of War, McKenney observed to Christopher Vandeventer about their secretary and Indian affairs, "Our excellent friend Mr. Calhoun has got

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Sheehan feels that white philanthropists were sincerely motivated; he writes that the "white man dealt with the Indian as he perceived him," and the implication is, of course, that the Indian received from white reformers as good a treatment as was available at the time. Yet there were those who on rare occasions placed themselves directly at odds with the ideas of both the frontiersmen and the reformers by taking what was perceived as an unprogressive and racially disloyal position. Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction, p. ix.

Niles' Weekly Register, December 30, 1820.
it in his power to promote the welfare of this people; and in doing so, to erect a monument to his memory." McKenney could not have been more wrong. Of all the problems Calhoun faced in his official life at the War Office, none was more resistant to his reforming impulses than that of Indian affairs. In his attempts to modernize the army, Calhoun confronted prejudices sufficiently long-standing to endanger his every program; and yet, compared to those he would encounter in his supervision of Indian affairs, anti-army sentiment was patently superficial.

Calhoun inherited Indian policies and programs which had been evolving without much real purpose since Knox's first administration. Officially, the United States had committed itself to the regulation of Indian trade and the monopolization of all land transactions between natives and whites. A series of trade and intercourse acts stipulated that all such activities be monitored and supervised by the War Department and its chief officer. Government agents were dispatched to several tribes in order to enforce these acts with the help of the local military commander. Working directly under the Secretary of War, the Indian agents (and sometimes sub-agents) policed private traders (to whom they issued licenses), settled disputes between races and tribes, negotiated treaties, and administered payments legally due the tribesmen as the result of past settlements.

Beginning in 1796, a system of government trading posts—or "factories" as they were called—was established to offer the Indians an

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22 Thomas L. McKenney to Christopher Vandeventer, June 21, 1818, Vandeventer Papers.

alternative to duplicitous private traders. More symbolic of official
benevolence than anything else, these factories never seriously threatened
private trading operations since the system was inadequately capitalized.
The system's nuisance value apparently was quite high, however, because
this arrangement was eventually destroyed by its private competitors.24

While Calhoun watched over relations with the tribes generally,
the Superintendent of Indian trade was responsible only for the factory
system. This officer was theoretically the government's wholesaler and
warehouseman for the goods which went out to the tribes through the fac­
tories. In practice, however, the Office of Indian trade in Georgetown
became a clearing house for intelligence about the tribes and their
affairs. Much could be told about the situation on the frontier from
the factors' letters to their Superintendent, and on occasion the Indian
agents wrote the Superintendent as well as the Secretary of War about
certain matters.25 Thomas L. McKenney had only been in office about a
year when Calhoun came to the War Department. A Quaker, a Marylander,
and a failed Georgetown businessman, McKenney was thirty-one years old
when he went into government service. He likely owed his appointment to
influence, for he was no expert on the Indians, and although he threw
himself into his duties with ardor, his views and opinions were based
upon an education far removed from the tribes themselves. His knowledge

24 Ibid. See also pp. 231-240 below.

25 Herman J. Viola, Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's
Early Indian Policy, 1816-1830 (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1974), pp. xi-5,
8-20, 26, for a summary of the day-to-day duties of the Superintendent
and the doings of his office. On the whole, Viola assumes a general
agreement on Indian affairs between McKenney and Calhoun and a far
greater impact upon Indian policy than I am willing to concede, as shall
be seen later in this chapter.
of Indians, gained during the course of his duties, came from occasional meetings with deputations of Indians in the capital on business. He did not get to the frontier himself until after Calhoun had left office. McKenney was nonetheless available to Calhoun on short notice; he possessed a fund of information and advice, and he was an impassioned advocate of Indian reform.26

There was little about the Indian policy of the Monroe administration to distinguish it from its predecessors. As the President made plain in his first annual address to Congress, the United States was still bound to extinguish the Indian claims to all lands east of the Mississippi, to persuade the Indians to move west, and to civilize them if possible. The over-all success of the Monroe administration in pursuit of these goals is best told by the number of Indian land cessions negotiated between 1817 and 1825. Under Calhoun's supervision the national government obtained forty-one cessions, while in the previous eighteen years only fifty-seven had been managed.27 Although Monroe acknowledged that it was necessary to make some provision "for the preservation, improvement, and civilization of the native inhabitants," he forthrightly defended the avid expansion which had made the Indians objects of concern. Looking forward to the settlement of the Mississippi basin, the President told Congress that "the rights of nature demanded it."28 And even though it was hardly likely that the westward movement

26Ibid.


would be hampered in the least by humanitarian concerns for the plight of the native, Monroe called upon Vattell for justification; he wrote:

The hunter state can exist only in the vast uncultivated desert. It yields to the more dense and compact form and greater force of civilized population; and of right it ought to yield, for the earth was given to mankind to support the greatest number of which it is capable, and no tribe or people have a right to withhold from the wants of others more than is necessary for their own support and comfort.  

Few whites would have cavilled with the sentiment expressed here, so unlimited were its assertions. Monroe's friend and predecessor, James Madison, wondered idly about the implications of the new executive's pronouncements. "It might also be not easy," Madison cautioned, "to repel the claims of those without lands, in other countries, if not in our own, to vacant lands within the U. S. likely to remain for a long period of years unproductive of human food." However, Monroe had no patience with such ruminations and he did not relent.

The President did not enlarge upon the foundations he laid for his Indian policy. As in most matters, he set general policy and let his underlings add substance as necessity arose. Reflecting the importance he assigned to dispossession and civilization, government functionaries devoted considerably more time, money, and energy to outright dispossession than to any sort of cultural transformation. Dispossession, either by means of emigration or outright land cessions, and civilization were presumably pieces of the same cloth; and if we are to believe the rhetoric of policy-makers, civilization was regarded more

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29 Ibid.
30 James Madison to James Monroe, December 27, 1817, Monroe Papers, LC.
highly until the balance between the two ideas frankly shifted in the
1830s to forced removal. Yet the real goal of government policies can
be seen in the appropriations having to do with these two programs. The
emphasis upon dispossession is evident. In 1819 Congress voted an annual
sum of ten thousand dollars for the education of Indian children.31 After
five years of operation, this program used something on the order of
twelve thousand dollars annually; yet private contributions in 1824 to
the same end—mostly coming from missionary societies—amounted to over
$170,000. The niggardliness of the government's participation becomes
evident when one considers that the expenses associated with but one
land cession could easily exceed that spent by the government on a program
which presumably lay at the heart of the policy of civilization.32

In his assiduous pursuit of Indian lands and his nominal dedica-
tion to the concept of civilization, Calhoun conformed with the priorities
laid down by his government, but during his first years in office Calhoun
seems to have entertained the notion that it was possible to satisfy
government priorities and reform the Indians' affairs at the same time.
His first inclination was to adopt the rhetoric of reform, and this was
one reason for McKenney's enthusiasm over Calhoun's appointment. The
Secretary's confidence matched that of the Superintendent. "Our system
in relation to the Indians," Calhoun told a missionary in 1819, "ought
to undergo an entire and radical change. The great point is, by

31 3 Stat. 516 (March 3, 1819).

32 Thomas L. McKenney, "Condition of the Indians," April 20,
1826, ASPIA, 2:669. The Georgia Creeks, in whose lands the national and
state governments were considerably interested, cost the Indian depart-
ment more than $20,000 in negotiation expenses during the year 1824
alone, and even then no cession was agreed upon.
instruction to prepare them to become a part of our community." But McKenney's remark that Calhoun had an opportunity to build a monument for himself made an observation more profound than the Superintendent intended. Calhoun was educated to the futility of reform only gradually. Five years after he made this remark, Calhoun had rejected the assimilationist ambitions which had been born of his optimism and had recommended the creation of an Indian enclave in the West in which the natives could be protected from white encroachment. The remainder of this chapter chronicles the progress of his change of heart.

Calhoun's first order of business was always the extinguishment of Indian land titles. The War of 1812 had provided a brief respite in the campaign to acquire Indian lands, but the war's end signalled a resurgence of interest. Between 1817 and 1825, thirty-one of the forty-six treaties negotiated by the government entailed tribal movement of some kind because of lands ceded. A great deal of this campaign against Indian title was conducted in the southern states, where the pressure of white population had created considerable hostility to native possession, and in the instance of Georgia, the United States had agreed by means of a compact with that state in 1802 to eliminate native possession

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34 John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, January 24, 1825, ibid., 9:516-517.
as soon as it could be done peaceably. As it happened, the natives in this area were the most numerous and cohesive of all the eastern woodlands Indians at the time. Collectively, they were known as the "Civilized Tribes," whose members were Cherokees, Choctaws, Creeks, and Chickasaws.

By Calhoun's time it had become almost axiomatic that when native groups were surrounded to the degree of the southern Indians, extinction was soon to follow. "Helplessness," he ventured, "has succeeded Independence." That being so, the debility of the encircled tribesmen made the pretense of treating the tribes as independent nations all the more absurd. "They neither are, in fact, nor ought to be, considered as independent nations," Calhoun observed. As Calhoun learned more and more about the wretched prospects of the Indians, his knowledge of their situation and the need to treat them as independent peoples clashed. In his first report to Congress on Indian affairs, Calhoun concluded that "it is only by causing our opinion of their interest to prevail that they can be civilized and saved from extinction." The paternalism which Calhoun's attitudes embodied was, in


37 The Seminoles are usually included as a distinct part of the Civilized Tribes, but the Seminoles were actually renegade Lower Creeks, or at least they were so regarded by the Creeks.

38 John C. Calhoun to Henry Clay, December 5, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:342.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., p. 350.
fact, hostile to any exercise of native independence. It made possible the use of coercive methods otherwise unthinkable.

Calhoun's was not a unique view. He had at his disposal a coterie of like-minded men who had close contact with the tribes. The most active were officers of the so-called "Indian Department" of the War Office, the agents and the regional Superintendents of Indian affairs (who were, with one exception, governors serving in an ex officio capacity). Keen to satisfy the land hunger of their constituents, these last officials were eager to cooperate with Calhoun on any program which promised dividends in Indian lands. Missionaries were attracted by the pagan souls, yearning to be converted. Private individuals from both races involved themselves for reasons which were best known only to themselves and about which Calhoun never inquired.

As long as none of these individuals threatened his own objectives, Calhoun unselfconsciously exploited them all. The first requirement for those who participated in Indian affairs was the support of the government. Calhoun felt no remorse about summarily dismissing a sub-agent because he "countenanced and aided the Indians" in their opposition to a proposed treaty. He accounted for this lapse of fidelity by the agent's marriage into the tribe. Of course, Calhoun had control over all those who operated in an official capacity among the tribesmen,

41The only difference of substance ever to arise between Calhoun and these governors concerned the speed at which the government's policy of dispossession was carried out. Not surprisingly, the most energetic and cooperative of these men was Governor Joseph McMinn of Tennessee, where a large population of Cherokees lived.

but since Calhoun took such a proprietary interest in the Indians, he insisted that outsiders hew to government policy also. The missionaries, requiring the good will of the government, were susceptible to Calhoun's influence. He let it be known that he expected from the missionaries, too, "a proper support of all its [the government's] measures, growing out of our best relations with these tribes, and prompted by our best policy." Because there was such racial and programmatic unanimity to begin with, there were few incidents of this kind, but they were all the more noticeable because of their rarity. Disloyalty of any kind was construed as an exploitation of the Indians' weakness, and Calhoun, along with other officials, was exceedingly close-minded about it. Indians who resisted government policy were considered in much the same way. The Secretary could not suppose, he said, "that those who make such violent opposition . . . are governed by a regard to the good of the [Indian] nation." To him there was little difference between white and native obscurantism.

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43 John C. Calhoun to Thomas L. McKenney, February 16, 1818, ibid., 2:241. After rumors were heard that a missionary had been working against the idea of emigration, the secretary of the missionary's board felt obliged to reaffirm his organization's support of government policy and assured Calhoun that those under his charge had been instructed "to withhold themselves sacredly from even colour of interference" with the government's designs. See Samuel Worcester to John C. Calhoun, February 6, 1818, ibid., 2:124-125.

44 See two letters from New York Representative David Ogden on the intrigues of one Jabez B. Hyde, a schoolmaster, against the emigration of the Six Nations. Ogden was torn between ignoring Hyde and prosecuting him under any law that could be found. David Ogden to John C. Calhoun, November 7, 1818, ibid., 3:255; and David Ogden to John C. Calhoun, November 24, 1818, ibid., 3:295.

45 John C. Calhoun to Joseph McMinn, July 29, 1818, ibid., 2:437.

46 See on this matter Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction, pp. 143-144.
If whites were generally agreed on the wisdom of the government's programs, the Indians certainly were not. Their opinions ran the gamut from those who were willing to forsake tribalism altogether and assimilate to those who threatened to kill Indian agents who advocated a program such as emigration. As Calhoun and others who had an interest in moving the tribes west increased pressure, native factions broke out which the Secretary always attempted to manipulate to the government's advantage. Having no qualms about ignoring lines of tribal authority, he placed his faith and his sanction in more pliable men who he thought would be able to educate the obstinate members of the tribe to his conception of their best interests.

In 1817 the Eastern Cherokees of Tennessee had agreed to an exchange of their lands for an equal acreage in Arkansas Territory. It is doubtful that the number of Indian assimilationists was very high at this time. Those who wrote to Calhoun, petitioning for individual headrights or expressing other assimilationist sentiments—such as an appeal for schools—certainly were not matched by letters arguing for tribal or territorial integrity. Letters of the former kind were, of course, much more pleasing to Calhoun, who may have let such letters, combined with the optimistic reports of his agents and the missionaries, shade his opinions of how well the Indians were progressing. My impression is that the resisting Indians were much less visible than the assimilationists, even though the former probably composed a majority of the tribesmen. See, as examples of assimilationists sentiments, Richard Brown to John C. Calhoun, January 14, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:57; Abraham Williams to John C. Calhoun, May 1, 1818, ibid., 2:273; and John Jolly to John C. Calhoun, January 28, 1818, ibid., 2:99.

Kappler, Indian Treaties, pp. 140-144. This agreement of July 8, 1817, was negotiated by Andrew Jackson at the Cherokee Agency, Tennessee, and it was the first treaty of exchange agreed upon after the war. It called for an equal exchange of lands and allowed those remaining behind 640 acres as "life estates." After the death of the family head, title would revert to fee simple. No date was fixed for the exchange, because the amount of lands involved was to be determined by a native census yet to be taken. Any monetary payment to the tribe as a result of the exchange depended upon the census also.
Although it appeared that a considerable number of Cherokees would make the move west quite soon, there was significant resistance from within the tribe. Established tribal authority was opposed to any precipitate emigration. In an attempt to circumvent tribal authority, white officials cooperated. Senator John Williams of Tennessee sent to Calhoun's office Major David Walker, a Cherokee chief who had been opposed to emigration. Now, Senator Williams believed, Walker's "friendship and aid can be procured." Williams suggested that Walker be given an appointment to help take a census required by the late treaty. "I wish you to have a confidential conversation with Major Walker on the subject," Williams told Calhoun. Walker represented himself well; he was given the appointment. A month later Calhoun told Governor Joseph McMinn of Tennessee that Walker "has entered warmly into the notion of emigrating ... it is a matter of great importance to keep him well affected to the removal of the Cherokees West of the Mississippi."^50

Official optimism that the treaty would soon be executed was dashed in early 1818 when rumors went out from the Cherokee towns that serious resistance was developing among the headmen of the tribe. As Governor McMinn was attempting to arrange a meeting with the Cherokees on the subject, Chiefs Path Killer and Charles Hicks called a meeting of the national council in which opposition to emigration was so dominant that it was resolved to put to death any Indian who advocated fulfillment of the treaty. It was said, furthermore, that any who tried

^50John C. Calhoun to Joseph McMinn, April 11, 1818, ibid., 2:241.
to emigrate stood in danger of having their lands confiscated on the pretext of "bad debts" to the nation. Since the amount each Indian was calculated to give up had a direct bearing upon how much he got across the river, this rumor was quite intimidating. 51

Major Walker returned from Washington just in time to accompany Governor McMinn into the Cherokee homelands to the town of Oostallanny. Walker was not much help. The governor's party was greeted, by his account, by two thousand very drunk and very hostile natives of the Southern and Underhill clans. If he even mentioned emigration, McMinn was told "they would chastise me with their light-horse [native police]." McMinn nevertheless tried to convince the Cherokee chiefs of the errors of their position, but Charles Hicks carried the standard of opposition and argued forcefully against the provision of the treaty which granted "life estates" to those who remained behind. This stipulation, Hicks said rightly, took the control of tribal lands away from the chiefs. Hicks reminded McMinn that the Cherokees were still an independent nation. All that McMinn could do was to propose a very large bribe and hope that this would cause the Indians to agree to move within two years. The chiefs flatly refused. McMinn laid the blame for the misfired treaty squarely upon Hicks and his party. "Were it not for these declarations," said the governor, "I should be able to enrol [sic] nearly their whole nation." 52

51 Joseph McMinn to John C. Calhoun, January 18, and June 8, 1818, "Extinguishment of Indian Title to Lands in Georgia," ASPIA, 2:281.

52 See McMinn's correspondence to Calhoun, detailing this incident in "Plan for Extinguishing the Cherokee Claim to Land in Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama," January 12, 1825, ibid., 2:526-529.
When Calhoun received McMinn's dispatches from Oostallanny, the Secretary allowed himself a fit of temper. He was shocked by the hostility which McMinn had encountered at the Indian town. His initial optimism disappointed, Calhoun told McMinn:

'It is in vain for the Cherokees to hold the high tone which they do, as to their independence as a nation, for daily proof is exhibited, that, were it not for the protecting army of the United States, they would become the victims of fraud and violence.'

If the Cherokee leaders wished to be independent-minded, he said, let them indulge themselves in the only place where that sort of conduct was possible—west of the river. "Let them reflect," Calhoun said heatedly, "how nation after nation have sunk before the United States, and they will see the necessity of coming into our views."

Calhoun was not content, however, merely to leave the Cherokees to their ruminations. In the months that followed, white officials were busy persuading Indian leaders and sounding out their reasons for opposition, and then bluntly appealing to their self-interest. Cherokee

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53 John C. Calhoun to Joseph McMinn, July 29, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:436.

54 John C. Calhoun to Joseph McMinn, July 29, 1818, ibid., 2:438-439. This is a different letter than the one previously cited. The first letter to McMinn on that day was Calhoun's immediate reaction, in which he simply vented his spleen against the Cherokee chiefs. The second was more moderate in its tones. It began, "after mature reflection . . ." 

55 The first order of business was to get the Cherokees to meet with McMinn and discuss the emigration question at all. The fact that such an agreement was made in the fall of 1818 was taken as a good sign that the Indian leaders' opinions were changing. See John C. Calhoun to Joseph McMinn, October 13, 1818, ibid., 3:200. McMinn thought all along that Hicks was the chief to convert; so great was his prestige, his conversion would perforce solve much of the opposition problem. See McMinn to John C. Calhoun, January 26, 1819, "Extinguishment of Indian Title to Lands, ASPIA, 2:482-483.
agent Return J. Meigs singled out Charles Hicks as the principal target for the government's campaign against resistance, and Meigs and McMinn sought to isolate Hicks from his fellow oppositionists in several meetings during late 1818. McMinn gave bribes to all the principal chiefs except Hicks and added to the cash the promise that when the treaty went through, those chiefs who cooperated would receive grants of land in fee simple for their pains. As Hicks watched his fellow chiefs defect, he too became more receptive to emigration. By the beginning of 1819 plans were in the making for the chiefs to visit Washington for discussions with Calhoun. McMinn informed Calhoun that Hicks was beginning to moderate his views:

His mind had, however, undergone a considerable change, insomuch as to be visible to many who attended the last conferences; and this change is to be accounted for, in a great degree, by the loss which the nation sustained in the selection of those persons named in my report of the 24th instant [in which McMinn stated the amounts of money given to each of the chiefs]. The remarks will particularly apply to [Major John] Walker, [Walter S.] Adair, and [Richard] Taylor; the latter having been in the employment of the United States for some time in attending the delivery of corn to the Arkansas settlers.

Thus, when the Cherokee delegates arrived in the capital, all of them had been seduced in some degree by the government. Hicks took the lead in the discussions with Calhoun, and the delegation's main concern seemed to be how much land was to be ceded and how the members of the delegation would be affected by the agreement. Calhoun meanwhile

56 Joseph McMinn to John C. Calhoun, January 24, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 3:519.
58 See Charles Hicks to John C. Calhoun, February 12, 19, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 3:569, 598-589.
pressed his advantage. "The tone of the nation has greatly altered," he observed. The Secretary said he sympathized with their desire for some guaranteed homeland in the East, but he cautioned the delegates in no uncertain terms:

To secure such great benefits, it is indispensable that the cessions which they make should be ample, and the part reserved to themselves should not be larger than is necessary for their wants and convenience. Should a larger quantity be retained, it will not be possible by any stipulation in the treaty, to prevent future cessions. So long as you may retain more land than what is necessary or convenient to yourselves, you will be inclined to sell and the United States to purchase; the truth of what I say you know cannot be doubted, as your own experience and that of all Indian nations, proves it to be true.

The Cherokee Treaty of 1819 was the first of two with which Calhoun was directly involved. Its provisions spelled out in detail the concerns of the chiefs; the bulk of the treaty had to do with the protection of their lands. In the document, these individuals were referred to as "persons of industry, and capable of managing their property with discretion." A list of names of the principal chiefs, detailing their property improvements, was appended. The provisions of the treaty of 1817 were reaffirmed, but no lands in addition to those already mentioned were ceded.

Calhoun obviously had ambitions to extinguish the entire Cherokee title during these negotiations, but he had fallen far short of that. As he predicted, the failure to rid themselves of all but their most necessary

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59 John C. Calhoun to Joseph McMinn, December 27, 1818, ibid., 4:428. Hicks protested that McMinn had misrepresented him, and that he had never been so opposed to the execution of the treaty as the Governor had said. See Hicks to John C. Calhoun, February 8, 1819, ibid., 3:555.


61 Kappler, Indian Treaties, p. 178-179.
lands would eventually cause the Cherokees a great deal of trouble. A residue of ill-will was created among the whites of the South which would lead to the forced removal of the Cherokees fifteen years later.

Calhoun's part in these proceedings is illustrative of the larger role he played as the nation's highest Indian officer. These negotiations were Calhoun's baptism of fire in Indian affairs, and during their course he countenanced acts which, in any other undertaking, he would have condemned as blatantly unscrupulous. While dealing with the Indians, Calhoun discovered an ability in himself to lay aside his principles for a time; these were the niceties of civilized intercourse only. In doing so, he could have made no clearer demonstration of the disdain he held for the legitimacy of the views which uncooperative natives had to offer, whatever the justice behind them. The denial of the native's ability to decide his own fate was the real price of the humanitarianism which Calhoun and other reformers then professed.

Because of their numbers, territorial claims, and the growing militance of the states involved, the southern tribes were particular objects of official concern. But every eastern tribe faced the possibility that they might be asked to give up their lands and move west. There were no official criteria which told Calhoun that the time for a tribe's removal was propitious, but when other political, speculative, and humanitarian groups evinced an interest in a particular tribe's removal, Calhoun was bound to act, if only to represent the government's position.

This was the case of the remnants of the once-great League of the Iroquois of New York. Altogether, the Six Nations occupied fourteen
reservations in New York state which engrossed more than a quarter of a million acres from the Mohawk valley west beyond the Finger Lakes, a distance of some two hundred and fifty miles in which the Indian presence was noticeable. A little more than 4,500 natives claimed aboriginal title to this vast estate. Such was their situation that unofficial interest groups fixed upon them as candidates for emigration even before the government did. Calhoun had no thought to initiate emigration talks with the Six Nations until private interests brought them to his attention.

Alarmed by the poverty, alcoholism, and violence among the Six Nations Indians, missionaries had been moving into their areas before the War of 1812. The missionary campaign coincided with the emergence of a revivalistic, anti-Christian religion among the Indians. For about twenty years Handsome Lake (Connediu), a Seneca Chief, had been preaching among the nations and had made considerable headway by the time he died in 1815. It would have been difficult for Handsome Lake to have devised a creed more opposed to the tenets of civilization as the missionaries and the government saw them. Led now by the remarkable Seneca Chief, Red Jacket, the Handsome Lake adherents were also suspicious that humanitarian interventionists served purposes uncongenial to their national welfare. Above all, the Handsome Lake religion dictated temperate self-reliance and tribal integrity, two concepts which ran directly contrary to the white outlook. For the missionaries, and later for Secretary

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63 John C. Calhoun to Jasper Parrish, March 14, 1818, ibid., 2:294.

64 Wallace, Death and Rebirth of the Seneca, pp. 321-337.

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Calhoun, one standard of how well civilization was being accepted was the lack of progress of this new apostasy.

The Ogden Land Company naturally was less interested in souls than the missionaries. Since the company had acquired the rights of preemption to Iroquois lands in 1810, the company stood to benefit if the Indians could somehow be persuaded that emigration was in their interests. And since the company had no portfolio to treat directly with the Iroquois, company directors attempted to manipulate tribal strife, missionary philanthropy, and in the end, Calhoun himself. The company stood a good chance of success in this last task. Several of the company's directors were at one time or another members of government themselves and were well connected in the capital. David B. Ogden, Robert Troup, James Wadsworth and Peter B. Porter all dealt with Calhoun on behalf of their company's interests.  

Calhoun first became involved in the affairs of the Six nations in 1818, when Congressman David Ogden told him that the Indians might be induced to emigrate if the government could find suitable western lands for their new settlements. Calhoun did as Ogden asked, but he had considerable evidence already that Ogden had misrepresented tribal sentiment. Only a short time before, a group of Six Nations Chiefs had let Calhoun know that they were apprehensive that the government was about to force a land exchange upon them. This was not true, and so he told

65Ogden, Troup, and Wadsworth were all large landowners and congressmen representing New York. Peter B. Porter was a former Secretary of War.

66See John C. Calhoun to David B. Ogden, May 14, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:293.

67Six Nations Chiefs to John C. Calhoun, January 1, 1818, ibid., 2:50.

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the chiefs. Calhoun's feeling that the Indians would be better off if they emigrated certainly applied to the Iroquois too, but he clearly did not see the Iroquois in the same light as the Cherokees. On the other hand, the recent Cherokee treaty was the very model of what the Ogden Land Company hoped to arrange.

Although the War Department received several other such memorials from anxious Iroquois during the course of the year, Calhoun's own convictions moved him to at least a partial association with the goals of the land company. When he found a place for the Iroquois in Arkansas Territory and the Iroquois rejected it as being too unhealthy for them, he reacted in much the same way he had when he had first heard of Cherokee resistance: he attributed opposition to "officious and designing men" influencing the tribesmen. Despite the continued attentions of the land company, the efforts of the missionaries, and even a blunt message from President Monroe, the Iroquois majority held firm in their refusal to move. Calhoun had explained the government's policy

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68 John C. Calhoun to Jasper Parrish, March 14, 1818, ibid., 2:294. In this letter, Calhoun outlined the government's intentions toward the Iroquois, which were simply that there was no plan to remove the Indians by force or otherwise, but that if sentiment existed favorable to emigration, the government would have no objection to it. The letter emphasized the voluntary aspect of emigration.

69 In November, 1818, a group of Oneida chiefs protested the idea of emigration, arguing that it would impede their progress toward civilization. The Oneidas, however, were the most thoroughly Christianized of the Six Nations, and thus the most receptive to government persuasion. See Oneida Chiefs and Warriors to John C. Calhoun, November 11, 1818, ibid., 3:262.

70 John C. Calhoun to David Ogden, August 19, 1818, ibid., 3:56.

71 In early 1819, President Monroe took the unusual step of addressing the Six Nations on their welfare. Probably in response to the protest from the Oneida Chiefs lodged earlier, Monroe told these Indians: "You cannot become civilized 'till you advance one step farther." That
that all such moves west were to be arrived at voluntarily and that the choice was up to the Indians. The Iroquois took him at his word, and, to Calhoun's mind, chose wrongly. 72

Already feeling the strains caused by white encirclement, the Iroquois had split into at least two groups, which were identified as the "Christian party" and the "Pagan party," the last of which drew its support from disciples of Handsome Lake and Red Jacket. The disagreement between the parties turned at least partially on how the Six Nations should confront the problems presented by white encroachment upon their lives and lands. Confronted now with the prospect of emigration, factional antagonism magnified considerably. The Christian party was the smaller of the two, and it was not initially unified on the emigration question. 73

Neither were the members of the Pagan party, but they were possessed of a creed which justified social resistance to white cultural

one step had to do with the division of their lands into family lots with titles in fee simple. James Monroe to the Six Nations, January 15, 1819, ibid., 3:499. Ogden and his company arranged, over Indian protests, a conference between the Six Nations and commissioners from New York to discuss emigration and the extinguishment of the Iroquois title, but the conference fell through. Interestingly, Calhoun appointed a federal representative to attend this state conference and oversee the welfare of the Iroquois. See John C. Calhoun to Morris Miller, March 27, August 17, 1819, ibid., 3:698, and 4:216. Calhoun was by no means happy that the state conference had misfired; on the contrary, he told Miller, "I only regret, that the Indians had not sufficiently understood their interest to have accepted the liberal offers."

72 John C. Calhoun to Jasper Parrish, March 14, 1818, ibid., 2:294.

73 As late as 1820, Jedediah Morse believed that all of the Iroquois were undecided on the issue of emigration, party notwithstanding. See Jedediah Morse to John C. Calhoun, May 31, 1820, ibid., 5:160. In 1824, after a considerable expenditure of missionary, speculative, and political effort, the most optimistic census of Christians among the Iroquois counted just less than 2,200, or less than half the total number. See Jasper Parrish to John C. Calhoun, February 5, 1824, ibid., 8:52-521.
influences, and thus they were more firmly set in their opposition to emigration, and, indeed, to civilization programs as well. The chances of whites manipulating the Pagan party were therefore more remote, while the Christians were at least not doctrinally opposed to white advice. Accordingly, it was the minority party of the Six Nations which won the sponsorship and patronage of white interests.

The cause of these interests won two important supporters in 1819, important because they were prepared to involve themselves directly with the internal affairs of the tribes in the name of the righteous mission. The first of these was an educated son of an Onondaga chief, Eleazar Williams, who had been working among the Oneidas as a Presbyterian lay-reader since 1815. Williams was at that moment falling under the spell of Episcopalianism as a result of the efforts of the Reverend Jedediah Morse. Williams was introduced to Calhoun by the Episcopal Archbishop of New York, J. H. Hobart. Hobart thought that Williams might be of some use in the difficult task of convincing the Iroquois to emigrate to the west, and Calhoun, ever mindful of the worth of any native assimilationist, agreed. At the same time that Williams was being brought to Calhoun's notice, Williams' new patron, Morse, was attempting to educate the New York authorities to the cause of philanthropy.

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74 See Wallace, Death and Rebirth of the Seceda, passim; and Berkhofer, Salvation and the Savage, pp. 131-132, for a discussion of the internal stresses upon the tribes and how they affected Iroquois politics.

75 See Morse's own account of Williams' conversion to Episcopalianism and Williams' background in Morse, Report on Indian Affairs, Appendix M, pp. 79-80, n; and Berkhofer, Salvation and the Savage, p. 132, for a modern appraisal. Williams is credited with having converted a substantial number of Oneidas to his newest creed as well as the outright conversion of some of the Pagan party.

Morse had become committed to emigration after a visit to that state's Indian towns in 1819, and he was interested in removing and civilizing as many natives as he could lay hands on. Sordid and humanitarian interests converged as Morse enlisted the aid of the Ogden Land Company. After a meeting with David Ogden in Albany, Morse went about his business with the company's happy sanction, not to mention influence. Ogden wrote to Calhoun about Morse:

> It is his intention to be at this place [Albany] at the Meeting of our Legislature early the next Month, to obtain a Law authorizing the Executive of this State, to co-operate with that of the United States, in adopting such measures as may promote his Benevolent views; he then proposes visiting Washington to develope [sic] his plan and solicit the aid & patronage of the General Government.77

Blessed with such an upright ally as Morse, the company tried to make sure that Morse received a proper hearing in the capital. Another director of the company, Robert Troup, asked Senator Rufus King to use his influence on Morse's behalf. Troup wrote:

> I am informed that Dr. Morse, and his friend Mr. Williams— an Indian Catechist of the Oneida tribe— are at Washington in prosecution of their plan for civilizing the Indians, by getting them to concentrate on some particular reservation or remove farther West. Such is also supposed to be the plan of the government; and it is one that would promote the interest of my self and friends owning the reservations in this State. As far as you can with propriety favor the success of Dr. Morse with your advise & influence, I should be happy if you would do it.78

From all points of view except the Indians', Morse's and Williams' visit could hardly have been more successful. Morse received a commission from the President to begin the tours of the Indian nations

77 David B. Ogden to John C. Calhoun, December 10, 1819, ibid., 4:475.

78 Robert Troup to Rufus King, February 16, 1820, King Correspondence, 6:275.
which would eventually result in the publication of his report on Indian affairs in 1822. Calhoun's instructions to Morse reflected the government's general concerns at the time. Morse was charged to gather information in order "to devise the most suitable plan to advance their civilization and happiness." Calhoun wanted summaries on each tribe's condition "in a religious, moral, and political point of view," their customs, and significantly, "the character and disposition of their most influential men." An accounting of the number and character of all the missionary schools was to be made also.  

As for Williams, Bishop Hobart had well prepared the Onondagan's way. Calhoun was predisposed to take advantage of any Indian assimilationist in behalf of his goals, but it was obvious to the Secretary that Williams was no ordinary native. "It is more desirable to make use of the Indians themselves to bring about so great a change," Calhoun said, "and where a native so intelligent as Williams, can be found, much good may be effected by giving a proper direction to his zeal." Hobart had suggested boldly that Calhoun purchase Williams' support by appointing the Indian to "an authoritative superintendence over them," in order to secure to the government the aid of his "important services." Calhoun followed Hobart's advice and gave Williams a special commission of his own. The Secretary allowed Williams several hundred dollars and the support of the War Department to conduct a number of Iroquois on a tour

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79 John C. Calhoun to Jedediah Morse, February 7, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4:648-649.
of the Great Lakes to search for colonization sites. This was as good as an announcement of the War Department's hopes for the Iroquois.

Williams' subsequent activities took place against a background of ever-stiffening resistance by the Pagan party. Williams and his fellow Christians had been patronized indirectly by the national government from the start, but the New York state legislature voted several thousand dollars to aid in the emigration of those Indians who chose to move, and of course the Christians had the moral support of missionaries such as Morse. The more evident it became that the minority party had the favor of white interests, the more obstinate were the Pagan party members. In 1822 Williams arranged for the right of settlement around Green Bay with the Menomini and Winnebagos. Calhoun and Monroe quickly voiced their approval, but a convocation of the Six Nations chiefs did not.

Indians and whites alike identified Red Jacket as the champion of the opposition. David Ogden, chagrined by the failure of Williams' treaty at the central council, laid the blame squarely on Red Jacket and explained the old chief's views to Calhoun:

The Pagan Party, being the most numerous, and being led by Red Jacket, whose Talents give him a powerful ascendancy, control the affairs of the Seneca Nation. He lays it down as a principle, that no Indian Nation has ever adopted Civilization, without becoming merged, in the White Population, & losing their National Character and respectability. He asserts that an Indian is incapable individually of providing for himself, or of taking care of his Property, & he Cites himself as an example of this.

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82 John C. Calhoun to Eleazar Williams, February 9, 1820, ibid., 4:656.

83 David Ogden to Christopher Vandeventer, March 2, 1822, ibid., 6:723.

84 Jasper Parrish to John C. Calhoun, June 22, 1822, ibid., 7:178.

85 David B. Ogden to John C. Calhoun, May 9, 1822, ibid., 7:103-104.
Until 1822 white patronage did not fix upon a particular segment of the Iroquois: any Indian who took the white line could count on the affections of interested whites. This allowed for the greatest number of defections from the opposition. But as the dispute between the parties intensified, such hopes of mass desertions dwindled. Regardless of the views of the Indians, they were still loyal to the decisions of the central council of the League, and there Red Jacket was in control.

Red Jacket and his party began to apply pressure of their own kind against the presence of both white ideas and persons; and the Christians, among whom the greatest inroads had been made by these influences, Red Jacket believed, were the first who needed pressuring. Rumors went out that all those who emigrated against the wishes of the council would have their lands confiscated along with any improvements which had been made upon them. Since the Christians were the least propertied of the Iroquois to begin with, this was an important consideration. It was said, furthermore, that those who went west might lose any claim to proceeds from future land sales or government annuities. Several Christians attested to Red Jacket's new animosity toward them when they told Calhoun that "were it not for Red Jacket and Captain Cole [another Pagan leader] we believe there would be [no opposition]. These men are opposed to us in all our ways." Red Jacket and his party had also

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86 David B. Ogden to John C. Calhoun, May 9, 1822, ibid., 7:103-104. Parrish was informed definitively by the Six Nations Chiefs that if some of their tribesmen were bent on moving west, it would have to be done without tribal money, and that it was indeed true that the leaders of the League would consider whether any future monies would be allotted to the emigrants. Jasper Parrish to John C. Calhoun, June 22, 1822, ibid., 7:178.

87 Jasper Parrish identified the Christian party as the group most amenable to government policies. Jasper Parrish to John C. Calhoun, November 29, 1821, ibid., 6:543. See also Colonel Pollard [a Christian party leader], Silver Smith, Big John, et al, to John C. Calhoun, June 19, 1820, ibid., 5:199.
begun a campaign to rid the reserves of direct white influence as well. Already one Baptist minister had been forced to leave the Buffalo reserve, and there was talk that the Pagan party was asking the local District Attorney to remove yet another. The Christians and their sponsors were being assailed from all sides. 88

The government of the Six Nations was already a democratic legend in the United States, praised (if in an off-handed way) by Benjamin Franklin at the Albany Congress, and much later by Calhoun himself in his Disquisition on Government. But the majority decisions of the central council, however admirable theoretically, did not prevent Calhoun and other whites from condemning these decisions. For the time being, Calhoun thought democracy was admirable only if it was the product of civilized minds. 89

New subtleties began appearing in the communications of those committed to the government's views. These remarks forecast a change in the official attitude toward the parties of the Six Nations. Describing the Iroquois factions after the Williams treaty had been rejected, sub-agent Jasper Parrish said that the two parties were "at variance upon almost every issue," but, he added, "the most respectable part of the

88 Zecharaiah Lewis, Domestic Secretary of the United Foreign Missionary Society in New York, informed Calhoun of these proceedings, and innocently recommended that Calhoun merely tell the pagans to quit bothering the missionary. Zecharaiah Lewis to John C. Calhoun, September 2, 1822, ibid., 7:264.

"Chiefs" were Christians who were happy to take the government's advice. Parrish recommended that President Monroe take a hand in the dispute. Calhoun laid the matter before Monroe and later conveyed to Parrish the news that the President "views their [the Pagans'] conduct with marked disapprobation." The Pagans' lack of "respectability" had robbed their actions of legitimacy in the eyes of the government's officials. Further explaining his own and the President's disapproval of the tribal strife, Calhoun instructed Parrish to tell the Pagans:

The [educational and religious] institutions in the Six Nations, having been established with the consent of a number of the most respectable Chiefs, and with the approbation of the government, a continuance of the violent opposition which they have lately manifested towards them, against which the wish of so many of their own people, and that of the government, will be considered as highly unjust to the former and disrespectful and offensive to the latter; that if they do not choose, themselves, or their children, to profit by them, it is an act of selfishness and injustice to attempt to deprive those of their people that do.

In his attempt to intimidate the Pagans by shaming them, Calhoun was cheered on by the supporters of the government policy. Peter B. Porter, one of the Ogden directors, was convinced that "the difficulties now existing amongst our Indians, are principally to be ascribed to Red Jacket, who is a man of great talents, and a great intriguer." Porter urged Calhoun to persevere, and sternly, in his present course.

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90Jasper Parrish to John C. Calhoun, January 11, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 6:616.
91John C. Calhoun to Jasper Parrish, September 6, 1822, ibid., 7:266-267.
92Ibid.
93Peter B. Porter to John C. Calhoun, October 21, 1822, ibid., 7:266-267.
In September, 1822, for the first time, Calhoun decided to wed the government to the Christian party explicitly. He wrote to the Christian party leader, Young King: "While you pursue this wise course, you will always receive the approbation and support of the government." But the Secretary's frank alliance with the minority party only seemed to encourage the growth of the Pagan party. Early in 1823 leaders of the two factions traveled to Washington to meet with Monroe and Calhoun. The Christians may have entertained the hope that the President and the Secretary of War could persuade the Pagans to relent in their purges of white influences on the reserves and in their opposition to emigration. But Red Jacket, who made the visit over the objections of the Christian delegates, wanted nothing at all from Calhoun. For his part, the Secretary made clear to the delegation that if any compromising was to be done, it would have to be the Pagans who gave in. He told the delegation:

You say there are two paths—one for the Whiteman and another for the red man. This was the case and did well enough many years ago . . . but now . . . necessity will eventually compel the Red man to leave his path and travel in that of the whiteman.

Later in a private interview with Calhoun, Red Jacket was not in the least contrite about his refusal to be guided by the government's opinion of his welfare. "He appears to be inveterately opposed to removal and declared it to be his intention to live and die on the lands

95 Jasper Parrish to John C. Calhoun, October 21, 1822, ibid., 7:311-312.
he now occupies," Calhoun observed.°" Doubtless, Calhoun would have liked to persuade the old chief otherwise, but Red Jacket was one of the most experienced Indian diplomatists then living. Moreover, Calhoun was limited by the necessity of sustaining the myth of voluntarism. Some actions on behalf of Indian welfare were difficult enough to justify on the grounds of philanthropy, but to have even hinted at the use of official force would have called the entire concept into question.

Thus the majority party continued its purges of white influences in the Seneca areas where they were the strongest. By Calhoun's last year in office Parrish was reporting to the War Office that the Pagans intended "to dissolve the compact entered into between the Indians & the Missionary Society and break up their Establishment altogether."° The Reverend Thomson Harris, one of those harassed missionaries, asked his Christian charges to plead his case before the central council, but to no avail. Harris' plaintive report to Jasper Parrish on the council proceedings was a testament to the vitality of the Pagan party. Harris wrote:

The Chiefs of the Christian Party have requested me to inform you that they have experienced a severe defeat in the transactions which have lately occurred here. Red Jacket, they say, is at length permitted to triumph. He has trampled them under foot.°°

The Pagan party was not inclined to stop with the missionaries.

Sub-agent Jasper Parrish, like Calhoun himself, had so thoroughly

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97 John C. Calhoun to Thomas L. Ogden, March 15, 1823, ibid., 7:524.


99 Thomson Harris to Jasper Parrish, March 10, 1824, ibid., 8:572.
identified himself with the Christian party that he had alienated the most powerful segment of the Six Nations and was clearly no longer of much use to the entire native population. Several times, the Pagans asked that Parrish be replaced with someone who would enjoy their confidence as well as the government's and the Christians'. Thomas McKenney was now installed as the new Superintendent of Indian affairs, but he replied with Calhoun's voice in a way that was tantamount to the breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Iroquois hierarchy.

McKenney told Parrish not to fear for his position:

The Government condemn [sic] the proceedings of the Pagan party; and consider [sic] them hostile to the interests and prosperity of the Six Nations. No attention is due, and none will be paid, to the representation of Red Jacket and his party, they being not only hostile to the views of the larger, and more respectable portion of the Six Nations, but also to their own interests, and to the recognized policy of the government towards them.

The Cherokee and Iroquois cases were but two pieces in the huge mosaic of Indian affairs. Calhoun dealt with a multiplicity of other eastern tribes, and as he did so he became more convinced than ever that his view of their best interests should prevail, as though the social debilities of the natives somehow diminished the legitimacy of their

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100 The Pagan party had been trying to rid themselves of Parrish for some time. In August, 1822, the central of the Six Nations held at Tonowanda condemned Parrish and his interpreter, Horatio Jones, and demanded their removal, making in the process several charges against them both. Calhoun laid on an investigation, but he significantly appointed General Peter B. Porter, an Ogden Land Company director and friend of the beleaguered Parrish to conduct the inquiry. Porter found that the charges against the sub-agent were "without foundation." See Peter B. Porter to John C. Calhoun, September 23, 1822, and January 6, 1823, ibid., 7:276-277, 407; and also Younnontalae, et al to James Monroe, April 5, 1824, ibid., 9:15.

101 Thomas L. McKenney to Jasper Parrish, April 9, 1824, ibid., 9:25.
views.  Thinking that the eastern tribes were on the very eve of
their extinction—an extinction which would not "tell well in history"—
Calhoun and his fellow reformers sought to "save" the Indian and also
themselves.

Setting out on this noble mission, involved whites were occa­
sionally uneasy about the less than noble methods which they used to try
to persuade the Indian to accept reform. Even the classic Indian-hater,
Andrew Jackson, was anxious lest these methods somehow impugn those who
used them. Jackson wrote:

The Strength of our Nation is now sufficient to effect any object
which its wisdome [sic], humanity and justice may please to adopt
with regard to those unfortunate people. And it is now discovered
that no thing can be done with the Indians without corrupting their
Chiefs—this is so inconsistant with the virtue, and principles
of our Government, it is high time the Legislature should interpose
its authority and enact Laws for the regulation and control of the
Indian Tribes.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, white reformers continued to believe that somehow the
Indians were not fit subjects for the exercise of scruples, and philan­
thropy itself was their justification. Thus assured, Calhoun and his
subordinates used bribes, threats of one kind or another, and recruited
pliable Indians, gullible missionaries, and self-interested businessmen
in order to interfere wantonly in the internal affairs of tribes marked
by one interest or another.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² The most recent and detailed study of one tribe's experience
with philanthropy is DeRosier's Removal of the Choctaws. The techniques
of manipulation war are admirably discussed within Sheehan's Seeds of
Extinction.

¹⁰³ Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, August 24, 1819, Calhoun
Papers, 4:271.

¹⁰⁴ At one time or another Calhoun threatened to withhold annuities
and to withdraw protection from white intruders on Indian lands if the
tribes did not accede to his wishes. The cutting of roads through tribal
territories was a reliable means of intimidation as well. A list would
be very nearly endless.
It was in the East that the rhetoric of philanthropy was given its fullest play; western whites tolerated little pretense of charity toward the Indians, and although they were forced to treat the natives with more circumspection, the currency of Indian-white relations in the West was force, violence, and chicanery.

If only because population and the government had not yet overwhelmed the Indians of the West, the opportunities for manipulation, in whatever cause, were fewer here. Calhoun recognized that the case of the western tribes was different from that of those in the East, not only because the western Indians still retained their "original character and customs," as Calhoun said, but also because of the character of the frontiersmen themselves. 105

The ordinary hostility between the races proved difficult enough for Calhoun even to keep up with, much less to influence. Calhoun's sense of justice was offended when he found out that while white murderers of Indians generally went unpunished, Indian murderers of whites rarely survived to stand trial. 106 Even in areas where Calhoun officially had control, it was all the Secretary could do to oversee the dispensation of justice for Indian defendants. When two soldiers were murdered by Winnebagos, Colonel Henry Leavenworth told Calhoun that he would not "trouble with civil authority," and hinted elsewhere that he

105 John C. Calhoun to Henry Clay, December 5, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:346.
would "Jacksonize" the Indians once they were found.\textsuperscript{107} After an Indian family was murdered on the western Ohio, however, Calhoun was forced to take the extraordinary step of paying for guards for the captured white offenders for fear that they would be rescued from jail before trial.\textsuperscript{108}

As if conflict between whites and Indians were not enough, widespread wars between tribes on the prairies also erupted; at least one of these clashes seemed to owe its origins to the effects of emigration. The so-called "western" Cherokees, who had moved to the Arkansas territory before the War of 1812, were engaged for several years in hostilities against the Osages. The sudden appearance of the Cherokees in an area where there was already a delicate cultural balance may have set off the sporadic violence which so plagued white officials and threatened white settlers.\textsuperscript{109}

In the northernmost reaches of the western territories, however, a wholly different situation obtained. There, most of the tribesmen had

\textsuperscript{107} Henry Leavenworth to John C. Calhoun, May 14, 1820, ibid., 5:117; and Henry Leavenworth to Daniel Parker, June 10, 1820, ibid., 5:171.

\textsuperscript{108} See John Johnston to Thomas L. McKenney, December 22, 1824, ibid., 9:459.

\textsuperscript{109} While Army officers were attempting to quell the violence between the Cherokees and Osages, Niles' Weekly Register reported that the Indians seemed well disposed toward the whites and seemed to attribute this development to the wars between the tribes. "They are at war with other Indian tribes and ever will be at war with one another unless their thirst for blood be not turned against the whites by a general peace among themselves, which has been too often effected by a mistaken philanthropy existing at Washington!!" See Niles' Weekly Register, July 4, 1818; and also a dispatch from an Army officer attempting to effect such a peace as Niles feared, William Bradford to John C. Calhoun, July 8, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:366. Aside from hostilities between the Cherokees and Osages, there were, at one time or another during this general period, wars between the Chippewa and Sioux, between the Winnebago and the Pottawatomies, between the Winnebagos and the Kickapoos, and incessant skirmishing.
been British allies during the late war and what peace existed from the
Great Lakes to St. Louis was maintained only by precarious treaties
negotiated since Ghent.\textsuperscript{110} Having won the territory, the United States
now hoped to win the trade of the area as well. Americans were sensi-
tive, therefore, to the slightest hint of a continued British presence
or foreign influence among the Indians with whom the lucrative fur trade
was carried on.

Officers and agents of government pointed to British encroach-
ment—real or imagined—at every opportunity. Doubtless influenced by
the bitterness hanging over from the war, Americans automatically con-
sidered every foreign trader as a British agent provocateur. Agent
Benjamin O'Fallon arrived at Prairie du Chien (formerly a British fur-
trading post) in 1817 and was greeted, so he said, "by numerous British
traders . . . whose conduct during the late Indian war was the most
unprincipled, the most inhuman, and disgraceful to civilized man." He
was convinced that "the faithless Mackinac traders" were alienating the
Indians against all Americans. These men, he believed, had encouraged a
band of Chippewas "to massacre and rob" him, and he was certain that had
not a party of friendly Sioux arrived to protect him he would have been
the worse for wear.\textsuperscript{111} The remotest American Indian agent at the time

\textsuperscript{110} The Treaty of Spring Wells, for instance, September 8, 1815,
allowed pardons to Indians who allied with Britain during the war in
exchange for a promise of loyalty to the United States. Those tribes
participating included bands of Wyandots, Delewares, Senecas, Shawnees,
Miams, Chippewas, Ottawas, and Pottawatomies in Ohio and Michigan and
Indiana territories. Spring Wells was just one of a welter of treaties
of friendship negotiated with the Indians of the northwest after the
war. See "Treaties with Twenty-One Tribes," December 6, 1815, \textit{ASPIA},
2:12-25.

\textsuperscript{111} Benjamin O'Fallon to Governor William Clark, May 10, 1817, in
wrote from the outpost of Michilimackinac in no uncertain terms:

The object and policy of the British Government in their Indian relations cannot be mistaken. . . . [It is] to alienate the Indians from the American Government and people, to attach them to the British Interests by every and by any the [sic] most insidious means.112

In their eagerness to assert American power in the Northwest, many westerners did not bother to separate the actions of the British Indian department from those of private British subjects who operated in the area. The Indians contributed to American suspicions by making occasional pilgrimages each year to British posts on the Great Lakes. At Fort Malden, opposite Detroit, and at Drummond's Island, not far from Mackinac Island, British agents welcomed Indians from the United States with traditional gifts meant to cement good relations between themselves and the natives. This practice continued for much of the decade following Ghent, much to the chagrin of Lewis Cass, Michigan's territorial governor. In one of the first of his many letters complaining of these visits, Cass told Alexander Dallas, then Secretary of War, that he had "every reason to believe that the Indian Department opposite to us are about to adopt the same systematrick [sic] course of measures which they have so long and so successfully pursued"—that of estranging Indians from Americans by means of lavish gifts and trade.113


113 Cass estimated "that at least Three [sic] thousand Indians have visited Malden this season and that the quantity of goods, of arms, and of ammunition which has been distributed to them greatly exceeds anything which they have heretofore received for the same term, either in peace or war." By the next year (1820), the number of visiting Indians had doubled. See Lewis Cass to John C. Calhoun, October 8, 1819, and December 16, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4:367, and 5:497; and Lewis Cass to Alexander J. Dallas, June 20, 1815, Thwaites, Wisconsin Historical Collections, 19:377.
Causing even more concern, however, was the campaign to the West then being mounted by fur trading companies in the area, and the fact that there were so few Americans actually engaged in the trade. John Jacob Astor's South West Fur Company (soon to become the American Fur Company), though nominally an American concern, regularly used the more experienced émigrés of French and Indian extraction to carry on the business of the trade. With better and cheaper goods, the British traders had little difficulty in dominating the market. Astor's company,

114 Astor had arranged with the North West Company after the war ended to assume operations in American territory; in the process of doing so, he inherited virtually all of the personnel of the old company who, according to one source, were all Canadians of one stripe or another. Astor professed to believe that Americans "will not submit to the hardships and habits of living which they have to endure" in the Indian trade. Although it was true that Canadians had more experience in the trade, Astor had other reasons for wanting to use the Canadians. His agreement with the North West Company had stipulated a five-year partnership, provided the American government did not prohibit such an arrangement. Astor told Monroe, then Secretary of State, that he hoped that such a prohibition would be made. Then, he would succeed to the trade and company facilities below the border, and the North West Company could have little to say about it. See John Jacob Astor to James Monroe, December 30, 1816, quoted in Kenneth W. Porter, John Jacob Astor: Business Man, 2 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), 2:691 (hereafter cited as Porter, Astor). See also Henry Schoolcraft, Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes On the American Frontiers (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., 1851), pp. 485-486 (hereafter cited as Schoolcraft, Memoirs).

Factor George Sibley at Fort Osage gave it as his opinion that "a prejudice has already gone among the Indians that the American cannot make goods of a good quality. They believe that all blankets, cloths, &c. of common quality, are of American manufacture, and that the British only make the best kind. The traders tell them that there are none but American goods for sale at the factory, and that, although they are sold at low prices, they are, nevertheless, very dear, considering the quality; but that their goods are of the real British kind." George Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, January 3, 1818, "Operations of the Factory System," ASPIA, 2:363. Indian Agent Thomas Forsyth at St. Louis went even farther: he believed that goods on the open American market were even better than those at the factories. See Thomas Forsyth to John C. Calhoun, April 22, 1833, Calhoun Papers, 7:59.
plus the formidable Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, moreover, were all heavily capitalized.¹¹⁵

Competing with all these concerns, and poorly, were the government trading posts, the "factories," which were supposed to provide a humane alternative to the less than philanthropic private traders. When Calhoun came into office, there were only three such trading houses in the far north, at Green Bay, Chicago, and Prairie du Chien.¹¹⁶ Because these government establishments were forbidden to deal in whiskey or credit, the Indians did not hold them in much esteem.¹¹⁷ The factories

¹¹⁵ Thomas McKenney's best estimate of the capitalization of the North West Company alone exceeded one million dollars. It was reported in 1820 that the best market value of the furs collected by that company in that year was more than $700,000. See Thomas McKenney to John C. Calhoun, December 31, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:442; and Thomas S. Jesup to John C. Calhoun, April 26, 1820, ibid., 5:76-77.

¹¹⁶ There were five other factories besides these three: Fort Mitchell; Chicasaw Bluffs; Fort Confederation; Fort Osage; and Sulphur Forks. The operating capital for the factory system was set at $300,000. Since the factories were supposed to pay for themselves, this principal was not supposed to be touched. In addition, the salaries for the factors was a separate annual appropriation which, by 1818, was set by Congress at almost $20,000. See John C. Calhoun to Henry Clay, December 5, 1818, ibid., 3:344.


On the matter of the government houses refusing credit, one official close to the business attributed this refusal to the failure of the factories. Ninian Edwards, then territorial governor of Illinois, argued that advancing native hunters enough goods to make the winter's hunt was the traditional practice in the northwest territories. Trapping fields were even then as much as 300 miles away from the factories. Indians did not wish to leave their families in the wilderness while they trekked back with furs to sell for more provisions. Moreover, it was the long-standing custom of the area for the Indians to sell furs to whomever had advanced them credit. Edwards pointed out that the engagés who worked the area were also more adept at trade because of their mobility and aggressiveness. "If we want to go into competition with them," he told the Secretary of War, "then we must do the same." See the notes appended to the letter by Ninian Edwards to William Crawford, November, 1815, in "Indian Trade and Intercourse," ASPIA, 2:66.
were also fixed to one location and their native customers had to go to
them, whereas the private traders pursued the Indians into the wilder-
ness. The Chicago factory, although well situated to interdict the
Indian portage from Lake Michigan to the Upper Mississippi, did not do
enough business during one six-month period to pay the factor's salary
of $650.\textsuperscript{118} To Superintendent of Indian Trade Thomas McKenney, the
factories were a means whereby the government could protect the Indians
"from oppression," and any interference with the Indians by private
traders was harmful. It made little difference to him that some traders
might be working for an American company and others for a British com-
pany, or still others were totally independent.\textsuperscript{119} He attributed to
them all the downfall of the Chicago factory and said to Calhoun:

The cause which has so successfully prostrated the once flourishing
hopes of this establishment is so notorious as hardly to need refering [sic] to. It lies deep in the influence (principally
British) which is spread so generally over that region and in the
combinations which have been entered into to do away, from amongst
the Indians inhabiting that Country, whatever control the U.S. may
easy to acquire over them, either by the Factory or any other system.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{118} Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, July 7, 1820, Calhoun
Papers, 5:243.

\textsuperscript{119} Prucha argues that, contrary to what McKenney believed, there
were considerable differences between the small, independent trader, the
so-called "whiskey traders" (actually peddlers), and the company men.
Prucha infers that Astor's men did not use liquor in their trade, but
offers no evidence. The fact that Astor once petitioned the government
to allow him to use liquor in order to combat the operations of rivals
does not mean that he was not using it himself. Making the practice
legal could have saved a great deal of trouble and money, and Astor was
always looking out for a way to cut costs. There is no doubt that liquor
was very nearly a necessary part of doing any business with the Indians.
Even McKenney acknowledged that, all things being equal, the trader with
the whiskey got the business. See Prucha, American Indian Policy, pp. 110-
111; and Hiram Martin Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West,
Chittenden, The American Fur Trade).

\textsuperscript{120} Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, July 7, 1820, Calhoun
Papers, 5:243.
But because the American factory system was inadequately capitalized, the government of necessity had to allow private business to operate, lest the proceeds of the fur trade (in money and in influence over the Indians) fall back into British hands. The palladin of the new American fur trade in this area was John Jacob Astor, whose western headquarters was Mackinac Island. This made the island truly a hardship post for the agents stationed there, and it was from them that McKenney and Calhoun formed their opinions of the effects of private trade upon the Indian.  

Since the end of the war, Astor had been by no means hesitant to operate the way he pleased in the northern territories. The Indian agents who were supposed to control the private trade through a licensing system were rightly intimidated by the power of Astor's company. When a new law was passed giving President Madison discretionary power over the licensing of foreigners in the trade, Astor pleaded with Madison to give him the authority to issue the permits. The agent at Mackinac Island was aghast. "I wish to God the President knew this man Astor as well as he is known here," the agent remarked. "Licenses would not be placed at his disposal."  

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121 Astor's reputation for sharp trading did not make him the most popular man in the West, but it did reflect the power he and his company wielded. No doubt his willingness to go over the heads of local agents did little to improve his image. McKenney was the recipient of all sorts of complaints about Astor. See, for instance, Thomas L. McKenney to George Graham, March 19, 1817; William Puthuff to Lewis Cass, June 20, 1816; and Talbot Chambers to Willoughby Morgan, September 19, 1817, in Thwaites, Wisconsin Historical Collections, 19:452, 423-424, 478-479; and also Schoolcraft, Memoirs, 485-486.  

122 William Puthuff to Lewis Cass, June 20, 1816, Thwaites, Wisconsin Historical Collections, 19:423.
Armed with reports from the upper Mississippi that "the blackest of characters" were regularly being issued licenses, Superintendent McKenney managed to convince President Monroe to suspend the licensing authority of the agents in November, 1817. Astor, however, had only the remotest interest in the character of his employees, and he was not about to let this threat go unchallenged. Astor himself called first in Washington and, failing to see Calhoun, later sent one of his most trusted associates, Ramsay Crooks, to the capital "to ascertain definitively the ground on which private citizens engaged in this trade are to be placed." Crooks apparently had his interview with Calhoun in mid-March, 1818, during which he handed Calhoun a letter from Astor which complained of the interference in his trade by government officers. If this sort of harassment continued, Astor said, it would be "ruinous" to the company. A few days after Crooks and Calhoun talked, the Secretary issued new regulations to all the territorial governors to allow foreigners licenses as interpreters and boatmen. For all purposes Calhoun had re-created the wide-open trading climate which had previously existed, because no one was to tell when one of these licensees was in the wilderness exactly what function he served.

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123 See the letter of John W. Johnson, Factor at Prairie du Chien, dated January 8, 1817, extracted in Thomas L. McKenney to George Graham, March 19, 1817; and Thomas L. McKenney to George Graham, September 30, 1817, ibid., 19:452, 480-481.


126 Porter, Astor, 2:691.
If Calhoun seemed to give in too easily to Astor's representations, it was because the Secretary of War had other plans in mind which would regulate the private trade more strictly than ever before. At the very time Crooks was on his way to Washington to treat with Calhoun, the Secretary was setting the Yellowstone movement in play. Calhoun's avowed purpose was to counteract British influence among the Indians of the area, but Army troops could regulate the activities of "American" traders as well. At the same time, the Yellowstone movement could materially assist the business of St. Louis fur traders then going up the Missouri.

But not even the Army could ensure the success of the factory system. Astor had vowed to destroy the system if he could, and there was a consolidation among the fur interests to effect this end. In view of the inefficiency of the factories in winning business and influencing the Indians, the private traders' hostility is difficult to account for, but as one close student of the fur trade has pointed out, the factory system was an anomaly in a nation committed to nothing if not to free enterprise. It was not easy for an aggressive frontiersman on the

127 John C. Calhoun to Thomas A. Smith, March 16, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:194-195.

128 Matthew Irwin, United States Factor at Green Bay, reported to McKenney that "the Agents of Mr. Astor hold out an idea that they will, ere long, be able to break down the factories; and they menace the Indian agents, and others who may interfere with them, with dismissal from office, through Mr. Astor." "Extract of a Letter from the United States Factor at Green Bay to the Superintendent of Indian Trade," [1818?] ASPIA, 2:360. The forlorn and perpetually troubled George Boyd (John Quincy Adams' brother-in-law) wrote Calhoun that at Mackinac there was a "fixed and settled plan . . . to harrass [sic] & bring into disrepute, the affairs of the Government in this quarter." George Boyd to John C. Calhoun, December 13, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:433.

129 Prucha, American Indian Policy, pp. 84-85.
make to be sympathetic to a system that was founded on humanitarian
principles, that took any amount of business away just at the time when
a promising market had appeared, and that did not work. The factory
system was only a government's dream. And, finally, it was a system
which did not have the full support of the government, including
Calhoun.  

A congressional resolution in 1818 forced an evaluation of the
entire system upon Calhoun. As was customary, Calhoun consulted with
interested officials. Not surprisingly, McKenney stoutly defended the
factories, claiming that their abolition would "blast, at once, the
happiness of thousands of Indians who now enjoy its benefits." McKenney
told Calhoun that he had "never detected any evidence to shew the least
unwillingness on the part of the private adventurer to adopt any resort
that should promise to favor his scheme of profit."  

Whereas the profit motive was the bane of the Indian in
McKenney's opinion, it was his salvation as far as Lewis Cass was con­
cerned. Cass looked forward to the abolition of the factory system,
whose existence he believed was an insult to the integrity of the
citizens engaged in the private trade, an ingenious view at best.
Abuses, said Cass, would automatically be curbed by increased competition

130 Chittenden and later scholars have contended that the American
factory system had a good chance of success until the American Fur Com­
pany began its campaign against it. It is easy to blame, as McKenney
did, the demise of the factories on the company, but had not Astor begun
operations, others would have. The fur trade of the west was about to
explode in activity. Individuals, as well as companies, would have
eventually brought the factories down, especially since high members of
government were rather ambivalent about the factories after 1818. See
Chittenden, The American Fur Trade, 1:12-16.

131 Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, August 19, 1818,
Calhoun Papers, 3:47.
and by the perspicacity of the natives themselves, who, he said, were shrewd businessmen when they were not drunk. Cass would limit the whiskey trade only and trust thereafter to humane capitalism.  

Cass and the fur trading interests had the West only in mind when they attacked the factories, even though most factories were located in more settled areas. In the East, for entirely different reasons, the factories were not operating with a great deal of success. At Fort Mitchell, Georgia, for instance, the Indians were "independent of U. S. supplies" because the chiefs themselves had monopolized the trade with their own people in cooperation with white sutlers. Besides, in the South the peltry had been trapped out and the natives had precious little to trade anyway.

In the end the policy on the factories had to be decided by Calhoun. He was careful not to claim too much for them, since it was widely understood that the system was a shambles. Instead, he told the Congress:


133 Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, July 26, 1818, ibid., 4:181-183. The apparent leader of this combine of Indian traders was the Creek General William McIntosh, who was a partner in a store on Creek territory with David B. Mitchell, the Agent to the Creeks, who was later fired for having trafficked in contraband slaves on agency grounds. Andrew Jackson believed that McIntosh allowed fellow tribesmen to run up enormous debts at his store in order to take their annuity payments when they were made. Considering the state of national finances at the time, when specie was in limited supply and when goods were easier to get, McIntosh may also have been an important supplier of specie in southern Georgia, for annuities were usually paid in gold or silver. In this enterprise, McIntosh had the assistance of a party of the stronger chiefs of the Lower Creek towns, including the well-known Big Warrior. McIntosh was later killed by a fellow tribesman for agreeing to a land cession. See Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, January 12, 1822, ibid., 6:618-619.
It was commenced, and has been continued, from motives both of pru-
dence and humanity; and though it may not have fully realized the
expectations of its friends, it has no doubt produced beneficial
effects. If wars have not been entirely prevented by it, they
probably, without it, would have been more frequent; and if the
Indians have made but little advances in civilization, they pro-
bably, without it, would have been less.¹³⁴

Behind this lukewarm defense of the factories, there was scant
encouragement waiting for private enterprise. The Indians themselves
had been forgotten by most of the parties in this dispute; McKenney
defended the factories as though they were sacrosanct, and Cass was much
too sympathetic to the business dealings of Astor.¹³⁵ Calhoun reminded
his readers that the basic point of the government's participation was
still the protection of the Indians "against the fraud and violence to
which their ignorance and weakness would, without such protection, expose
them." The Secretary therefore presented a scheme which would increase
the regulation of private trade.¹³⁶

In the settled areas, traders would be required to fix their
establishments, pay for licenses, post bonds, and keep accounts so that
Indian agents could inspect them on demand. For the trade in those
areas beyond the line of settlement, Calhoun proposed a semi-public
corporation, a monopoly supervised by the government for a term of twenty
years. All other traders would be excluded. In essence, Calhoun wanted

¹³⁴ John C. Calhoun to Henry Clay, December 5, 1818, ibid.,

¹³⁵ Astor's biographer indicates strongly that Governor Cass had
close relations with the businessman. See Porter, Astor, 2:702, 723-725,
n. 54. See also a letter from Cass to Calhoun defending Astor and other
private traders, July 30, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:440-442.

¹³⁶ John C. Calhoun to Henry Clay, December 5, 1818, Calhoun
Papers, 3:341-355.
to remove the anarchy which then existed in the private trade. "The mere objection that it would create a monopoly," he argued, "ought not to outweigh so many advantages. The Indian trade had never been opened entirely to private citizens; the government had always attempted to regulate the business in some way."  

It is clear from the Secretary's report that Calhoun and McKenney were not of one mind on how the Indian trade should be regulated. The Superintendent of Indian Trade had not managed to enlist Calhoun's outright support of the factory system. McKenney was hostile to the licensing system administered by the Indian agents; in his view, if the government had to choose between licensing and the factories, the licenses should go. Calhoun had said in his report, however, that he suspected that the very existence of the factories had impeded the licensing system, and if Congress chose not to accept his plan for a government corporation, licenses should be relied upon more heavily than ever before. McKenney had insisted that the protection of the Indian could hardly be served by such a system. "An invoice upon the horns of a stag would be as easily got at, as would be the Indian adventurers, who might wish, even if the law should forbid it, to extend their

137 Ibid.

138 McKenney's views on the relative merits of the licenses and factories are best expressed in his report of August, 1818, to Calhoun. Significantly, he believed that were the factories abolished, all trade would then "be soon swallowed up in one vast engine of monopoly." Calhoun would hinge his recommendations five months later on the beneficial effects of monopoly. The two officials were obviously not of one mind on this question. Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, August 19, 1818, ibid., 3:44-56.

enterprise into the wilds of Missouri," the Superintendent told Calhoun after he made his report.  

Congress took no final action on Calhoun's report following its submission, and the Secretary used the time to gather as much information as he could on the fur trade and the activities of the "Indian adventurers," as McKenney called them. Hoping to anticipate any further licensing authority he might be given, Calhoun asked for Indian agents to accompany the military expeditions to the upper Mississippi and Missouri rivers. As a sign of what he intended, Calhoun told his new agent for the upper Missouri not to take action against unlicensed traders until the military posts had been established. After that, any unlicensed trader was to be evicted from the region.  

When Senator Walter Leake of the Committee on Indian affairs asked Calhoun in early 1820 to compose a bill "better calculated to secure the peace of the frontier," he quickly responded with his most extensive licensing plan to date. He recommended that the authority to issue trade permits be vested in the President or in those whom he might specially commission, and he insisted that only those who could afford large bonds would be involved in the trade in the first place. If a licensee engaged in wrongdoing, the permit could be recalled by the President at any time, and the bond (from one to ten thousand dollars)

140 Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, December 31, 1818, ibid., 3:442.
142 Walter Leake to John C. Calhoun, January 29, 1820, ibid., 4:615.
would be forfeited. In addition, a fine would be levied up to one thousand dollars, along with six months imprisonment.\textsuperscript{143}

American Fur Company officials looked on in horror while the Senate actually considered Calhoun's bill, passed it, and sent it to the House. The fur interests were galvanized into direct political action. In April, 1820, Ramsay Crooks told William Woodbridge, Michigan's territorial representative to Congress, that Vice President D. D. Tompkins had agreed to lobby with House members in opposition to Calhoun's proposals. There were already some in the House, Crooks said, "who I trust will especially aid us in defeating this outrageous license system about to be imposed on us." He asked Woodbridge to "please suggest any thing you may think will aid our cause with Mr. Calhoun's new license system, and I will do all I can to meet your wishes."\textsuperscript{144}

By the end of the session Crooks' efforts had stalled Calhoun's bill. A vote in the House was never taken. Crooks afterward reported confidently to Astor, "I have not the smallest doubt, had the bill been brought forward, but the monster would have been strangled." This victory was only the opening shot in the fur interests' battle to win the field entirely from interference by the government.\textsuperscript{145}

Crooks believed that Calhoun's bill was merely a ruse to eliminate the American Fur Company and thereby rejuvenate the factory system.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{143}John C. Calhoun to Walter Leake, January 31, 1820, ibid., 4:623.

\textsuperscript{144}Ramsay Crooks to William Woodbridge, April 7, 1820, Thwaites, Wisconsin Historical Collections, 20:163.

\textsuperscript{145}Ramsay Crooks to John Jacob Astor, May 30, 1820, quoted in Prucha, American Indian Policy, pp. 95-96.

\textsuperscript{146}Ibid.
Convinced of the Secretary of War's hostility to private trade in general and to the American Fur Company in particular, Crooks urged Astor to take preventive action against the other of the two government programs, the factory system itself. With the survival of the company at stake, Crooks told Astor that the only remedy was to "interest some of your numerous friends to obtain if possible the abolition of the Factory system."  

In the fall of 1820 Crooks and fellow employee Russell Farnham began to lobby with a new-found dedication. One of their easier converts was Thomas Hart Benton, then still only a territorial delegate to Congress from Missouri, but soon to become a Senator. Both agents took up lodgings in the same Washington hotel as Benton that winter. This happy coincidence gave the agents the opportunity to tutor Benton in preparation for the coming fight over the factories. By Benton's own account, many conversations occurred between the three men that winter of 1820. When Benton finally took his seat at the winter session of 1821, he had gathered an impressive array of anti-factory testimony already. With Benton installed in the Senate, Crooks wrote to his employer that he meant to use "every fair means to obtain a decision on the Public Trading House System."  

Once Benton's hearings began, it was evident that much of the testimony was to come from Calhoun's Indian agents. There was no surer indication of the administration's lack of resolve to defend the system

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147 Ibid.


149 Quoted in Porter, Astor, 2:713.
than the assistance rendered by official men. Calhoun's own lack of faith in the factories is evident. The Secretary of War was not above forcing his subordinates to hew the line on other policies; that he did not in this case is significant. The tenor of the agents' comments was the same: factory goods were inferior to both British and American commercial goods; the factories charged too much and even then they lost money; the factories were too few, and being stationary, did not attract Indians to them; therefore, even the pretense of their civilizing effect was lost. Significantly, only one factor gave testimony. George Sibley of the Fort Osage factory condemned the system for being no system at all. Since the Osages had a treaty which guaranteed them their own factory, Sibley had no fear of losing his office. All that remained was for the only trader who testified--Ramsay Crooks--to administer the coup de grâce. He told the committee that the liquidation of the entire system would not "create a murmur loud enough to disturb the primeval stillness of the forest." 

Thomas McKenney's attempts to save both his position and the system were thwarted further by the adverse testimony of a well-known "friend" of the Indian, Jedediah Morse. Morse, in his recently-printed

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150 The most extensive remarks on the system came from Agent John Biddle at Green Bay, and Benjamin O'Fallon, agent for the upper Missouri. Colonel Henry Atkinson and Major John Bell, associated with the Yellowstone movement, were decidedly against the factories as they were then constituted. See all this testimony collected in "Operations of the Factory System," March 8, 1822, ASPIA, 2:326-332.

151 Sibley remarked concerning the factory system: "I said 'Indian trade system;' so it is called; but it is no more like a system, than the yells of an Indian are like music." Ibid.

152 Ramsay Crooks to Thomas Hart Benton, January 23, 1822, ibid., 2:329-332.
Report, argued against the factories and for his own plan of civilization, which was little more than an exalted version of the existing system. 153

Indecisively supported by the government, failing in both its humanitarian and practical goals, and assailed by the rapacious and enlightened alike, the factory system was struck down by Congress on May 6, 1822. 154 Arrangements were made to phase the system out gradually to minimize the effect on the Indians, if any, and George Graham was appointed as executioner. 155 Although the reasons were many for the abolition of the factory system, Superintendent McKenney put the blame squarely on the fur traders. "No man knows better than Mr. Crooks the causes of this decline, and the means which it is necessary to adopt at any time to produce the same results elsewhere," McKenney had told the committee. 156 Earlier McKenney had undertaken to explain to Calhoun why the factory at Prairie du Chien was in trouble. His remarks on that occasion would serve as a fitting epitaph for the system as a whole. As he said to Calhoun:

The multitude of traders, British, and all other sorts, made a sort of wall about the Factory. Few Indians could get to it. The Principles emenating [sic] from it, which are enlightening and humane, and which all tend to attach the natives to our Government, could not operate. 157

153 Morse, Report on Indian Affairs, pp. 92-93.
155 After having attacked the system partly on the basis of the inferiority of the goods sold to the Indians, Ramsay Crooks was piqued because the government would not allow his company to take over the disposal of those same commodities. See Porter, Astor, 2:714.
156 Thomas L. McKenney to Henry Jackson [Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs], n.d., "Operations of the Factory System," ASPIA, 2:356.
157 Thomas L. McKenney to John C. Calhoun, July 17, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:293.
IV

Contrary to McKenney's expectations, Calhoun erected no monuments to himself in his dealings with the American Indians. And as McKenney continued to make the most sanguine forecasts for native improvement, Calhoun came to believe that true Indian reform was a task for the generations; history weighed more heavily upon the Indians and the whites than he had imagined. During his tenure he had failed to demonstrate that even coercive philanthropy could work the radical changes he had earlier believed possible. A number of Indians had accepted the ideas of civilization which the reformers then purveyed, but many more had not. The activities of Calhoun and his associates among the Iroquois and the Cherokees actually intensified tribal resistance to humanitarian intervention. The story was much the same elsewhere: after years of the most avid work by the government's best Indian handlers, the Choctaws of Mississippi brought in their verdict on voluntary emigration. No more than fifty of this tribe had resettled west of the river. Religious philanthropy produced small results, even with government help. Missionaries operated thirty-two schools in 1825, most of which had begun operations only in the last five years. The increase in the number of these schools had less to do with Christian enthusiasm than with the fact that the government made it easy for anyone to receive grants; most of the money spent in this program went to buildings rather than minds.

158 John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, February 8, 1822, ibid., 6:680; Thomas L. McKenney to Solomon Davis, October 26, 1824, ibid., 9:355.

159 DeRosier, Removal of the Choctaws, p. 98.

From the Seneca reserve at Buffalo, where it was said the greatest native hostility to mission schools still existed, one Seneca argued that after thirteen years of missionary presence, "not a single schollar [sic] has been produced . . . who can attend to his private concerns with any accuracy." The tragedies of forced removal in the following decade had as much to do with the failure of these programs as with Andrew Jackson's frontier style of Indian reform.

Calhoun was a conservative, restrained philanthropist: tradition said, and Calhoun agreed, that when national weal and native life clashed, it was the latter which gave ground. No Indian program ought to be considered, he said to Monroe, which failed to take national interests into account. Since the factory system was not his, and since he knew that its administration was a shambles, he made no attempt to save the dubious program. His position on the factory system defined the limits of his benevolence. And again, when the Georgians began their campaigns against all the Indians in their state and accused the Monroe administration of bad faith, Calhoun's only concern (other than not wanting to "bully" the Indians) was to preserve the prestige of the national government and to face down the Georgians' impertinence.

He held his views of the Indians and their problems with complacency. There was something too facile in his policy; his affectation of the rhetoric of Indian reform, his professions of regret at their

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162 John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, January 24, 1825, ibid., 9:516-517.

163 Adams, Diary, March 11, March 26, 1824; John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, March 29, 1824, Calhoun Papers, 8:608.
demise, his bringing of a delegation of "almost naked" Indians to a formal Washington party, and his easy magnanimity toward the once-hunted Seminoles. There was no emotional cost to any of this: he was simply performing his official duties. It was expected.

Being for the present a nationalist whose faith in progress was even more intense than that of most of his race, Calhoun faced in the Indians' way of thinking an attitude which, had it appeared in his own culture, he would have despised as the worst kind of conservatism. But for him, as for other whites, the civilized verities did not penetrate the forests and had no meaning there; thus, he was not obliged to exercise them except as his own private dictates moved him. In his way, Calhoun may have recognized that the Indians were not so much enemies of progress as strangers to it. Eventually, Calhoun embraced a reactionism of his own devising, but he could not make the same apologies as the Indians had for theirs.

164 Adams, Diary, July 16, 1819; John C. Calhoun to John R. Bell, September 28, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:395.
CHAPTER V

THE WAR DEPARTMENT UNDER SIEGE

One of the more enduring American myths tells of a military establishment which has assiduously remained neutral in the course of political agitations, and of army officers and War Department functionaries trusting in their civilian masters to support their cause, without regard to the philosophy of one faction or another. Professing all the while to be content, the military establishment, until recently, has been viewed as a passive agent in the political working of the republic, more a victim than victimizer. Yet studies now exist which span the entirety of American history and which demonstrate that, at various times, what might be called "the military factor" in politics was hardly negligible.¹

During wartime, of course, political leaders in America have been keenly sensitive to the tendency of military institutions to increase their power in the operations of civilian government.² But the times of peace have brought with them their own special opportunities for the extension of military influence as well, and for the most part,  

¹Two works which bear upon this general period and which have been particularly helpful to me in understanding its civil and military interrelationships have been Kohn's, Eagle and Sword, and Cunliffe's, The Martial Spirit.

²During the Army debates of 1821 Speaker of the House John W. Taylor confessed that he was "fill[ed] with apprehension that our liberties after a war or two more are to be controlled by our standing armies." U. S., Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 2d sess., p. 367.
Historians dealing with the era of good feelings have not taken this influence into account.\(^3\)

Scholars have generally agreed that the War Department and the military establishment as a whole were caught up in the political activities which inaugurated the second American party system. The assault on the War Department which followed has been attributed to Calhoun's presence, which, once his presidential ambitions were known, acted as a magnet for his competitors. The War Department thus became a proxy for Calhoun himself. The most detailed studies of his period of Calhoun's life have focused upon his relations with fellow cabinet members and with the congressmen representing the various factions contesting for the presidency.\(^4\) But the reaction of the various officials in the War Department and the military establishment has not been examined. For the most part the military has been viewed, again, as merely the passive institution, accepting as its due the vicissitudes of political controversy. Yet it would be surprising indeed if Calhoun had not sought to use every means at his disposal first, to thwart attacks upon his candidacy, and second, to protect the very institution which had elevated him.

\(^3\) By the same token military historians have treated their subject as most episodic, governed in their work by what seems to be an ineluctable desire to discuss war only. As always there are exceptions, such as Weigley's, American Way of War, and his History of the U. S. Army, as well as T. Harry Williams', Americans at War. Cunliffe's The Martial Spirit defies categorization and comes closest to a sensible appreciation of the interrelationships between the American society and the American military during this period. Political historians seem to believe that only civilians can participate in presidential contests: I have not found one who even approaches a satisfactory appreciation of the military factor in the American politics of this time.

\(^4\) For all the work done since it was written, Wiltse's Calhoun is still the study which best covers activities within the military establishment. His, of course, is a much broader focus than that of Wiltse's work.
to the status of candidate. As this renewal of avid partisanism developed over the presidential election of 1824, members of the American military establishment underwent a politicization which largely has gone unnoticed by historians.

The spell of partisan controversy, so intense during the war, diminished only momentarily as James Monroe assumed the presidency. Federalist debility was only partly responsible for the political confusions of this period; some Republicans such as Monroe and Calhoun were busily preempting much of the Federalist credo while more orthodox party members were attempting to decide between loyalty to party and loyalty to doctrine. Others consulted their ambitions, mostly, and there was ambition aplenty in the councils of national government. There seemed at first to be indecision upon what policy was dictated by the requirements of the nation, and it is likely that the congressional support for the early programs of the Monroe administration derived from lack of agreement about national goals rather than from a solid consensus. A solid consensus would not wither so quickly as this support did. And although Monroe ruminated about the withering away of parties, John Quincy Adams professed an indefinable anxiety about what the political future held.

"It is a sort of instinctive impression that Mr. Monroe's administration will terminate by bringing in an adverse party to it... All the restless and uneasy spirits naturally fall into the ranks of the opposition."\(^5\)

Because they seemed more justified in their ambitions by reason of experience, position, and age, there has never been any question but

\(^5\)Adams, Diary, 5:119.
that Adams, Clay, and Crawford all had their eyes on the presidential succession as early as 1817 or 1818. Calhoun, less justified by experience and age, and less well represented by a diary such as Adams' has been censured for his unseemly hurry to reach the top. More sympathetic biographers of Calhoun have traced his presidential ambitions to that time when he could no longer stand by and watch his nationalist programs in the War Department being assailed by other, smaller-minded Republicans. Only then, it has been said, did Calhoun contemplate entering the contest for the White House. Yet this view gives Calhoun little credit for the original and aggressive mind that he was already known to have had.

From congressman to cabinet member in five years was a dizzying ascent for a man as young as Calhoun was when he became Secretary of War. With such a record behind him, could the presidency be far beyond? His spectacular rise in national politics doubtless had a great deal to do with a characteristic of thought for which Calhoun later became well known: an autocratic mentality which admitted no possibility of error, which transcended the pettiness of any faction, and which presumed to represent the best interests of national progress and genius. It was a cast of mind that was rapidly obsolescing.

Calhoun's faith in the superiority of his views encouraged a certain amount of inflexibility even at an early date. Still a congressman, Calhoun rose on the floor of the House to discuss the extent to

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7 The reactionary aspect of Calhoun's presidential ambitions is well represented by the chapter title in Wiltse, *Calhoun*, p. 249, "Calhoun fights back."
which a constituency could require their representative to do their bidding. Some argued that the congressman was merely a creature of the voter and no more. Calhoun argued to the contrary: "The Constitution is my letter of instruction," he said. To a friend Calhoun wrote about himself and his political temperament on the eve of the War of 1812:

"Want of firmness! All know, that in the short time I have been in publick service, I have ever stood obstinate against all local, party, or factious interest. . . . I love just renown; but to me undeserved popularity ha[s] no charms."  

All that followed merely confirmed and accentuated Calhoun's view of himself and his place in American politics; he took these sensibilities with him into the War Department in 1817. To a man with such enlarged views of himself, there was only one place remotely free of localism, partisanship, and faction, and that was the presidency itself. The cabinet and the Department of War could serve as the avenue of his rise to power. During the first few years in the cabinet, Calhoun played his role as the transcendent politician well enough to impress the critical Adams. After having dealt with his younger colleague only a short time, Adams recalled:

He [Calhoun] observed that it would be of great advantage to this country to have statesmen of a philosophical turn of mind. He is himself of that character, and it has brought him to a high distinction at a very early age. But he is the only man of the present administration who does possess it. We are obliged to live from hand to mouth, and to leave posterity to take care of itself.  

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8 John C. Calhoun, "First Speech on Amendments to the Compensation Law," January 17, 1817, Calhoun Papers, 1:387.


10 Adams, Diary, 5:221.
Adams would eventually change his mind about Calhoun and heap the score upon the young secretary which he had earlier reserved for the likes of Clay and Crawford. It is difficult to tell when reading Adams' tirades against Calhoun, whether Adams is merely angry at the defection of a potential supporter or disappointed that Calhoun's pose as a statesman has been tarnished.

In his first two years as Secretary of War, Calhoun was the bellwether of nationalism. His programs of fortification and military expansion, and internal reforms made him even more of a public figure to reckon with than he had been before. A mind as lively as Calhoun's could hardly have resisted contemplating what the future held. This applied to others who were associated with Calhoun as well. Sometime in early April, 1818, Calhoun's chief clerk produced an extraordinary document which had all the marks of a campaign biography. Christopher Vandeventer entitled his piece, "The Secretary of War," and it bears the signs of his superior's cooperation. Vandeventer wrote:

The career of this young statesman has been active and elevated. He has aimed to advance the true interests of his country untrammeled by party and unbiased by sectional prejudices—He already occupies a wide space in the public view, and an analysis of the past will to us the best hopes of his future career.

To a mind active and discriminating he adds strength and solidity of judgment; he forms his opinions by a rapid intuition, but he forms them correctly, for having settled in his own breast certain general principles he brings to this standard any subject which presents itself. With a moral intrepidity which fears no consequence when the [illegible] call to action is honest he had [sic] uniformly appeared as the champion of national interests at times at war with the peculiar traits of all parties but invariably consistent [sic] with himself. The change of rulers in the eventful contest of 1801 produced a corresponding change ["of policy," interlined] measures; and in the heat of the conflict the true interests of the nation were sometimes forgotten.—When Mr. Calhoun came forward on the theatre our Statesmen pursued the lines of party demarcation fixed and unwavering. They adhered to early opinions with the pertinacity of bigots, and seemed willing to aspire even to the character of martyrs in defense of their faith. Now that the period of excitement is over, and public opinion has consecrated leading national measures,
the history of past times appears almost incredible. Will posterity believe that in the management of our external relations, the policy of the federalists [sic] since this epoch was to render this country subservient to England? That instead of wishing to assume the position which Providence has assigned to us, they seemed determined to place us in an attitude secondary and humiliating. [sic] Hence when our commercial rights were assailed, our Flag disgraced, our citizens incarcerated, the federalists [sic] as a party virtually advocated submission; They [sic] went further and declared that England had done us no essential injury ......................

While the nation was thus distracted [sic] with the prejudices of the two political parties in 1811-1812 Mr. Calhoun appeared in our national Legislature [sic]. The crisis was eventful and the aspect of the time portended the storm which was to follow. There were associated with him from his own State [sic] two colleagues of whom I shall only here remark that they possessed commanding talents and the most elevated patriotism--His [sic] views soon developed themselves as resting upon the basis of the national welfare. He refined the gold (?) from the drip of both political sects and adopted the amalgamation as the standard of his policy. He wrested from the administration opinions which time had consecrated, and the opposition have since repented their follies in sack cloth and ashes—on the subject of our foreign relations he sought to protect our sovereignty, to defend our lawful commerce as a vital right, and to place the nation in the attitude she now sustains, commanding, respected, and feared. To accomplish these objects it has been the constant effort with reference to internal measures, to organize our institutions to enlarge our modes of thought to expend our views to lofty principles of action [sic]. He combatted on the side of the administration when it determined to make [the community?] a citadel and protect it with the national force. He brought all his talents into action for the increase of our naval establishment for the abandonment of the system of commercial restrictions, for the creation of a bank as necessary to our finance as well as our commerce.

The loss of this statesman from the halls of Congress will be severely felt, but in the new duties in which he is called we predict the nation will reap a higher benefit from his intelligence and services.---In the Cabinet [sic] he will give weight and to the army reputation; the former will receive the full benefits of an intellect which analyses the future almost with the spirit of prophecy; The [sic] latter will we are confident experience new vigor from the decision and energy which marks his character. The important duties of fortifying our different frontiers so as to present an armor calculated for any contingency; of reforming and elevating our military school, of establishing at every point capacious arsenals and depots; of exploring our country in all directions, and concentrating the result in a board of topography at the capitol [sic]; imparting new life to the officers of our little army; and rendering them habituated to that mental exertion which leads to distinction.
in science as well as in arms. These we trust will occupy his attention and distinguish the epoch of his present employment.

As a Legislator [sic] the nation in adopting his principles has marked him out as one of her brightest ornaments; as the chief of an important department . . . we feel assured he will exemplify these principles by the whole course of his administration.\textsuperscript{11}

It is difficult indeed to believe that John C. Calhoun did not have a hand in the composition of this panegyric on his young life. The candid Calhoun is revealed here, his nationalism and his self confidence in full flood, a transcendent politician who had heroically rescued the nation. Appended to this document, in Vandeventer's hand, is a postscript which re-emphasizes the real message, one which would have to be integrated with the body when the piece was later polished:

At times he opposed each party in some antequated and favorite creed and he came off victorious, in every conflict. The highest eulogium which can be paid to his political career is the circumstance that all parties have adopted his leading opinions as settled axioms of national policy and have awarded his talents and virtues unanimous approbation.\textsuperscript{12}

That the document was written less than five months after he became Secretary of War is significant. Presuming Calhoun's connivance, if not authorship (the writing is a poor imitation of Calhoun's syntax), the purpose of the document can only be surmised. Certainly its author put Calhoun in the best possible light, writing with a cavalier regard

\textsuperscript{11}I have reproduced this document very nearly in full here for two reasons: first, because it portrays what I believe to be an unguarded side of Calhoun's thoughts about his and the nation's past and future at a relatively early time, and because it demonstrates how completely Calhoun identified his own progress with that of the nation. Second, this document is used here for the first time, and its reproduction may be of some benefit to future students of Calhoun's life and thought. The manuscript was found at the William L. Clements Library. See Christopher Vandeventer, "The Secretary of War," April 5, 1818, Vandeventer Papers.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
for the truth. Perhaps the Secretary of War saw it after it was written and decided to delay the campaign for popularity which the document presaged. The eulogy may have been only the result of Vandeventer's ambition to ingratiate himself with his chief; if that is so then Vandeventer had penetrated to the core of his superior's personality and politics in a very short time and the paper is a testament to the young clerk's precocity. In either case, this document reflects the close personal relationship which had already emerged between the secretary and the clerk. Despite some anxious moments the relations between the two would deepen in the following years. More importantly, Vandeventer's commitment to Calhoun's cause reveals in miniature what happened to the American military establishment while Calhoun was in the War Office.

The Secretary of War kept his counsel for the time being. Any announcement on his part would have been grossly premature, and at any rate he was far too busy for the present to do anything but think about his prospects. In the meantime factions were already taking shape within the Republican party. John Quincy Adams was particularly sensitive to the political winds. Occupying the seat that Henry Clay had wanted, Adams saw Clay working against him in Congress from the very beginning of the Monroe administration. And although it seemed to take longer for him to decide, Adams soon began counting upon the enmity of William Crawford and his friends as well. Soon after the beginning of the Sixteenth Congress, Adams had concluded that the delicate Republican consensus had broken apart. "All public business in Congress now connects itself with intrigues," Adams observed, "and there is great

\footnote{13} Adams, Diary, 4:119. \footnote{14} Ibid., 4:407.
danger that the whole Government will degenerate into a struggle of
cabals.\textsuperscript{15}

This forbidding aspect of public affairs was compounded by the
first hints of the Panic of 1819. By January, 1819, the buoyant postwar
economy broke into so many pieces: banks had already begun to fail the
previous year and so had some eastern businesses. The reverberations of
the general collapse were not to affect the West for a few months, but
already cotton prices had fallen precipitously and land prices would
shortly follow. In May Adams called the prospects "alarming" in a con-
versation with Treasury Secretary Crawford. The Secretary of State
described a dark picture to his diary:

The staple productions of the soil, constituting our principal
articles of export, are falling to half and less than half the
prices which they have lately borne, the merchants are crumbling to
ruin, the manufactures perishing, agriculture stagnating, and dis-
stress universal in every part of the country. The revenue has not
yet been, but must very sensibly and very soon be affected by this
state of things, for which there seems to be no remedy but time and
patience, and the changes of events which time effects. Crawford
showed me his last bank returns, which are as large as usual, and
the condition of the Treasury is daily improving. But there will
be a great falling off in the revenue of the next year.\textsuperscript{16}

For once Adams was not overstating. Later that year, he and
Calhoun discussed the worsening depression. Calhoun thought that "we
shall unavoidably come within a year to a paper-money currency."\textsuperscript{17} How
much the depression would have to do with his own political career,
Calhoun did not yet perceive, nor, probably, did other political leaders.
The panic was the harbinger of the Industrial Revolution in America, and
with it came the first stirrings of Jacksonian nationalism.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 4:212.
\item Ibid., 4:375.
\item Ibid., 4:401.
\item This summary is based upon a reading of George Dangerfield's, The Awakening of American Nationalism (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 72-96; see especially p. 89 (hereafter cited as Dangerfield, American
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
By the end of 1819 it was evident that this had been a year of portentous beginnings. Adams thought that the next year would see the fulfillment of his worst fears. He told Monroe that "the great battery opened upon the Administration at the session before last was South America. That of the last session was the Seminole War." The next session of Congress promised to be agitated in the extreme: "Before the Congress will be all the moneyed [sic] embarrassments of the country, the affairs of the bank [of the United States], the manufacturing claims [for protective tariffs], and the Missouri slave question, which might excite ardent debates."  

Calhoun had little of his own reputation invested in the difficulties of the past few sessions of Congress, and so at the start of the session in December, 1819, he was relatively self-satisfied. The extended debates over Jackson's invasion of Florida the previous session had little to do with Calhoun personally, and his stand against Jackson in the cabinet had befuddled Adams. "I had not exactly understood what he meant or what he was after," complained the Secretary of State.  

Calhoun's main concern during 1819 was about the effect the failure of the Yellowstone expedition would have upon the next military appropriations bill. Because the expedition had virtually bankrupted the

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19Adams, Diary, 4:473.  
Quartermaster's account, the entire War Department budget might be scrutinized more closely. And since the extent of the financial panic daily became more evident, he was concerned that certain retrenchment-minded congressmen would have much more to say about the standing army than had been the case. In the summer of 1819 Calhoun told General Brown that because of these two problems, "I consider the next Session [sic] as the most trying for the Army [sic] of any which will probably occur in many years."21

Crawford's report on the state of the Treasury at the end of 1819 was alarming. Because of the decline in revenues, Crawford recommended a loan to defray the five million dollar deficit caused by increased expenditures. He believed that, whether expenditures were decreased or not, the loan would still be necessary in order to offset future deficits which he expected would occur.22

The drive for retrenchment began in Congress in the wake of Crawford's gloomy report. The first moves against the War Department were tentative, but the congressmen putting retrenchment into action against the department were all easily identifiable as friends of the Secretary of the Treasury: Lewis Williams of North Carolina, John Floyd of Virginia, and John Cocke and Newton Cannon of Tennessee. By the first of the year, Eldred Simkins, who held Calhoun's old seat from Abbeville and who was one of Calhoun's past law students, wrote to Calhoun's cousin, Patrick Noble, that it looked as though the main

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21 John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, August 15, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:249.

contenders for the presidency in 1824 were already limbering up their batteries. The importance of this intelligence for Calhoun was evident to Simkins: "Crawford & Adams both appear very friendly to Calhoun personally, but the friends of the first show a spiteful spirit towards the War. Dept. almost constantly." There was every prospect that the defense of the nation could be "prostrated" by the combination of retrenchment and presidential maneuverings.23

Newton Cannon and John Cocke were the most active congressmen in their pursuit of military retrenchment. Just two days after Simkins had complained of the activities of Crawford's friends in Congress, Cannon moved that the House Committee on Military Affairs consider suspending appropriations altogether for coastal defenses, and Cocke devoted himself to stopping the Yellowstone expedition by denying little more than operating money to the Quartermaster's accounts in the War Department.24

This business was put aside for the time being in late January as the concerns of the House of Representatives turned to the admission of Missouri to the Union. It was not until the middle of March that the opponents of the military establishment were able to return to the attack. On March 8, Newton Cannon introduced a bill to reduce the army to five thousand men, and it was no trick for Cannon to link reduction with retrenchment. He told his fellow congressmen:

It might appear a little astonishing to the people of this country that, notwithstanding the vast revenue that had been brought into the public Treasury, from various sources, since the termination of

23 Eldred Simkins to Patrick Noble, January 8, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4:560.

the late war, to find that we are unable to meet the current demands against the Government; that such has been the extravagance of our public expenditures on this Military Establishment, as well as others equally useless or unnecessary, that there now seems to be a deficit to the amount of five millions of dollars, and this too during a time when we are enjoying the most perfect peace and boasted prosperity.\textsuperscript{25}

Cannon's proposed bill stirred army supporters to action. A few days after William Lowndes' Committee on Foreign Relations proposed that Congress virtually order President Monroe to seize Florida by force, but Lowndes had no thought that the recommendation would pass the House. Even though Lowndes protested that he would vote for such a bill himself, it was widely said that he had merely meant to excite the House to foreign dangers in order to help Calhoun's military appropriations requests through. John Quincy Adams thought that this was the case, and since Lowndes and Calhoun were very close friends, it was a reasonable assumption to make.\textsuperscript{26}

At the same time, Eldred Simkins championed the War Department and the military establishment on the floor of the House, using some of the very same arguments which Calhoun had employed five years before. "Can a single gentleman in the House," he asked, "believe that ten millions of enlightened freemen are endangered by an army of ten thousand men, divided at eighty-five posts, and spread over a space of several thousand miles? I will not discuss the proposition."\textsuperscript{27} Furthermore, said Simkins, the army was no longer the band of idlers which had so

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 1598.


\textsuperscript{27}U. S., Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1610.
drained the treasury in past years: "The camp of your army will not be a seat of idleness and corruption, if it is properly organized and judiciously attended to; and is it not true, that your soldiers are already employed in constructing valuable roads; in raising provision for their support." 28

The vote on money for fortifications came up on March 14. Josiah Butler of New Hampshire gave the final speech for the anti-military forces. His remarks were illustrative of the general unease in Congress about several problems, not the least of which was the growing power of the executive branch. Butler said:

Now our Treasury is empty, we are required to increase this expenditure $300,000. You are told that contracts are made; that the Secretary wants the money; that he must have it; nothing less than the demands will do. This plea of necessity you have at every session. If you propose a reduction of the expenditures, you are charged with want of confidence in the departments. Thus, sir. you are the humble servant of the Executive. Passing appropriation bills has become a matter of course. It is even considered uncivil to hesitate in giving the sum demanded. . . . If you propose a reduction of the Army, there is a cry of war, and a war bill is laid on your table. If you propose to abolish the Military Academy, that sink of dissipation, you are told that military science will be forgotten, and martial spirit and ardor will become extinct in your country. If you propose to stay your hand in fortifying your extensive coast and building islands in the sea, large specks of war are seen, your cities will be demolished, unless the work is done without delay. Sir, your expenditures are increasing faster than your revenues. 29

Despite Butler's rather accurate portrayal of the importunity of the executive branches, the fortifications moneys were voted by a large margin: 103 to 51. 30 Among the fifty-one dissenting votes was a phalanx of men determined somehow to reduce the military establishment if they could. Not yet strong enough to force a reduction immediately,

28 Ibid. 29 Ibid., p. 1636. 30 Ibid.
the best that they could do was to pass, nearly at the end of the session, a resolution calling upon Calhoun for a plan to reduce the army to six thousand men.\textsuperscript{31}

Calhoun took all of this with seeming equanimity. He did not think, as his young friend Simkins obviously did, that there was any move afoot in Congress against him. Discussing the attacks on the Missouri (or Yellowstone) expedition with Micah Sterling of New York, Calhoun said that he could not believe "that the vote in the House . . . had much relation to me individually. The real cause, will principally be found in the state of the Treasury."\textsuperscript{32} This, of course, was before the House resolved to demand a plan for army reduction at the end of the session. But still, Calhoun did not waver in his opinion that he was not the target of these votes even after the resolution on reduction was passed. He further miscalculated the depth of the panic and its consequent effects on the War Department, particularly those expansive programs that he had begun. He ascribed the vote on the Yellowstone expedition to the "accidental state of publick affairs at the time that the vote was taken."\textsuperscript{33} He told Andrew Jackson that he hoped that "a better state of feelings will exist in Congress at the next session."\textsuperscript{34} After the resolution was passed Calhoun told the general that the move was undoubtedly due to the "low state of the Treasury;" still, he thought

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} The resolution was agreed to on May 11, 1820. A roll call vote was not taken. See ibid., pp. 2232-2233.
\item \textsuperscript{32} John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, April 15, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:40.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{34} John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, March 27, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4:735.
\end{itemize}
it was probable that "Congress will not reduce the Army [sic]." No "sound mind," Calhoun thought, would really consider such a reduction proper.35

II

The military men of the United States watched all this congressional activity closely. General Jacob Brown, then in Washington, was rather more gloomy on what the session portended for the army than his Secretary of War. In January, 1820, Brown wrote to Joseph Swift in New York; the major general thought that the anti-military sentiments in Congress had more to do with Andrew Jackson than the army itself, but he presumed that some sort of alteration would be made in the military establishment as a result of hostility toward Jackson. Brown wrote:

You must not consider the vote taken upon the Army as indicating the sentiments of the national legislature on this subject. The deliberations of Congress upon the military peace establishment will, I confidently believe, result in an organization that can be approved by military men. As I write to you in great confidence I may venture to say that much of the opposition to the Army grows out of the deadly hostility of some of the members to the Hero of New Orleans--this interest has been joined by many others hostile to the Exec. Govmt. [sic] the Army or any of its permanent officers. . . . I consider it next to impossible that the Bill [sic] you have seen or anything like it can become a law--Even the majority of the House of Representatives do not expect or desire this--But there is, I fear, a fixed determination at all hazards to legislate Genl [sic] Jackson out of the service. The Pres. [sic] and Sec. on this point find it a duty to yield.36

Brown's solicitude for the army is not difficult to fathom. He had faced reduction before, and so had every other officer who had served

35 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, June 1, 1820, ibid., 5:164.
36 Jacob Brown to Joseph G. Swift, January 25, 1820, Swift Papers.
since the War of 1812. The American military establishment had, in fact, been confronted with the threat of extinction since it had come into being. For the intelligent and observant officer, the continuing existence of his institution was always in the balance; for the politician who favored a standing army, the problem was how the republic could fashion a military establishment which enhanced rather than endangered democracy. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the most astute of America's military men were extremely sensitive to political trends and that they had evolved a sophisticated response over the years to this very problem.

Their response was known as the "expansible," or "skeleton" army. Put simply, an expansible army was a peacetime military establishment arranged so that it could mobilize just by calling for recruits. The organization of an expansible army—the general staff, command structure, order of battle, and logistical systems—theoretically remained constant in peace or war. The substance of the army—the number of men in actual service—varied according to the military requirements of the nation. When war approached, a skeleton army stood ready to receive levees who would complement the standing forces to battle strength. If all went well, only the number of private soldiers in each company would change.

This concept is hardly exotic today, but on the eve of the War of 1812, the United States Army was organized virtually in the face of the enemy. An expansible army, by contrast, bespoke a degree of readiness that the pell-mell army did not have. Command duties increased only by degree; there was little qualitative difference between leading a company composed of one hundred than one of fifty. This kind of army was more efficient economically; the cost of maintaining it during
peacetime, it was argued, was more than offset by a prompt resistance which prevented early enemy depredations while an unprepared army mobilized. Moreover, it was less costly to fill up an existing organization than to build one anew on the eve of a war.

But these military and economic benefits were no more important than the fact that this was a concept which was politically feasible in the United States. In a nation long wary of standing armies, an expansible army did not threaten the nation or the liberties of its citizens. At the same time, it provided a modicum of protection that, for all its suspicions, the nation could not profitably neglect. The expansible army was therefore the smallest effective army possible for the republic. Its power, potentially great, could be adjusted as political sentiments demanded. It was the next evolution in military organization and policy for a new nation anxious to protect the fruits of its progress.

Scholars have credited Calhoun with the invention of the expansible army concept. Calhoun's friends considered his proposal for this kind of army as one of his most noteworthy acts in the War Office. But the concept of the expansible army antedates Calhoun's period in the War Department by some years, and earlier references to this unique military

37 Calhoun's most authoritative biographer says that the expansible army had been on Calhoun's mind since 1815, but there is nothing in the Calhoun Papers to support this conclusion. Calhoun was present during the debates on the peacetime army in 1815, and he took the administration line there, but he did not refer then or in the years succeeding to an expansible army. See Wiltse, Calhoun, p. 224; and U. S., Annals of Congress, 13th Cong., 3d sess., pp. 1215-1217.

38 One need only consult Calhoun's own correspondence between 1821 and 1824 to see how importantly both he and his friends regarded this plan. Throughout, Calhoun never hinted that the expansible army plan he had presented to Congress had any precedents at all. See, for instance, Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, January 4, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 5:528.
idea suggest that it was a well developed concept by 1817. Calhoun became an expositor of the expansible army concept, but it was by no means original with him.

Richard H. Kohn has recently pointed out that William Heath recommended such a concept to George Washington while the future president was writing his "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" in 1783. Contending with many of the same problems Calhoun would be facing forty years later, Washington also sought, in Kohn's words, "the bare minimum, politically feasible army." Aside from the actual numbers involved, General Washington devised a kind of army which, he said, "will give us a Number of Officers well skilled in the Theory and Art of War, who will be ready on any occasion, to mix and diffuse their knowledge of Discipline to other Corps, without that lapse of Time, which . . . would be necessary to bring intire [sic] new Corps."

It is reasonable to expect that the merits of this concept from the military professional's point of view could not go unheeded. It was a rational concept which took into account the anti-military proclivities of the nation as well as the need for some sort of army. That an expansible army was not created along with the republic simply indicates the depth of anti-military feeling at the time; in no wise was the concept itself degraded. It remained a favorite response of army advocates to

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39 Kohn, Eagle and Sword, pp. 45-46.


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the threat of military retrenchment, for in a sense it was timeless, having more to do with political climate than with military danger.

James Monroe believed in 1815 that the time was propitious to bring the concept into play once more. Peace was at hand in February of that year. One of the first questions before Congress after Ghent was announced was the adjustment of the American military establishment to fit the new peaceful situation. There was no danger that the army would be abolished altogether, and Secretary of War Monroe pondered the next logical question: if there was to be an army, what kind would be allowed? In a letter to Senator William Branch Giles, Monroe argued for a twenty thousand man army, an army which he probably knew the House of Representatives would never approve. In the course of his remarks to Giles, Monroe wrote:

Two modes have occurred by which to regulate the reduction [of the army]. One by retaining the skeleton of every corps now in service, dismissing as many officers and men in each as will reduce the establishment to the proposed number, the other by reducing the number of regiments, down to that standard.  

A few days before Monroe's letter to Giles, General Swift visited him. The subject of reduction was discussed, and later Swift recalled that "the general idea of Congress seemed to be to reduce the army to a standard upon which an army of fifty thousand men might be engrafted." Following Monroe's proposal to Giles, Congressman George M. Troup of the Committee on Military Affairs put the plan to his colleagues in some detail, arguing for the retention of "skeletons of regiments" at the very

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41 James Monroe to William Branch Giles, February 22, 1815, Monroe Papers LC.

42 Swift, Memoirs, p. 137.
But the bill fixing the military peace establishment did not reflect the proposal; it summarily cut the army to ten thousand men. Apparently it was only the reluctance of the Senate to cut the army more that prevented the House from going even lower; proposals were heard in the House which went as low as five thousand men. The bill of 1815 was therefore a compromise between the two houses of Congress. Army officers were watchful of any move in Congress thereafter to reduce further the military establishment as the passage of time made it clear that foreign dangers were subsiding.

At least one professional soldier perceived a threat of further reduction late in 1817. As the first session of the Fifteenth Congress opened in December, Brigadier General Winfield Scott suspected that the army was due for a reduction of some kind. Newspaper articles did appear that month which alluded to military reorganization. Scott was anxious that Congress was about to look closely at the army once more.

The letter that Scott dispatched to the War Department on December 16 would have startled the newly appointed Calhoun, had he actually received it; but there is some doubt that the new Secretary of War ever saw Scott's letter. It contained a plan, unsolicited by Calhoun (or anyone else), to reduce the army in accord with the expandable army concept. There is no record that Calhoun replied to Scott on this matter or ever acknowledged that he had seen the proposal. For

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46 Niles' Weekly Register, December 20, 1817.
47 Winfield Scott to John C. Calhoun, December 16, 1817, Letters Received, SWMA. See also, pp. 267-268, below.
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44 Ibid., pp. 1272-1273.  
46 Niles' Weekly Register, December 20, 1817.
47 Winfield Scott to John C. Calhoun, December 16, 1817, Letters Received, SWMA. See also, pp. 267-268, below.
reasons which will become clear, Scott's letter bears going into. The letter was hastily written, but the plan the general proposed was as detailed an exposition of an expansible army as Calhoun later saw. In an apologetic tone, Scott assured the Secretary that if he had had time to develop his arguments properly, he would not have marked them "confidential." He nonetheless offered this plan, he said, because he had seen "that a disposition exists in The [sic] House of Representatives to reduce and otherwise modify the army."48

Although he thought that the army was already too small for its mission, Scott believed that "if reduction be resolved on, the parts the least essential should doubtlessly be the first [lopped?]." When Scott wrote, the army was composed of eight regiments of infantry, one regiment of riflemen, and one corps each of light and regular artillery. He thought first of all that the rifle regiment could be converted into a ninth infantry regiment and that two companies could be added to each of the new regiments. These extra companies would act as "flank" companies, serving as riflemen or grenadiers. To lend authority to this scheme, Scott observed that "this organization is believed to be the most perfect that has yet been devised. It is that of France at present."49

Having outlined the new military organization, Scott turned next to the actual number of reduction. The ideal combat strength of a company was one hundred men; Scott proposed that company strength be reduced to fifty-five privates and a small non-commissioned cadre. If similar arrangements could be made in the two corps of artillery, Scott estimated, 1,690 men could be trimmed from the rolls without deranging

48 Ibid. 49 Ibid.

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the army organization. This was the foundation of Scott's plan. He wrote:

In this view it is hoped that the present number of companies may not be diminished, because on that number depends the capacity of the base for the reception of a war establishment. I will rather hope that this base will be enlarged altho' the total of the army should be reduced. The enlargement might take place in the infantry without any augmentation of the rank & file or rather or aggregate [sic] & the reduction be made in the rank and file of the other corps.\footnote{50}

By this method, Scott argued, "the aggregate of the new regiment[s] will be precisely that of the old--at the same time the base for the reception of a war establishment is one fifth greater!"\footnote{51}

Eventually Calhoun would be exposed to the ideas contained in Scott's 1817 proposal, but the Secretary of War would not know that they were the general's. The distinction of being the first to acquaint Calhoun with the merits of an expansible army belongs to Christopher Vandeventer.

On January 16, 1818, one month after Scott made his proposal to Calhoun, Vandeventer composed a memorandum for his chief on this very subject. A comparison of the texts of the two plans reveals considerable agreement between them. Scott's and Vandeventer's plans, in fact, were the same. In Vandeventer's memorandum grammatical indiscretions which appeared in Scott's proposal were corrected, but in content and form, both proposals were identical. There were no references to Scott's plan in Vandeventer's memorandum.\footnote{52}

\footnotetext{50}{Ibid.}\footnotetext{51}{Ibid.}\footnotetext{52}{Christopher Vandeventer to John C. Calhoun, January 16, 1818, Vandeventer Papers. There is, in fact, so much agreement between Scott's and Vandeventer's proposals, that only one conclusion may be drawn. As one of many examples, compare the following passages; from Scott's letter of December 16, 1817: "It is believed that the peace establishment}
After Calhoun left the War Office some years later, a dispute arose between Generals Brown and Jesup over which of the two was the first to educate Calhoun to the possibilities of the expansible army concept. Both men claimed the honor, but it was by then fairly well known, as one of Calhoun's friends said, that "VandeVenter [sic] . . . was the first who laid before you the project of the Central Staff."  

This means that Calhoun actually saw Vandeventer's memorandum, because both Scott and the chief clerk extended their comments to that subject in their proposals as well. What Calhoun actually saw in January, 1818, was a plan plagiarized by his chief clerk from the letter of a general who, disturbed by rumors and preferring to believe the worst, hurriedly produced a way to blunt the effect of yet another army reduction. It seems clear enough that Vandeventer had taken Scott's plan and passed it off as his own. As far as can be told, Calhoun was never the wiser.

General Scott had misread congressional intentions in 1817; an enlarged military establishment could still be tolerated. Perhaps Scott did take alarm unnecessarily, but he knew that army reduction was always possible in the United States during peacetime. That he concocted a plan is already too small for the objects to which it is applied or for which it is intended: nevertheless if reduction be resolved on, the parts the least essential should doubtlessly be the first [lopped?];" and from Vandeventer's memorandum: "It is believed that the peace establishment is too small for the objects for which it is intended; nevertheless if Congress determine to reduce it, the parts the least essential should be discarded."

53 Virgil Maxey to John C. Calhoun, March 2, 1827, Jameson, Correspondence, 2:791-792.

54 Despite the fact that Vandeventer eventually became involved in the Rip Rap scandal, the chief clerk never lost favor in Calhoun's eyes. In the middle of the presidential campaign, Calhoun used a trip to Baltimore to attend Vandeventer's wedding in order to meet several political confederates. See John C. Calhoun to Samuel L. Gouverneur, October 4, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:299.
like this in so short a time suggests that the expansible army concept already had some currency among American military thinkers. Such was the nature of the plan that it could be held in readiness, an answer to the periodic dismantling of an army that served political requirements so well and the national defense so poorly. On the whole, however, Scott's fears were needless. It was true that the army was larger than normal for peacetime, but military dangers had not yet disappeared by the time Scott wrote. General Gaines was fighting in the south, soon to be joined by General Jackson; Spain's reaction could not be estimated. There was no financial crisis to threaten government expenditures; revenues were still high enough for Congress to have abolished taxes without apprehension. For the time being, there was no political turmoil in which the army could serve as an issue. A certain residue of mock good will existed among the politicos, sufficient at least to create the image of partisan harmony.

All this had changed by the summer of 1820, of course. Secretary Calhoun began soliciting advice on the reduction of the army from his senior officers. Between July, 1820, and the fall the Secretary received memoranda from Generals Brown, Jackson, Gaines, Macomb, Scott, and Jesup. Each of these men thought that the problem they faced had less to do with the army's practicality than with its political acceptability.

55 Jacob Brown to John C. Calhoun, October 6, 1820; Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, August 9, 1820; Edmund P. Gaines to John C. Calhoun, July 27, 1820, ibid., 5:377-380, 317-319, 293-296. See also Alexander Macomb to John C. Calhoun, September 30, 1820; and Winfield Scott to John C. Calhoun, August 20, 1820, Letters Received, SWMA. The plans of Macomb and Scott are calendared in the Calhoun Papers; the references above contain the complete plans, with accompanying charts.
Like Calhoun these generals to a man professed surprise that the congressmen were willing to go so far against the new army. The generals believed that the congressmen's thinking was out of fashion: they were looking at the old army when the resolution was passed. The professional army could hardly be so undeserving of their support. Thus when they wrote their reports, the generals began by answering a question which had not been asked. The generals argued for the survival of the army, but the army's existence was not at stake. In a neat juxtaposition of the old Republican creed, they insisted that if the new army were harried into obscurity, liberty would be endangered all the same.

Having made their objections to any reduction at all, the generals considered next how, if reduction were unavoidable, the disruption of the army could be minimized. Several of the plans argued for minor reorganizations in the line and staff only. A recommendation common to all plans merged the two branches of artillery, for instance. This merger meant, at least, that one full colonelcy would be created along with several more staff positions. None of this seemed to have much to do with reduction at first glance. But this proposal and several others of the same kind aimed for the same effect: the protection of the officer corps from the dislocations that reduction were sure to bring. If somehow the staff could be exempted from reduction, and if somehow more officers could be moved from line to staff positions, the best of the


57 Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, August 9, 1820, ibid., 5:317. Jackson was dismayed that there was some prospect for the army other than "a gradual annual increase."
officer corps could be preserved. In such an interest, then, the generals who reported to Calhoun during the latter half of 1820 construed the congressional resolution so that the officer corps, whatever the final reduction, would remain unscathed. This interpretation of Congress' resolution was entirely unwarranted, of course, but it did answer the most basic requirements of an expansible army concept. As General Scott pointed out again in 1820: "If reduction be unavoidable, the parts the least useful should be sacrificed to those more so [Scott's italics]."

The congressional resolution had reawakened the officer corps' instinct for survival. In framing their reduction plans, the generals tested just how successfully the army had ingratiated itself with the republic. Calhoun's efforts since taking office had been directed toward that very end; if in fact the military establishment had been made politically defensible, then perhaps the officer corps (or more narrowly, the staff) could be exempted from the evils of retrenchment, just as their

58 This passage is based upon a "composite" view of the generals' reduction plans. Of the whole set of recommendations, Jackson and Gaines seemed less emphatic about the keeping of an officer corps at the expense of the rest of the army. Gaines bitterly told Calhoun that it was better to dismantle the army altogether if it was to become only a token force. The generals of the Northern Division and the War Office, however, were the most insistent that the officer corps not be reduced at all. For Scott's comment, see Winfield Scott to John C. Calhoun, August 20, 1820, Letters Received, SWMA. Once again, Scott's plan was one of the more extensive of those which Calhoun received, and it bore a marked resemblance to his 1817 plan which Calhoun had seen with Vandeventer's help. See also note 55, above.

As for the generals' interesting interpretation of the congressional resolution, the preservation of the staff or, indeed, any other part of the army was not comprehended by the resolution. When the vote was taken in early May, 1820, Samuel Smith of Maryland attempted to alter the resolution so that it read only "six thousand--exclusive of officers." Lewis Williams of North Carolina rushed forward to re-amend the resolution, apparently seeing what Smith was about, so that the entire army would stand at 6,000 men, officers and all. See these final moves in U. S., Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 2233-2234.
brother officers in the Corps of Engineers had been since 1815. Needless to say, the actual number of soldiers in such an army was very nearly irrelevant to this design.

While the generals of the army were pondering their fate, Calhoun was thinking about his own. By the middle of the summer Calhoun had decided that right-thinking congressmen would not countenance another reduction of the army, but he was anxious to arrange the affairs of the department so as to "present nothing at the next session, which will enable those opposed to our Military institutions to take any advantage."  

On August 15 Calhoun began a long-needed rest and tour of the northern states, ostensibly to examine military defenses in that region. He was gone nearly two months from Washington and went as far north as Montreal; it was a "very pleasant and useful excursion," he thought.

While the Secretary was gone, his young friend and staunch supporter in Congress, Eldred Simkins, carefully monitored his progress through New York and Pennsylvania. In September Simkins wrote to Christopher Vandeventer, who was acting Secretary of War in Calhoun's absence:

Will you be so very obliging as to inform me particularly by the return of mail what papers or journals in the State of N. York are friendly to Mr. Calhoun, & more especially those (if any) which would be favorable to his future political rise and ascendance? . . . It wd [sic] seem that Mr. Crawford's friends are of opinion that they had gotten rid of Calhoun, by calling him a man of genius, a very growing character, but too young. C and others, a little more ill natured, say he would [illegible] with his army.--They also

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59 John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, July 21, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:274.

60 Christopher Vandeventer to James Monroe, August 15, 1820, ibid., 5:330.

61 John C. Calhoun to John Ewing Colhoun, October 23, 1820, ibid., 5:408.
say (I mean the ill natured class) that he is a visionary chimerical politician. . . .

*Remember that by the 4 March 1825 he will be about 42 years of age—Pitt, governed [sic] the Parliament at about 25.62

How is one to regard Simkins' candid solicitude? It is evident that Simkins felt that Calhoun was presidential material, and his frankness with Vandeventer indicated that the subject was not a new one to the chief clerk. Just how much Simkins' letter reveals about Calhoun's presidential ambitions at this point remains an open question. The most that can be said is that by September, 1820, some of Calhoun's closest friends thought he could be president in 1824, and that they believed firmly that the congressional friends of William Crawford were already trying to eliminate Calhoun as a possible candidate by demolishing the army. If on the other hand one views Calhoun's actions in the most cynical light, the Secretary's northern tour was a political reconnaissance, calculated to measure the sources of possible support in the wake of the Missouri debates and financial crisis of the previous year. Unfortunately, cynicism seems to be the best guide for the student of the election of 1824. Whatever the case, the Simkins letter is the first extant evidence which suggests strongly that Calhoun was preparing for the presidency even before President Monroe was elected for his final term and was doing so a year or more before that fact was generally known.

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62 Eldred Simkins to Christopher Vandeventer, September 11, 1820, Vandeventer Papers. This is just one of several pieces from this collection which have never been used before. I do not wish to hedge on the importance I assign to this source; had not scholars been ignorant of this letter, I believe it would have materially altered the interpretation of Calhoun's activities during this period. I believe it indicates that Calhoun was seriously considering the presidency over a year before previous scholarship has argued that his ambitions took shape.
After his return to Washington the Secretary's complacency began to moderate. He wrote to his old friend Charles Tait (who was nevertheless a friend of Crawford's) that "our political horizon[s] present no reason to expect a storm."\(^{63}\) Yet less than two weeks later Calhoun told Samuel Ingham in Pennsylvania: "Your opinion, that the storm will next turn in this direction concurs with my own; provided any point be presented with the least hope of success."\(^{64}\)

Calhoun thought that he could ride the storm out. He counted on Congress' providing for a loan if revenues were still too far below expenditures. There was no doubt but that a retrenchment-minded Congress would be able to see clearly the savings already made in the War Department, and he estimated that the department would need no more than five million dollars out of a total government expenditure of sixteen million dollars. He was even willing to concede that some sort of reduction could be made in the army, but beyond a minimal dislocation, he said, "I would hesitate much."\(^{65}\) He was at this moment working upon his expansive army report.

By November 12 the outlines of his report to Congress had taken shape. The Secretary gave Jacob Brown a preview of what he intended to recommend:

I am strongly inclined to think, that if the Army should be reduced as proposed, still the officers both of the line & staff, ought to be retained with very few exceptions. I know this will not suit the wishes of many both in & out of Congress, yet, as I have always

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\(^{63}\) John C. Calhoun to Charles Tait, October 26, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:414.

\(^{64}\) John C. Calhoun to Samuel Ingham, November 6, 1820, ibid., 5:425-426.

\(^{65}\) Ibid.
found it preferable to discharge my duties faithfully without regard to unjust clamor, I am of the opinion, that a regard to the same principles, will in this case induce me to shape my report so as to make but little derangement in the existing establishment. I still hope that even the rank & file will not be touched.66

While Calhoun polished his report, General Brown (and no doubt other officers as well) was calculating every advantage that the army could win for itself in the short time that remained before Congress took up the reduction question once more. Having learned that the Maine congressional delegation was, as Brown put it, "less friendly to the Army than, perhaps, they would [be] if an additional military Force was ordered to that State," he frankly appealed to Calhoun for military pork-barrel; Brown continued, "Their new condition naturally tends to increase their pretentions [sic], and comprising as they do a most important Flank of the Confederacy I think it will be seen that their claims to some additional national Troops, and Fortifications, are not unreasonable."67

One week into the second session of the Sixteenth Congress, the batteries of retrenchment opened up on the War Department once again. John Cocke of Tennessee moved that the House instruct the Committee on Military Affairs to discuss the expediency of reducing the army.68 Crawford's report on the state of the nation's finances followed shortly. The Secretary of the Treasury estimated that the coming year's deficit

66 John C. Calhoun to Jacob Brown, November 12, 1820, ibid., 5:432.


would be even more severe than that of the year before; he put the figure at $7,452,000. Coincidentally, the estimate which Crawford gave for projected military expenditures was $7,445,000. \(^{69}\) The similarity of these two figures, it seems, did not escape general notice, and certainly not Calhoun's; both figures quoted by Secretary Crawford were far off the mark.

Calhoun sent his report on the expansible army to Congress some eleven days later, on December 12, 1820. \(^{70}\) The Secretary of War readily adopted the sum and substance of his generals' recommendations. Calhoun's report was perhaps more elegantly phrased, and pretended to more high-mindedness than those of the officers, but certainly the expansible army concept which it contained was not a Calhoun creation. One might be moved to grant that Calhoun recognized a good idea when he saw one; and as has been pointed out, the concept had the crucial merit of adaptability to the republic's needs, especially at this time. But even if Calhoun had been disposed to extensive military retrenchment, there would have been little profit in opposing his own military constituency; there certainly would have been no commensurate gain in his congressional popularity and by this time Calhoun knew it. He was not, of course, favorable to what he called "false economy." Calhoun believed that the principles for which he and his generals stood were immutable. And principles of military nationalism, he felt, were not fit subjects for partisan bartering.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., p. 493. Figures are rounded off to the nearest thousand.

\(^{70}\) The discussion of the expansible army which follows is based upon Calhoun's remarks and the charts attached in "Reduction of the Army," December 12, 1820, ASPMA, 2:188-198. The text of Calhoun's message may be found in John C. Calhoun to John W. Taylor, December 12, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:480-491.
Unlike his generals, the Secretary wasted no time arguing for a standing army; he observed that the resolution at least took that much for granted. He was more interested in the character that the new army would assume and the principles which governed its maintenance. Knowing that the question before him was no longer the old one of militia versus standing army, Calhoun was not hesitant about expressing his preference for the latter. Friends of the militia, therefore, saw no defense of that institution in Calhoun's remarks. Instead, the Secretary's jaundiced view of the militia, confined until now in his private correspondence, assumed full expression. In Calhoun's opinion the rapid advancement of the science of war had passed the militia by; at the most, they could serve as auxiliaries to the Regular Army or as a sort of home or territorial guard. It was as sweeping an attack on military amateurism as had ever been delivered in the United States by a public official; the fact that Calhoun made it at this particular time indicates that there was no longer a serious competition between military professionalism and military amateurism. 71

The foundation of Calhoun's plan, like those of his generals, was premised upon retaining the officer corps very nearly intact. That corps, educated and trained in peacetime, was the essential difference between an armed crowd and an effective defense, Calhoun said. This being so, Calhoun devoted the majority of his report to convincing Congress that somehow the officer corps should be preserved and presenting a plan which did so. 72.

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71 Ibid. 72 Ibid.
What Calhoun actually recommended to Congress was an amalgam of the different plans he had received earlier in the year. The generals had been so well agreed in their plans that Calhoun really did not have to choose between them. Under Calhoun's proposal, the rifle regiment would merge with the infantry, making nine infantry regiments in all. The light and heavy artillery would be merged also and absorb the old Ordnance department to form a Corps of Artillery, which for the first time, would have a chief and staff. Officers of this new branch would rotate between the three different elements of the corps, learning the techniques of each. Both the artillery and infantry companies would be maintained far below combat strength: an artillery company would be comprised of 64 non-commissioned officers and men, an infantry company, 37.73

Calhoun took this opportunity to try to fill out the general staff by recommending the creation of a Judge Advocate General, a proposal he had made in 1818 and which had been refused even then. This post would fill out a complement of general officers supervising the distinct branches of the Regular Army, all of whom would be located in Washington under the control of the Secretary. Thus, in Calhoun's plan there were three distinct parts of the army: the general staff, the artillery, and the infantry. Charts accompanying Calhoun's report showed that this army would total 6,391 officers and men after reorganization. These charts were incorrect: including the 737 officers in the staff and the line the total number of men in this new army would be more than 7,000 men. This expansible army had become expanded indeed: between the congressional resolution and Calhoun's report, it had

73 Ibid.
increased by 1,000 men. Gliding over the mathematical error in the charts, Calhoun estimated that simply by augmenting this skeletal structure, a wartime force could be raised quickly to a level of 20,000 men.  

The report was the signal for the anti-army forces to gather in Congress, and they were considerable. Crawford's erroneous treasury report did not so much initiate this undercurrent of feeling as reinforce it. "Our good, & pure Republicans of Virginia & elsewhere are displeased with the military parade, as they call it, the same smelling strong of Monarchy & military Govt. [sic]," observed Rufus King. Even before Calhoun delivered his report, Newton Cannon was protesting the Military Academy's expenses again, hoping either to eliminate the institution or curtail its operations altogether. Congressman Cocke rammed through a resolution asking for a new report from Calhoun on the Johnson contract. By all evidence it seemed that the army question would be forced into debate early in the session.

Army officers watched expectantly as retrenchment-minded congressmen made their first moves and persuaded themselves that the worst could not happen. Out in Missouri Henry Atkinson wrote to General Jesup:

I have at no time before been under much apprehension of a reduction, and I think if the Army escapes a trimming [sic] down by the present effort we may look to something like permanency. In revolving the matter over in my mind I do not see how Congress is

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74 See the chart marked "A," in ibid., 5:191-192.
75 Rufus King to Christopher Gore, December 1, 1820, King Correspondence, 6:364.
77 Ibid., pp. 473-476.
very easily to begin a reduction. Genl [sic] Jackson is the favorite of the South & West & Cenl [sic] Brown of the North & East, and if they reduce at all one of these gentlemen must go out. If neither party yields the Army may escape.  

From his headquarters in upstate New York General Brown had seen Calhoun's report to Congress by the end of December. Brown thought that it was all that it should have been, but he told the Secretary that he still "most anxiously hope[d] that the Army will not be reduced."  

The general thought that any reduction would have a "demoralizing influence." Besides, Brown argued, the army had real value now in peacetime: "Let us erect as many military works, improve as many roads, & cultivate as much land as you please. Such labours will improve the moral & physical powers of the military establishment & aid much in sustaining this most important arm of the country."  

The debate on the military peace establishment began in earnest in early January, 1821. The pro-War Department forces were led by the ineffectual Alexander Smyth of Virginia and Eldred Simkins. Simkins began, on January 4, by accusing Newton Cannon of harassing Calhoun by calling for information on the Military Academy. Cannon's repeated demands for reports from the War Department amounted to little more than a tactic "calculated to give needless trouble to the public officers," said Simkins. Smyth was the chairman of the Committee on Military affairs, and his loyalty was suspect since he had been appointed by

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78 Henry Atkinson to Thomas Jesup, December 27, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:516.
79 Jacob Brown to John C. Calhoun, December 30, 1820, ibid., 5:518.
80 Ibid.
Crawford partisan John W. Taylor of New York, the Speaker of the House. Nevertheless, Smyth managed an able defense of the army by maligning the militia. He told the House:

The militia are a portion of the people; and we should remember that the regular troops are also a portion of the people. We are apt to view the latter as if they were strangers. It is the difference of organization that constitutes the difference between the militia and the regular troops in the service of the United States; both are composed of citizens; and the same man may alternatively serve in both.\textsuperscript{82}

The militia, Smyth said, was not deserving of "the confidence of the nation for carrying on war." They were expensive to maintain and deranged the economy when they were called out. The Regular Army, said Smyth, was everything the militia was not.\textsuperscript{83} Shortly afterward Simkins spoke again (and at length) in defense of an enlarged army, but aside from Smyth and Simkins only one other congressman, Alfred Cuthbert of Georgia, spoke for the Calhoun proposals. Withal, it was a poor showing for the army.

It remained only for the leaders of the "economy" faction to state their case. Only a few days after Calhoun's report went to Congress, Crawford had issued a correction of his earlier mistake in computing the deficit; because of the different methods of accounting in the various departments, Crawford said, there had been an error in reckoning the deficit of almost three million dollars.\textsuperscript{84} This statement went largely unnoticed during the army debates. Lewis Williams of North Carolina carried the retrenchment banner and cast most of his remarks against Calhoun personally. Williams declared:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{82}Ibid., p. 745.
\item \textsuperscript{83}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{84}Ibid., pp. 689-691.
\end{itemize}
The Secretary of War . . . has invariably adhered to this branch of
the Army [the officer corps] with wonderful tenacity. That he should
have done so, in the report made at the present session, is, to me,
a matter of perfect surprise. He knew well the condition of the
Treasury; he knew there would be a deficit of several millions; he
also knew that the officers materially contributed to the expense of
supporting the Army, and, yet, after all this information, he gravely
recommends that the officers should be retained. I should have sup­
posed that a very different course would have been pursued.89

Aside from the economy argument, proponents of reduction concen­
trated on the most obvious shortcoming of Calhoun's report: the
secretary's attempt to save the officer corps from retrenchment.
Calhoun's response to the resolution had not, of course, been a straight­
forward one, and his attempt to circumvent the real sense of the
resolution was pointed out on several occasions. One of the army's
opponents paid a compliment to the Secretary of War for his audacity.
Thomas Cobb of Georgia told the House that Calhoun's report was accept­
able except insofar as it retained the general staff. Notwithstanding
this and other serious difficulties with Calhoun's proposals, Cobb said,
"I yet agree that it is the ablest, most ingenious, and, upon the whole,
the best defence of a standing army in time of peace which I have seen
in print since the commencement of Mr. Adams' administration to the
present day."86 All that being so, Cobb concluded, "I can see no
utility in an army of officers."87 Lewis Williams claimed that "all
have seemed to think, that the number of officers in the Army was unneces­
sarily great."88

On January 23, 1821, the House of Representatives voted 109 to
48 in favor of reducing the army, officers and all, to 6,000 men.89

85 Ibid., p. 778.  86 Ibid., p. 728.  87 Ibid., p. 729.
88 Ibid., p. 778.  89 Ibid., p. 937.
Andrew Jackson, as General Brown had predicted he would be the year before, was virtually legislated out of the service by a provision in the bill that there be only one brigadier general in the service. The light and heavy artillery were combined, as Calhoun had recommended, but the Ordnance department remained a separate entity. A Judge Advocate General was created (Calhoun had long wanted this) in the House version of the bill, but the position was later excised in the Senate.\(^9\)  

The one consolation to supporters of the army was that throughout the debates in Congress, no one had advocated eliminating the military establishment. Apparently not even the retrenchment bloc was strong enough (or willing) to destroy the army. To Senator Mahlon Dickerson of New Jersey this was not a very consoling revelation. Dickerson told his fellow senators:

> The exertions which have been made, and I fear successfully made, to produce a revolution in the public mind, upon the subject of standing armies in time of peace, I will confess, fill me with apprehension. . . . The apathy of the people upon this subject, to judge from their silence, would indicate that their former jealousies of permanently standing armies, by some strange influence, had been put to rest forever.\(^9\)\(^1\)\")

Once again, while considering provisions for West Point, Dickerson worried aloud about the military influence in the United States and how it had grown. He had no particular objection to the Military Academy, Dickerson said, except "that it may enlist too many friends in favor of standing armies."\(^9\)\(^2\)

Dickerson need not have bothered himself about the army's friends. Other observers agreed that pro-military forces had not been able to put up much of a fight. Rufus King found congressional affairs

\(^9\)\(^0\) Ibid., pp. 934-935. \(^9\)\(^1\) Ibid., p. 367. \(^9\)\(^2\) Ibid., p. 372.

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"in a most extraordinary condition." As the administration's programs were being assailed daily by advocates of retrenchment, "no one offers himself to explain or to support those measures wh. [sic] are supposed to have the recommendations of the Extive. [sic]." William Plumer, Jr., of New Hampshire agreed; he wrote to his father:

We have lately given a pretty strong proof of the little influence possessed, by the Administration, over the House of Representatives, by the passage of the Army bill--The Secretary of War & all his friends, in & out of doors, opposed it by every expedient in their power--The President was known to be against it--& probably other members of the Cabinet--but it was carried, notwithstanding many defects in the details of the bill, by an overwhelming majority.

Naturally, the friends of the army were stunned. Major Stephen Long, newly returned from the Missouri exploration, wrote bitterly to Calhoun after hearing of the House vote: "In this enlightened age, where patriotism is valued according to the wealth it yields, I am inclined to think that Cincinnatus himself would be loath to turn farmer." This hostility to Congress was not Long's alone. Major John J. Abert, for one, thought that there was much more to the army vote than the ordinary anti-military hostility. Abert wrote to Vandeventer in late January:

This vote on the Army bill beats all I could have imagined. If reduction was to be made, the project of the Secretary is the only one in which System & Science [sic] were incorporated and which had the Singular [sic] advantage of lessening our numbers without weakening our means. But it seems to have been entirely disregarded--

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93 Rufus King to C. King, January 19, 1821, King Correspondence, 6:378.


Surely the State [sic] of intelligence in the house of Reps [sic] is far behind him; and their conduct if I may judge, very from the wishes of the people.

The West wishes to avoid the possibility of taxing their lands--there lies the rub--And to effect this they have gull'd the Atlantic over into our abandonment of the defenses of their towns; for to say nothing of the erroneous plan on which the reduction is to be made, it will all be taken on the line of the Atlantic. The West will make a-hell-of-a-noise, if a move the less is on their frontier. And from where are the garrisons for Florida to be taken? The Resolution [sic] requiring a System [sic] of reduction from the Secretary was made when it was probable we should not acquire this, the event proving otherwise, even that, excellent as it is, I should have thought would not have been adopted. But when determined to reduce, to turn their backs upon the ablest plan of reducing an Army, ever handed in by any war minister under our government, and to adopt one of the shape of that in the present bill ... Is [sic] to me most singular. So let me into the Secret [sic].

For other officers in the army the shock of reduction wore off much quicker than Abert's anger. An excited scramble for places began even before Congress passed the final reduction bill. Quartermaster General Jesup asked for Calhoun's permission to assign young officers to work with him in that department, taking the place of civilian clerks. Bartlett Yancey wrote from North Carolina on behalf of a local boy's retaining a captaincy. General Winfield Scott, obviously unconcerned about his own security, brought "the extraordinary pretensions" of Abram Eustis to Calhoun's notice. Calhoun had his favorites, too. He consoled Major Stephen Long, assuring him that reduction would not affect

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96 J. J. Abert to Christopher Vandeventer, January 25, 1821, Vandeventer Papers.

97 Thomas Jesup to John C. Calhoun, February 3, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 5:592-593.

98 Bartlett Yancey to John C. Calhoun, February 9, 1821, ibid., 5:623-624.

99 Winfield Scott to John C. Calhoun, February 12, 1821, ibid., 5:625-626.
the young explorer.\textsuperscript{100} The Secretary made sure that Andrew Jackson knew that one of his favorite young officers, Colonel James Gadsden, would emerge from reduction unscathed.\textsuperscript{101}

In order to determine the fate of officers who were perhaps less well connected, Calhoun set up a "Board of General Officers," which convened in April with Jacob Brown as chairman.\textsuperscript{102} As the board did its work during the following weeks, it too had to deal with political influence. One irate officer, Colonel Roger Jones, threatened Brown that he would use his connections with the Virginia delegation in Congress to abolish Brown's position.\textsuperscript{103} Jones was retained.

At the end of the Congress' last session Calhoun and John Quincy Adams walked home together. Adams thought that Calhoun seemed "dispirited" because of the attacks upon him and his department. The Secretary of War ruminated on the causes of the agitation against him in the Congress. He tried to fix in his mind where the administration had gone wrong: the repeal of internal taxes, a huge revenue-consuming pension bill for veterans of the Revolution—both of these acts had been a mistake, Calhoun thought. Calhoun was habituated to thinking in terms of issues, even at that late date.\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{100}Stephen Long to John C. Calhoun, February 18, 1821, ibid., 5:636.
  \item \textsuperscript{101}John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, March 7, 1821, ibid., 5:664.
  \item \textsuperscript{102}Jacob Brown to John C. Calhoun, April 11, 1821, ibid., 6:40-41. Here Brown describes the criteria the board will use in determining which officers to retain in service and which others to discharge.
  \item \textsuperscript{103}John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, August 18, 1821, ibid., 6:348-349. Monroe took a direct interest in rearranging the officer corps after reduction was mandated. These rearrangements would eventually become an issue at the next session of Congress.
  \item \textsuperscript{104}Adams, \textit{Diary}, 5:314-315.
\end{itemize}
It is interesting to watch the progress of Calhoun's thoughts during the spring of 1821. At the beginning of the year, he merely disapproved in general of those who wanted to reduce expenditures; he thought that they were seeking fugitive advantages in temporary popularity. By the time he walked with Adams, Calhoun personally identified the coalition which wreaked havoc on the War Department. Calhoun's obvious disapproval of retrenchment was now widely known, and Adams thought that Crawford saw Calhoun mainly as somebody else's—maybe Adams'—supporter. With that egoism which always makes one believe that he is the subject of others' calculations, Adams thought that the attack on Calhoun was merely an oblique means of attacking himself. But of Crawford's responsibility for the dismantling of the army, Adams had no doubt. Neither did Calhoun. He told Andrew Jackson shortly thereafter:

The Individual [sic] to whom you attribute the disorders in our affairs or rather the House of Representatives is not free from suspicion here. What part he may have taken, I cannot say, but it is certain that his personal friends have many of them been very active to embarrass. They have in particular been very pointed in their attacks on me personally. My course is fixed and nothing will turn me from it.

The work of the last session of Congress had devastated Calhoun's departmental programs. Reduction of the army had, as General Brown feared, disrupted the officer corps significantly: some of these officers had become even more politically sensitive than they had been formerly and would eventually take a direct hand in the upcoming presidential election. The money for fortifications had been reduced by

105 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxey, January 14, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 5:557.
106 Adams, Diary, 5:314-315.
107 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, March 7, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 5:663.
seventy-five per cent. Although the new reorganization law had mandated the continuance of the Ordnance department, no funds had been set aside for its operation. The appropriation for Indian affairs had been cut cleanly in half.\textsuperscript{108}

The immediate political consequences of Calhoun's defeat notwithstanding, the Secretary's attempted War Department reforms were not so chimerical as his friends and opponents believed. Each of these parties had its reasons for thinking so: his friends wanted his advancement; his enemies understood better that visions made for poor politics. The Secretary's reputation as a visionary invested his reforms with that quality; his contemporaries would have said the reverse.

In only one respect was Calhoun the innovator: he was perhaps this nation's first national security manager. Unconcerned by anti-military traditions, Calhoun sought to weld the military establishment to the cause of national progress. In order to do so Calhoun needed a professional military establishment with a repertoire of functions far more extensive than had ever existed. But an enlarged and improved army was merely an end to a means, as Calhoun saw it, and this is what most differentiates him from the crass militarism of which he was later accused. Calhoun never submerged himself into the military culture; always, he was the civilian nationalist.

It is interesting, therefore, that it was his report on the expansible army which set his reputation in American military history, and not his report on internal improvements, for it is the latter which best represents Calhoun's philosophy of managing the nation's security.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
The expansible army report would never have been written but for the demands of Congress, and even had this kind of army been created, Calhoun's ambitions for the American military establishment would not have been realized. The report nevertheless came to be considered as the professional army's best defense against democracy during the nineteenth century. In 1879 General William T. Sherman, testifying before Congress on peacetime military requirements, referred directly to Secretary Calhoun's report, then over half a century old. The report was, in Sherman's opinion, "so exhaustive . . . nothing more need be written."¹⁰⁹ Later, when General Emory Upton urged (again) the creation of a professional army, he spoke of Calhoun's report in glowing terms.¹¹⁰ These men misunderstood, however; the expansible army was Calhoun's reaction to congressional pressures. It was not a bonafide reform.

III

The Secretary of War was fond of saying that he stood on his principles and that those who opposed him were merely looking for advantages in the passions of the moment. Calhoun suspected the proficient politician, and he himself was not, after all, a very good politician if one considers William Crawford as the best representative of that breed. And although Calhoun did attempt the contest with Crawford and his kind, there was always the feeling of distaste when he did so.


Calhoun's first substantial moves to promote himself politically had to do with the Speaker's position in the House of Representatives. Anticipating trouble in the fall of 1820, Calhoun attempted to persuade his old friend and fellow South Carolinian, William Lowndes, to run for the Speaker's chair, which Henry Clay was known to be vacating for the time being. Calhoun thought that the time was propitious for a change in the House leadership. With the nearly obligatory re-election of James Monroe assured, the republic's debt to the Virginia dynasty would be paid; the Federalists did not even bother to put up a candidate. This boded ill for any programs the administration might wish to sponsor in the future: there would be few in the House who would care to stand by the obsolescing Monroe. Calhoun knew he had a friend in Lowndes. In the course of trying to convince the ailing Lowndes to stand for the speakership, Calhoun remarked: "I consider the measures of this government, as very much depending on the Speaker of the house [sic]. It is certain, that no elevated course of policy can be well sustained, without an enlightened and firm Speaker." 

Lowndes did stand for the position, and as the session opened, led the balloting for the first few votes. His principal opponent was John W. Taylor of New York, a known supporter of Treasury Secretary Crawford. After twenty-three ballots, Taylor won the victory. The

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111 John C. Calhoun to William Lowndes, October 12, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:390.
112 Rufus King to C. King, January 19, 1821, King Correspondence, 6:378.
113 John C. Calhoun to William Lowndes, October 12, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:390.
importance of Taylor's election shortly became evident. "Mr. Speaker Taylor has done us much mischief, by carefully arranging the military and naval comts. [sic] of the House so as to secure a majority hostile in each, to both Army and Navy," remarked General Brown.115

In April, 1820, after the Sixteenth Congress had done its work, Calhoun publicly aired his complaints. Still seething over Congress' destructive assault on his programs, Calhoun wrote an article for the National Intelligencer entitled "Fortifications," and signed it "Vauban."116 Calhoun's piece was only nominally about coastal defense, however; he reserved the bulk of his comments for those who had attacked the department's programs. Chief among his complaints was the "unfortunate formation of the important committees." 117 Those in the House of Representatives who were genuinely interested in retrenchment, he wrote, combined with "the few who were really hostile to our military and naval establishments" and the latter "acquired . . . an influence beyond their just standing." 118 The whole majority, Calhoun thought, "evidently acted under a panic, arising from the supposed state of the Treasury." 119 He had no objections to an honest reduction of expenditure, but retrenchment, he argued, applied to "improper or useless expenditures," none of

115 Jacob Brown to Joseph G. Swift, February 3, 1820, Swift Papers.
116 "Vauban [John C. Calhoun]," "Fortifications," National Intelligencer, April 10, 1821. See the text of this article in Calhoun Papers, 6:31-39. The authorship of this article was not attributed until recently, when the editors of the Calhoun Papers found a note of Calhoun's to Virgil Maxey, April 11, 1821, ibid., 6:41-42. References below refer to text in Calhoun Papers.
119 Ibid., 6:32.
which had to do with War Department programs. "Similar conduct in private life would invariably be called folly," Calhoun said. 120

It is doubtful that many in Washington were deceived by Calhoun's nom de plume. Suspicions that Calhoun had his eye on a higher office had been current since the beginning of the year, and they had been dismissed as unreasonable: Calhoun was too young. 121 "So many are visibly before him in the race," observed William Plumer, Jr. 122

Throughout the trying year Calhoun frankly communicated his disappointments to any correspondent who would listen. Calhoun and Jackson commiserated with each other over the duplicity of William Crawford, particularly after Jackson was banished to the governship of the new Florida territory. 123 Calhoun's private correspondence began to concentrate noticeably on several states: New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. All were states in which Calhoun's view of internal improvements, protectionism, the bank, and other of his nationalist sentiments would stand him in favor. The Secretary was heartened when his old friend, Micah Sterling of New York, bid fair to win a congressional seat. He congratulated Sterling by saying, "We want talents, frankness and firmness much in the House." 124 And as Calhoun realized that the nationalism upon

120 Ibid., 6:33.
121 William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., January 27, 1821, Plumer Correspondence, pp. 63-64.
122 Ibid.
123 John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, April 8, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:25-26.
which his career had thus far been based was in danger, the more intransigent he became. "My course is fixed," he said. "I will not tamper with the high destiny of this country." There were those politicians who still listened to this kind of rhetoric, and Calhoun was particularly susceptible to it when it was turned in his direction. General Jackson was especially handy with this kind of phrase:

The course pursued by last Congress [sic] is universally [sic] condemned, whilst your course, & report is approbated by nine-tenths of the citizens of the country through which I have passed; indeed it is approved by all who, from political and popular views have been with the majority—and finding themselves now in the minority cannot consistantly [sic] retreat.  

But Calhoun did not really need such praise to drive him on. "I have formed no connection with anyone," Calhoun said that summer. In all probability Calhoun had by that time decided that it was up to others to form connections with him. In August, 1820, Calhoun took his family to Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania, to "take the waters" for his health. And although no direct evidence exists which shows that this trip was anything more than personal, it seems highly likely, as two of the foremost Calhoun scholars suggest, that it was here that Calhoun formed an alliance with the so-called "Family party" of Pennsylvania. By the time he returned to Washington in September, Calhoun was predicting that

125 John C. Calhoun to Charles Tait, April 23, 1821, ibid., 6:70.
126 Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, May 22, 1821, ibid., 6:142.
128 See Wiltse, Calhoun, p. 232; and Capers, Opportunist, p. 84.
the coming session of Congress would at least be an "interesting" one. He fully expected a repetition of the agitation in the last session of Congress, and he expected to be involved in it.\(^{129}\)

Since in all likelihood Calhoun already had the assurances of Pennsylvania's support, he once again attempted to influence the election of the new Speaker of the House. Moving into the highly charged atmosphere with foolish confidence, Calhoun believed that he was providing the administration with the support which had been so noticeably absent during the previous session. He was sure that the other leading contender for the presidency, John Quincy Adams, had little support either in the House or in his home section and therefore could not carry on administration programs. Although he had likely heard rumors of Calhoun's ambitions, Adams did not yet see Calhoun as a competitor. For his part, Calhoun had already decided that Adams' was an ineffectual candidacy, opening the way for the calamity of a sweep of Congress and presidency by William Crawford's "radicals." Calhoun thought that Adams, "with bitter temper and views, the dread of insinuations, growing out of his former political opinions would render his policy feeble and timid."\(^{130}\)

Whether Adams suspected it or not, Calhoun was already drawing up plans for a national political organization devoted to his election to the presidency in 1824. He had no thought to move into the public light as yet. "My age and my position, would both seem to require, that

\(^{129}\) John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, September 24, 1821; and John C. Calhoun to Moses Waddell, September 25, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:386-387.

\(^{130}\) John C. Calhoun to Lewis Cass, December 9, 1821, ibid., 6:560-561.
I should be *protruded* on the publick notice," he told Lewis Cass in December.131

The way [Calhoun said] ought to be prepared by conversation and correspondence, where it can be safely done, previously to any publick demonstration, and when that is to be made the proper points to commence would be Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York, particularly the two first.132

Meanwhile, the contest for Speaker of the House went badly for Calhoun. Before the session began John Quincy Adams and Taylor had apparently agreed that Taylor would have the support of the administration in return for more favorable appointments to the House committees. When Adams talked with Calhoun about Taylor's re-election, Calhoun would not go along. Instead, the Secretary of War was bent on keeping Taylor out of the Speaker's chair at all costs. Calhoun was strong enough to prevent Taylor's being seated and unwittingly paved the way for the election of Philip Barbour, a Crawford radical.133 Although Calhoun could hardly have believed it, Taylor was moderate compared to Barbour, who promptly filled committees in the House loyal to Crawford. Because of the momentous issues awaiting the House, the stresses and strains of twelve hotly contested ballots before Barbour was chosen caused "more dissension in the House than there was in the whole of the last Congress."134 One immediate result of this agitation was Taylor's recruitment to the ranks of the radicals.135

131 Ibid.  
132 Ibid.  
133 For two accounts see William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., December 3, 1821, Plumer Correspondence, pp. 64-65; and Adams, Diary, 5:451.  
134 Adams, Diary, 5:451, 474.  
135 William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., December 11, 1821, Plumer Correspondence, pp. 67-68.
A few days after the speaker's election, the General Assembly of South Carolina caucused and nominated William Lowndes for the presidency by a vote of fifty-eight to fifty-four. The fifty-four votes went to Calhoun. Lowndes was on his way to Washington at the moment of the vote. One scholar speculates that the news of Lowndes' nomination reached Washington before Lowndes did. It is possible; the South Carolina assembly voted on December 18. Ten days later a group of Pennsylvania men went to Calhoun's house and arranged to support the Secretary's own nomination. The word of this occurrence was out the following day. Several days later Calhoun took pains to explain the sequence of events to Virgil Maxcy, and the Secretary intimated that Lowndes was already in Washington and that they had already discussed Calhoun's decision to run for the presidency when word arrived from South Carolina. Calhoun declared to Maxcy:

It so happened before we heard of this rash measure, that I had a full and free conversation with Mr. Lowndes, in which I stated, that I had determined, that I would not resist the opinion of those, who thought, that at any hazard, I ought to be brought forward, and my reasons for this determination, in the sufficiency of which, he fully acquiesced.

Calhoun added that he thought the movement in South Carolina "very rash and foolish." Whether or not Calhoun knew in advance about Lowndes' nomination, it is highly unlikely that Calhoun would have altered his course. Believing (as he said) that Adams did not have enough northern support to combat Crawford in a national contest, Calhoun had long since decided that he was the man to take Crawford on.

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136 On the local context of the South Carolina General Assembly's nomination of Lowndes, see Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, p. 105.
137 Capers, Opportunist, p. 83. 138 Adams, Diary, 5:466.
139 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, December 31, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:595-597.
140 Ibid., 6:595.
One scholar has taken Calhoun to task for not deferring to Lowndes' nomination. If Calhoun was interested only in stopping the radicals, so the argument goes, he should have fallen in behind Lowndes' candidacy rather than staking out a claim of his own.\textsuperscript{141} But it is easy enough to see Calhoun's thinking at this point: he knew Lowndes to be an ailing man.\textsuperscript{142} Lowndes had a limited constituency, whereas Calhoun was by now a national figure. Lowndes had managed to win the nomination only because the caucus had been boycotted by a third of the members of the assembly.\textsuperscript{143} So while Lowndes had only a part of South Carolina, Calhoun had almost as large a part, plus Pennsylvania as well.

It was true, as Calhoun's friend Micah Sterling told Adams, that the nomination of Lowndes (and Calhoun's) "would set the whole continent to premature electioneering."\textsuperscript{144} The leading contenders and their friends were galvanized by the news from South Carolina and Pennsylvania. "Nothing has been said or thought of, for some days past, but the Presidential election, & almost everybody has been sounded on the subject," observed one friend of Adams.\textsuperscript{145} Another of Adams' supporters entreated the Secretary of State not to be so quiescent; "if something should not be done to counteract the caballing, public opinion would be forestalled,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} Capers, \textit{Opportunist}, p. 85.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Lowndes died less than one year later. He resigned at the end of the first session of the Seventeenth Congress. He died at sea on his way to England in October, 1822.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Freehling, \textit{Prelude to Civil War}, p. 105.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Adams, \textit{Diary}, 5:470.
\item \textsuperscript{145} William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., January 3, 1822, \textit{Plumer Correspondence}, p. 71.
\end{itemize}
and a party too strong to be broken would be formed," said Adams' partisan.\footnote{Adams, Diary, 5:468.} Adams merely fumed at his young colleague's pretensions.

Even before the year was out Calhoun was sure that he could win the election. Although he had been upset by the Lowndes nomination, he nevertheless thought that "it demonstrate[d] to the North Mr. Crawford's want of popularity to the South, which I am satisfied, that time will continue to confirm": Crawford, he thought, had "gone down rapidly."\footnote{John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, December 31, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:596-597.}

Calhoun, meanwhile, was simply not willing to face up to his desire for the presidency. It was every bit as keen as was Adams', or Crawford's, or Clay's, but from the beginning the Secretary of War cast his candidacy in the guise of a crusade for progress. This unreality was a parody on the disinterested, elevated politician of the republic's past, and Calhoun never overcame the pose. His own motives, which he believed were so noble, were in the observer's eyes transparently self-interested.

Calhoun took pains to explain himself and his new course to John Quincy Adams. Perhaps Calhoun thought that Adams, of all politicians, would understand his motives, but Adams came to think of Calhoun only as a grasping spoiler, little better than William Crawford. When Adams' friend Plumer went to see Calhoun shortly after the announcement of Pennsylvania's support, Calhoun talked long and apparently freely to Plumer, doubtless knowing that Plumer would tell Adams all (as he did). The Secretary went on at length about how his candidacy was a "qualified"
one: he was standing not so much against Adams as against Crawford. Plumer was not disposed to see the difference; what Plumer did see was "the eagerness with which he grasps at the splendid phantom which plays before his eyes . . . a proof of equal ambition and want of judgment--; or rather the blindness of self-love."\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{148}William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., January 3, 1822, \textit{Plumer Correspondence}, p. 73.
"I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die:
I think there be Six Richmonds in the field."

Richard III

Scholars have analyzed the presidential campaign of 1824 to distraction. The roles of the various actors have been studied on both the national and state levels. The issues which animated the campaign, those chosen by the candidates such as internal improvements, protectionism, the national bank; and those which the electorate forced upon them, such as the death of the caucus and the expansion of suffrage, have all been considered in depth. The narrative of the campaign, with some exceptions, has been explained repeatedly in these works. More philosophical and ideological conjurings have been inspired by this period than nearly any other: old and new Republicans, old and new nationalists, the radical reaction under Crawford, Jackson and the vox populi—all have been compared, contrasted, contrived, discounted, trumpeted, dismissed.¹ Those who wish to write more on the subject are left only with reduction, prolixity, or mere redundancy.

Thus the following remarks are concerned less with the election's history than with Calhoun's. His activities have been well documented also, but the motives and attitudes of this complex man have been less satisfactorily explained than perhaps any other actor's in the campaigns of 1824. There is, first of all, considerable disagreement on this man's character among scholars. This is important on two counts: evaluations have generally turned on how different the actual Calhoun was from the figure he believed himself to be. Scholars have implicitly confronted the problem of evaluation by trying to judge Calhoun's sincerity. Either the Secretary of War was true to the nationalist beliefs he espoused, or

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2 The differences between Calhoun's thought and action (the first too professedly noble to be quite true—the second, ineffectual) have produced the greatest disagreements about Calhoun's character. For two extreme views, compare, Margaret Coit, John C. Calhoun: An American Portrait (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950) and H. E. Von Holst, John C. Calhoun (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1882).

3 It is possible to classify scholarly views of Calhoun in terms of the opinions held by his adversaries during the campaign of 1824. Crawford thought Calhoun was brilliant, but chimerical and impractical. Adams saw Calhoun as a deceitful political adventurer. Jackson eventually thought of Calhoun as a secret enemy. Clay viewed him as presumptuous. Calhoun thought of himself as a disinterested statesman.
he was an ambitious charlatan. Other Calhoun students have been more relativistic, but somehow their moral disapproval of Calhoun shows through. Scholarly determinations having been made, their suspicions remain that, for all his nationalist rhetoric, the forging of the "cast-iron" man was done here in the era of good feelings. These are still proper matters for consideration.

One important aspect of the election has been neglected. To some Americans Calhoun was as much an "army candidate" as General Andrew Jackson. Jackson's heroic image precluded his being attacked as a "man on horseback": the hero was indomitable; neither the British nor the creed of militarism could dominate his character. The hero's mantle freed the general from such institutional loyalties. Unlike Jackson, the Secretary drew much of his image from these very institutions. Calhoun was comfortable with institutions because he believed that he could dominate them.

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4 Compare Russo, "Southern Nationalists," pp. 293-294, with Von Holst, Calhoun, pp. 55-58. The latter scholar was the first to use John Quincy Adams' diary, then only recently published; accordingly, Von Holst's view of Calhoun is that of Adams' after the Secretary of State was spurned by the Carolinian in late 1821.

5 Capers, Opportunist, pp. 83-85.

6 By this is not meant that Jackson was not perceived as a military figure. He was, but by and large Jackson's image did not contradict the nation's anti-military traditions. In fact Jackson's celebrity confirms that these traditions were still alive and well in some quarters. As shall be seen, some observers did not make refined distinctions between the associations which Jackson and Calhoun had with the military establishment. On the question of Calhoun's success with other institutions, his rapid political rise hardly needs pointing out. Obviously, Calhoun had learned well how to manipulate political institutions in order to advance his career.
One of those institutions was the army. Jackson certainly felt less community with the professional army than Calhoun did. Just as Calhoun and Jackson were divided in their sentiments on the professional military establishment, so too were the views of the officers toward the Secretary and the general. In the ensuing presidential campaign both contenders would recruit military workers to their causes. So would some of the other candidates, but it is clear that of all the contestants for the presidency, Calhoun depended upon the military establishment for support far more than did any of his competitors. Whether he was likewise the army's candidate is less clear. However, it is important to note that of the several candidates for the presidency in 1824, two had intimate connections with the military establishment, and not all of those connections were seen by the public eye. Not since the election of George Washington had a candidate been so identified with things military. From then until the election of 1824, political aspirants were required to be impeccably civilian in outlook and manner. By the time Calhoun and Jackson had set their courses for the White House, a military association was obviously no longer a political liability. This fact, when considered in connection with the exertions of several military men at high levels of the campaign, make the election of 1824 one in which the army took an inordinate, direct interest. The activities of Calhoun's War Department operatives, then, added a new and unique element to the Secretary of War's presidential campaign.

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7See Jackson's criticism of the Executive in his letter to Henry Atkinson, May 15, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:63; and his pointed view of the War Department in Andrew Jackson to Winfield Scott, December 3, 1817, Bassett, Jackson Correspondence, 2:338-339.
The extent to which military men were involved in the campaign tells a good deal more about the army than about Calhoun, however. He had not become "militarized," but he had gone far to cultivate the political senses of a group of important and well placed military figures. Consequently there was no military caballing, no plans laid on for military revolt; instead, members of the War Department establishment who rallied to Calhoun's side adhered to the rules of the political game, such as they were, and gave no thought to militarizing the political process.

The War Department was nevertheless of considerable value to Calhoun during the presidential contest; likewise, he could be of use to certain military figures. When Calhoun became an acknowledged candidate for the presidency in December, 1821, the opponents of the army in Congress had just presented him with yet another opportunity to wield his power over the officer corps by deciding which officers would be kept after reduction and which would not. Although the Board of General Officers had been constituted, retention was, after all, a political question, and the mere existence of the board did not mean that the Secretary had capitulated to retrenchment. All of the other candidates--Crawford, Adams, Clay--with the exception of Andrew Jackson called upon

8"Military figures," as it is used here has reference to men who were in the army or recently retired from service, or civilians who were connected with the War Department in some way. Outsiders, for instance, differed little in the case of Thomas McKenney, who, although a civilian, was a War Department employee for most of Calhoun's career as Secretary. It was almost automatically assumed that whatever McKenney did politically was dictated by Calhoun himself.

9In fact Calhoun and President Monroe deliberately attempted to circumvent or otherwise blunt what they considered to be the more egregious effects of retrenchment. See pp. 311-312 below.
their political kingdoms for assistance as did Calhoun. The Secretary of War had by now a large circle of correspondents in various states; he had influence over appointments within the War Department and an opportunity to influence presidential appointments at times. He could control troop dispositions if he wished (there is no evidence that he used this device as perhaps it could have been used), and of course he had the benefit of official franking (which he did use extensively). Perhaps most beneficial to Calhoun were the military men themselves, stationed at various points, known to each other, and fairly well agreed that elevating Calhoun to power could hardly be against their interests. When the campaign was finished, however, there was no indication that any of the candidates had actively and consciously sought out the support of the army as an institution in their quests for power.

II

Calhoun was encouraged by his Pennsylvania visitors and from the first he counted on that state's support in the campaign to influence still other states where he was not so strong. But the assurances of the Family party's backing, contrary to what Calhoun believed, did not automatically confer that state's blessing upon him. Calhoun thought that his Pennsylvania ancestry and northern education would endear him

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10 The leaders of the Family party in Pennsylvania were Samuel Ingham and George M. Dallas. Both were young, well-placed, rising politicians in their state. The leading scholar of this state's politics during this period has described Ingham as "the front," and Dallas as "the brains" of the party. Ingham was the backer of the Bucks County Messenger and had some claim to the fine arts of political management. Dallas was the son of Alexander J. Dallas and, though young, was possessed of as much political talent as his late father. Other members of the party were Thomas J. Rogers, and Richard Bache, of the Philadelphia Aurora, a grandson of Benjamin Franklin. See Klein, Pennsylvania Politics, pp. 90, 128-129.
there; if he could split Crawford's strength in the South and use Penn­sylvania as the bellwether of his campaign in the Middle Atlantic states, then the Presidency was within his reach. He did not know (and probably would have discounted it if he had) that Andrew Jackson had already received a letter from a Pennsylvanian in August, 1821, hinting of wide­spread support.12 Exactly one year after Calhoun received his Pennsylvanians, the Jackson movement in that state held its first mass meeting in Greensburg.13

For good or ill the campaign of 1824 was underway. One of the several peculiar aspects of the contest was that the politicians did not choose the issues. Only a relatively few persons were concerned with the issues that interested Calhoun. He saw the election as a referendum on nationalism: to him it was to be a choice between progressive and atavistic Republicanism, upheld by Crawford.14 To Crawford it was a contest between orthodoxy and the new amalgam of old Federalism and new Republicanism—heterodox, and dangerous to state sovereignty.15 These were merely niceties, however; the real matter at hand was the power of political office, and none of the leading politicians were beyond sub­verting any position as long as power could be achieved.


12 Samuel Overton to Andrew Jackson, August 1, 1821, Bassett, Jackson Correspondence, 3:105-106.

13 Klein, Pennsylvania Politics, p. 123.

14 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Ingham, November 2, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:326-328.

15 Robert Garnett to Joseph G. Swift, August 12, [1823], Swift Papers.
Crawford meant to take the presidency in the very same way earlier candidates had: by dominating first the Congress, and thereby the congressional caucus which ultimately decided upon the Republican candidate. Early in his deliberations Crawford took his prospects of election somewhat for granted. Power over the congressional caucus ordinarily meant that there would be little need to take notice of the states themselves. Even though the support of the New York-Virginia axis which had made presidents for a good long while was still crucial to Crawford, he was still complaisant. He said in 1821 that he had "never been so silly as to expect anything in relation to myself" from New York. So long as the state's congressional delegates were managed by Martin Van Buren, there was no need for Crawford to be anxious. 16

But by then the caucus itself was becoming an issue. The low repute in which the caucus was held by this time was made abundantly clear by Hezekiah Niles during the first days of 1822. Niles wrote that he would sooner "learn that the halls of Congress were converted into brothels, than that, caucuses . . . should be held in them." 17 Throughout the campaign Niles did not relent in his opposition to any kind of "political management," and for this reason the Niles' Weekly Register, although not committed to any one candidate, worked against any pro-caucus candidate. 18

All this agitation over the caucus meant that Calhoun and his fellow candidates, if they were to stop Crawford, had somehow to change

16 Mooney, Crawford, p. 231.
17 Niles' Weekly Register, January 26, 1822.
18 Ibid., November 9, 1822.
the scene of the contest. Crawford's power in Congress (made evident by the dismantling of Calhoun's military programs during the last session) would have to be somehow blunted. That being done, Calhoun and the other candidates had to make sure that the contest would be moved from Congress to the individual states, where, by various means, the succession of Monroe could be decided. This strategy assumed, of course, that Calhoun would first have to survive what the Crawfordites had in store for him during the present session of Congress.

It was almost a certainty that the Crawford radicals would renew their attacks on Calhoun and the War Department. He had given them every cause to do so. The news of his pretensions was out. As the members returned from the holidays they were greeted by a report in the Washington Gazette entitled, "Training for the Presidency," which read that "members of the Legislature of South Carolina, taking 'time by the forelock,' are trying Mr Lowndes [sic] and Mr Calhoun [sic], in advance on the political turf of that state." Moreover, Calhoun had wantonly interfered in the election to choose a Speaker of the House for two years in a row, and his vindictiveness was so great against John Taylor that the second time Calhoun opposed Taylor, the Secretary did not even have a substitute in mind. Adams thought that James Barbour, who had been able to slip into the Speaker's chair because of Calhoun interference, was "ten times worse" than Taylor. By the end of the session Calhoun was inclined to agree with Adams: the Secretary of War's spring had been very unpleasant.

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19 City of Washington Gazette, January 3, 1822.
20 Adams, Diary, 5:474, 524.
The radicals had shown every willingness to renew their campaign against the War Department in the spring of 1822. Dominating the most important committees in Congress, radicals forced examinations of the Rip Rap and Dauphin Island fortifications contracts in the Senate and the expenses of West Point in the House of Representatives. Thomas Hart Benton pressed home his assault on the factory system from his new seat on the Senate committee on Indian affairs. All of these investigations produced recommendations hostile to Calhoun and his department. But the prospects of the War Department improved when the work of the radical committeemen reached the floor of the Congress for debates. The Secretary of War had recently acquired some new support. The impetuous and combative George McDuffie had just arrived to become South Carolina's newest representative; so had the erudite Joel Poinsett. From New York and Connecticut came Micah and Ansel Sterling; Micah and Calhoun had been friends at Yale. Now, too, several members of the Pennsylvania delegation were voluble in their defense of Calhoun and the War Department.

The results of the session, therefore, were neither as salutary as Calhoun had wanted, nor as bad as he had every right to expect. Only West Point emerged unscathed. The House had pointedly censured Vandeventer and Mix for their association in the Rip Rap project, but funds were not


22 Ibid., p. 343. Of the newest congressional champions of the War Department, George McDuffie got the highest marks, even from hostile observers. John Elliot, editor of the anti-administration Washington Gazette, said of McDuffie's defense of the War Department during debates over the military appropriations that the young South Carolinian's speeches were "incomparably the best," although they were marked by a "want of tenderness" toward other members of the House. City of Washington Gazette, April 18, 1822.
stopped completely, as in the case of the fort on Dauphin Island.\textsuperscript{23} Thomas McKenney's Office of Indian Trade and the factory trading system were both abolished.\textsuperscript{24} Radical demands for retrenchment seemingly had alienated more moderate members of Congress, and it is reasonable to assume that the appearance of McDuffie, Poinsett, the Sterlings, and some Pennsylvanians to champion War Department programs moderated radical demands.\textsuperscript{25}

The attention that Calhoun and Crawford paid to each other in early 1822 indicated that each man saw the other as his main opponent. Of the two, Calhoun was the easier target of criticism: he administered revenue-consuming programs, whereas Crawford merely managed the available monies for government. The operations of the Treasury Department were simply beyond the understanding of most people (politicians included), but all flattered themselves that anyone could fathom military administration—it was a subject requiring minimal knowledge and was ready made for simplistic judgments.

\textsuperscript{23} A move was made by the radicals in both houses to implicitly censure Elijah Mix by voting funds for Forts Monroe and Calhoun, but stipulating that the appropriation did not imply approval of Mix's contract. It was voted down by the House meeting in a committee of the whole. See U. S., Annals of Congress, 17th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1876, 1895.

\textsuperscript{24} U. S. Stat., III, pp. 679-680. See also Chapter IV, pp. above.

\textsuperscript{25} Professor Wiltse shows Calhoun's programs emerging from Congress during this session in rather better shape than I do. Presidential politics had galvanized this session, with the friends of the several candidates acting in various combinations which are virtually impossible to trace from the surviving data. Inasmuch as Crawford was then considered the front runner for the presidency, the friends of his opponents logically could be expected to work against him. This is not to say as Wiltse does, however, that Calhoun was that much stronger. Wiltse, Calhoun, p. 253.
During the winter of 1821-1822 Crawford and his supporters attempted to turn the disruption caused by the Army Reorganization Act of 1821 to their advantage. By late 1821 the work of the General Board supervising the reduction was finished, and quite naturally there were many dissatisfied army officers for the Crawfordites to exploit. By December Crawford was being very solicitous of disgruntled officers who had been removed from the service or transferred to another command.  

Public notice was given early in January that the Crawfordites in Congress meant to make officer displacement an issue. The Washington Gazette reported that John Floyd of Virginia was about to bring on an investigation of how the army bill had been executed. Floyd had reportedly complained that "there are many respectable officers, who consider themselves aggrieved by the appointments" made under the reorganization act. On January 21, 1822, President Monroe sent a new list of military appointments which reflected the reorganization to Congress. Monroe had recommended Colonel Nathan Towson to be Paymaster General and Colonel James Gadsden to be the new Adjutant General of the army. Both these officers were known to have close ties with Calhoun. In the Senate, which had to confirm Monroe's proposed appointments, Towson's and Gadsden's nominations ran into heavy opposition. "The organization of the Army is making great noise here," reported a Jackson man to his chief. "I am fearful that our friend Gadsden will be placed in an unpleasant situation."  

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26 William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., December 11, 1821, Plumer Correspondence, pp. 67-68.

27 City of Washington Gazette, January 2, 1822.


President Monroe took the unusual step of withdrawing the two nominations and resubmitting them with an explanation of how he had construed the reduction act of the year before. This difficulty upset the President: "I have never known such a state of things as has existed here," he told Madison, "nor have I personally ever experienced so much embarrassment and mortification." In the end both officers were denied their appointments, but Monroe and Calhoun saw to it that they were given the jobs unofficially, intending to submit the appointments again when the political climate was improved.

Although it was no doubt true, as Monroe said, that there was "great discontent" in a "host of disbanded officers," Calhoun's opponents suspected that there were a great many more officers who would support their Secretary of War. For example, Colonel Gadsden had already been acting in Calhoun's behalf. As early as November, 1821, Gadsden had asked General Jackson for his confidential opinion on the presidential chances of Adams and Calhoun. Colonel Towson was shortly recruited by Calhoun to use his influence in his home state of Maryland; having suffered at the hands of the radicals, Towson was pronounced "perfectly safe" by the Secretary of War for political uses.

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31 Ibid.
32 Ibid. The officers of the army could at least count on Calhoun not to be actively hostile against their interests if he were elected president. They had no such confidence in any other candidate.
33 James Gadsden to Andrew Jackson, November 20, 1821, Bassett, Jackson Correspondence, 3:132-133.
34 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, June 25, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:182.
Another recruit to the Calhoun camp was General Winfield Scott. Always in the eye of controversy, he had been carrying on a dispute with General Gaines over which was higher in rank since the reorganization act. Scott had recently finished his compilation of army regulations, several passages of which had a direct bearing upon his dispute with Gaines. Radical congressman John Floyd had singled out these items in the regulations and accused Scott publicly of trying to fix the new rules in such a way that Gaines was inferior to Scott in rank. Already contemplating leaving the army because he was tired of disputes of this kind, Scott threw caution away and dispatched seconds to call on Floyd to apologize or to demand satisfaction; wisely, Scott's seconds asked for Floyd's explanation first. The congressman explained that his charges had been based upon an error which the printers had made in the final composition, and cheerfully (and publicly) apologized. Scott, nonetheless, continued to entertain dislike for the radicals who had brought this latest controversy upon him, and took up Calhoun's cause against them. Scott's new loyalty to the Secretary of War was made easier because he had gained the impression from Calhoun that when General Brown retired, he would be Brown's replacement. It was said later that Calhoun had also promised General Gaines the same thing, but this allegation is more likely a demonstration of Scott's ability to delude himself.  

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35 Charles W. Elliott, Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1937), pp. 227-233 (hereafter cited as Elliott, Winfield Scott). Elliott bases his account of Calhoun's duplicity upon Adams' diary. Wiltse's, Calhoun, pp. 261-262, disputes Adams' account. There is an aide memoire, dated March 16, 1825, in the papers of Christopher Vandeventer which recalls a recent meeting between Scott and Calhoun on this question in which Calhoun is represented as having "invariably refused" to decide between the two generals.
William Crawford pretended to know nothing of the origins of the appointments dispute in Congress, but he felt sure that Calhoun had poisoned Monroe's opinion of him. There had been so much discussion, moreover, in cabinet and Congress about the controversy, Crawford was surprised when the public paid so little attention to it all. It is difficult to take Crawford's protestations of innocence very seriously; when he made them, the Washington Gazette had already sided with the Secretary of Treasury, and Calhoun had been the paper's main target for some time.

In mid-March that exemplar of old republicanism, John Randolph, set sail for Europe on a leave of absence from Congress. His sympathies being with Crawford, Randolph fired off a parting shot at Calhoun. It was, said Randolph, his special ambition to be a part of the government which would eventually choose the next president. This was important to him, he said, because "for the first time since the institution of this government, we have presented to the people the army candidate for the presidency, in the person of him, who, judging from present appearance, will receive the support of the bank of the U. States [sic] also." The outcome of the election, he predicted, might well decide the character of the government—"perhaps forever."

36 William Crawford to Albert Gallatin, May 13, June 26, 1822, Adams, Gallatin Correspondence, pp. 580-582, 583; Adams, Diary, 5:488.
37 Until the end of April, 1822, the Washington Gazette printed some articles which came to Calhoun's defense. By May, 1822, this was no longer so; after that time the tenor of articles printed by the Gazette were clearly to Crawford's benefit and took the radical line.
38 Niles' Weekly Register, March 30, 1822.
The Washington Gazette's editor, Elliot, seized upon Randolph's phrase, "army candidate," with alacrity. Elliot's position on the presidential candidates was clear only in that he generally attacked Calhoun and wrote little untoward about Crawford, but he was still "for sale" as yet. The Rip Rap scandal had been given full play almost daily since the investigations had begun in Congress, and Elliot had continually assumed that Calhoun was interested in some way in the contracts for the fort that carried his name. But Elliot had been careful not to make a general attack on the administration; noticing John Randolph's farewell speech, in which, along with his cutting remarks about Calhoun, Randolph had referred to Monroe as an "incubus" sitting atop the government, Elliot attacked Randolph for his "hypocondriacal vapouring." In March Elliot was still making distinctions between members of the administration. The editor would not do so for long. Elliot approvingly reprinted an attack on Calhoun in mid-April which originated with the Richmond Enquirer and which played heavily upon an anti-military theme. The Enquirer's editorial read:

What ever propriety there may have been in the selection of Washington, as the first to fill this highly responsible station it should be the prayer of the patriot and lover of the American constitution, that he should be the last military chieftain upon whom the office shall be conferred.

Thereafter Elliot used his paper against Calhoun savagely. He denied that Calhoun had accomplished anything in the War Department.

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39 City of Washington Gazette, April 1, 22, May 16, 1822.
40 Ibid., March 28, 1822.
41 Richmond Enquirer, April 16, 1822, reprinted in ibid., April 19, 1822.
Thereafter Elliot used his paper against Calhoun savagely. He denied that Calhoun had accomplished anything in the War Department. "At what period," Elliot asked, "in a time of profound peace, has the administration of the War Department been more wretchedly . . . more shamefully and corruptly managed." [sic]\textsuperscript{42} The anti-military rhetoric rose to a new hysteria in early June, when the editor accused Calhoun and his supporters of laying a trap for the people by advertising the peaceful attainments of the army in an attempt to "soften the terrors of the bayonets."\textsuperscript{43}

It is a testament to Calhoun's confidence that he went through these travails without being shattered. Throughout the spring of 1822 the Secretary of War kept up an almost cheerful correspondence with those on whom he intended to rely during the months ahead. At the very height of the army debates in Congress Calhoun calculated that Lowndes would not stand in the way of his own candidacy. In his estimation Lowndes had many admirers, but none who was "warm" or "ardent" for his candidacy. This, of course, meant that Calhoun could have South Carolina all to himself. For once at least the Washington Gazette had been accurate when it reported that "Mr. Lowndes has found a rival where he expected to find a friend."\textsuperscript{44} Furthermore, Calhoun saw the radicals' assaults upon him and his department as acknowledgments of his new strength as a presidential contender. Toward the end of the session Calhoun was confident that the radicals had been turned back in their mad retrenchment

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., May 15, 1822. \textsuperscript{43}Ibid., June 10, 1822. \\
\textsuperscript{44}John C. Calhoun to John Ewing Colhoun, March 19, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 6:754; City of Washington Gazette, January 15, 1822.

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schemes. Although still cheerful in his letters to relatives and friends, Calhoun was becoming obsessed with stopping Crawford, and the Washington Gazette had become, in Calhoun's mind, the voice of the Secretary of the Treasury himself. Now Crawford had become "the hand behind the curtain" to the Secretary of War. Earlier Calhoun had lightheartedly told a relative that "my friends the Radicals have selected me as the object of their peculiar favors;" but shortly afterward he told a Pennsylvania supporter that "the Gazette [sic] continues to pour its torrent of filth against me, but with effects different from what it intends." In this estimation of radical popularity, or lack of it, Calhoun may have been right. Crawford himself believed that Calhoun had emerged from the spring session's trials a stronger candidate than when Congress opened the previous December. "The Secretary of War is now, in the estimation of the public, lord of the ascendant," Crawford observed in May, 1822, and it was evident to him that Calhoun had acquired popularity at radical expense. Robert S. Garnett, a conservative Virginia republican, was anxious lest the excesses of the congressional radicals damage the reputation of orthodox republicanism. Reflecting on the work of the radicals at the end of 1822, Garnett wrote:

45 John C. Calhoun to John Ewing Colhoun, May 14, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:111.
46 Ibid.; Adams, Diary, 5:538-539.
47 John C. Calhoun to Thomas J. Rogers, June 9, 1822, ibid., 7:155.
One thing is certain, the people did not support their representatives in the intrigues & wrangling of the last session, and that circumstance, together with the failure of the Rip Raps [sic] and Russell schemes, has taught them a great deal of discretion. . . . It is very clear, that the radicals have been forced, as Tom Crib says, to sing small.49

Garnett thought of the radicals at this point as ideological hooligans. None of the candidates' views entirely pleased him; he had objections to all and he believed that the election would eventually come down to a choice between evils. The Virginian told one of Calhoun's friends that his view of Crawford, who was already claiming Virginia's support, depended upon "how far Crawford, is connected with the radicals and supports them, because my respect for him would be in great measure determined by it."50

Meanwhile "the army candidate" was availing himself of certain political opportunities which the army reorganization act had presented. In order to make certain that there were no radical sympathizers in the War Department, Calhoun used the reorganization to his best advantage. Most of the higher functionaries in the War Department were either enthusiastic about their Secretary's candidacy or were circumspect enough not to reveal their opposition. General Jacob Brown, for instance, harbored resentments against Calhoun because of the Secretary's tendency to gather unto himself as much organizational control as he could. Brown was nevertheless careful not to let Calhoun know of his feelings, and only when it seemed certain that the Secretary would fail in his presidential aspirations did the general openly take sides with John


50 Ibid.
Quincy Adams. The same was true of General Thomas Jesup, who eventually favored Clay for the presidency. However, Adjutant and Inspector General Daniel Parker was no stranger to political controversy, and he was not so cautious as his fellow officers. Parker had originally come to the War Department as a chief clerk, appointed by Secretary of War William Eustis. During the War of 1812 Parker had not been on good terms with Secretary of State James Monroe and, besides taking Secretary of War John Armstrong's part in the Chesapeake strategy disputes, had gone so far as to complain to President Madison about Monroe's interference with the War Department. Parker, then, was a friend of Armstrong's, who was no friend of Monroe's; and Parker was a friend of Eustis', who was certainly not friendly to Calhoun. Eustis was in 1822 a Crawford partisan, and it was Eustis who had lately presided over the House committee on military affairs with radical zeal. Calhoun naturally concluded that Eustis' sympathies were those of Parker. The Secretary of War's hostility toward Parker was confirmed when it was rumored that General Parker had criticised one of Calhoun's reports on the military establishment. An extraordinary scene followed.

51 In 1823 General Brown wrote to Ambrose Spencer, a New York judge then seeking a federal position, that it might be well to send some letters recommending him to Calhoun: "Finer hands never touched paper," Brown said. By early 1824 Brown was acting as an Adams' partisan, attempting to woo DeWitt Clinton into the Secretary of State's camp. See Jacob Brown to Ambrose Spencer, April 7, 1823, and Jacob Brown to DeWitt Clinton, January 8, 1824. See also Jacob Brown to Ambrose Spencer, December 14, 1824, on relations between Adams and Calhoun at this important point. All these letters may be found in The Papers of Jacob Brown, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan (hereafter cited as Brown Papers). Concerning the matter of Brown's eventual hostility toward Calhoun because of the Secretary's centralization of War Department programs, see Entry of November 1, 1825, Vandeventer Diary.

52 Entry of January 12, 1825, ibid.
Calhoun called General Parker to his office, where, in the presence of a witness, the Secretary of War interrogated the general about his criticism of the report which Calhoun had written. Parker equivocated when Calhoun asked him whether he was the author of these adverse remarks. But now the Secretary was bound to remove Parker from the staff if he could, and the reorganization provided Calhoun with the perfect opportunity. When Parker's position as Adjutant General was eliminated by the reorganization act, he had become the Paymaster General for the army. In the spring of 1822, when Colonel Nathan Towson's appointment as a regimental commander had been blocked by the Senate, Calhoun and Monroe had resubmitted Towson's name as the new Paymaster General, thus displacing Parker. Regardless of the fact that the Senate blocked this appointment also, Towson was still given the job temporarily, and Parker was out of a place. In desperation and feeling ill-used by Calhoun, Parker solicited John Quincy Adams' advice and told the whole sorry tale to the Secretary of State. 53

Calhoun had been correct in his assumption of Parker's hostility. Newly displaced from office and highly resentful, Parker had told Adams that "the management of the War Department had been inefficient and extravagant, which was very susceptible of demonstration." Throughout the spring Parker had been in contact with Crawford and his friends as well. Crawford had sent Parker word that "there was an intrigue for turning him out of office," and the Treasury Secretary had eventually offered Parker a clerkship in the Treasury. 54 There was also one other factor which may have led to Parker's abrupt dismissal by Calhoun: Christopher

53 Adams, Diary, 5:527; 6:3-9. 54 Ibid., 6:8.
Vandeventer, undaunted by the Rip Raps investigation, was probably seeking Parker's job for himself. Vandeventer's ambitions were well understood by his friends, and as early as 1819 it was rumored that the chief clerk had his eye on a staff position. William McRee wrote General Swift concerning the clerk:

I am told, that our friend Vandeventer, intends applying for the Pay Mastr Genlship [sic]. If it is true, and he succeeds I am satisfied he will ultimately repent it. It leads to nothing. It is a stopper. It may enable him to live comfortably and even genteely, at the city of W [sic]; but it will enable him to do nothing else.55

Calhoun had far more pleasant relations with his military friends. General Winfield Scott was then considering running for Congress from his home state of Virginia, but by the summer he had decided instead to become a partisan of Calhoun's. During the following months General Scott would also become one of Calhoun's propagandists in the radical stronghold of Virginia and a contributor, despite his limited funds, supporting a pro-Calhoun newspaper in New York City.56 In the West Colonel Henry Atkinson declared himself for the Secretary of War in a cautious way. In a confidential letter to Vandeventer, Atkinson discussed western politics at length and speculated upon Henry Clay's strength, which he thought was greater than that of all the other candidates. If Clay somehow made a misstep, however, Atkinson thought that Calhoun would benefit the most. Clay and Calhoun were the only two candidates spoken of in St. Louis, and Calhoun was Atkinson's favorite, or so the colonel told Vandeventer. "My own feelings toward Mr. Calhoun urges [sic] me to take an active

55 William McRee to Joseph G. Swift, September 27, 1819, Swift Papers.
56 Elliott, Winfield Scott, pp. 233-234.
part in his favor," Atkinson said, "but I fear to do it loudly lest it might be injurious to him, [my] being in the Army."\(^{57}\)

Atkinson was rightly cautious about his involvement in the campaign, for politics was a dangerous business for American soldiers to be interested in; miscalculations could end one's career prematurely, as Daniel Parker had found out. For a candidate such as Calhoun, who was closely identified with his department, it was all too easy for his opponents to cast him as "the army candidate." The Secretary of War's natural aggressiveness also played into the hands of his critics; such a trait fitted all too well into supposed military characteristics and could be turned by the opposition candidates to their advantage. One of the newspapers opposing Calhoun did just that. Washington Gazette editor Elliot wrote of the Secretary of War: "We cannot refrain from a decided opposition to the man who advances to the presidency, as though he was resolved to take it by a coup de main."\(^{58}\)

Some of Calhoun's most avid partisans came from the War Department establishment. Aside from Scott, Christopher Vandeventer was of course acting as a political correspondent for the duration of the campaign. The former and present aides-de-camp to General Brown, Charles K. Gardner and John A. Dix, were both involved with the New York Patriot, which was created specifically to promote Calhoun's chances in New York. Acting as a free-lance political correspondent as well as being involved with the New York Patriot was the ex-engineer general, Joseph G. Swift, who had

\(^{57}\) Henry Atkinson to Christopher Vandeventer, November 14, 1822, Vandeventer Papers.

\(^{58}\) City of Washington Gazette, May 27, 1822.
family as well as military connections in North Carolina which were put to good use. Paymaster Nathan Towson had connections in Maryland which Calhoun did not hesitate to make use of, and because Towson was indebted to the Secretary for his new place on the staff, the colonel could hardly refuse to help in Calhoun's campaign.

Another member of Calhoun's political entourage was drawn from the Secretary's official associations. Because Congress had abolished the Office of Indian Trade during the last session, Superintendent Thomas McKenney found himself without a place. By May, 1822, the Washington Gazette had come out openly in favor of William Crawford, and Calhoun wished for an "independent newspaper" solely, he said, "to expose the intrigues" of Clay and Crawford. Adams, with whom Calhoun was talking on this subject, replied wryly that an "independent newspaper" would be welcome in the city of Washington. Just how impartial the newest paper in the city was when it came out later that summer was open to question, but the new Washington Republican and Congressional Examiner, with former Superintendent of Indian Trade McKenney as the

59 Hay, "Calhoun and 1824," p. 27; Jabez D. Hammond, The History of political parties in the state of New York, from the ratification of the Federal Constitution to December 1840, 3 vols. (Syracuse: Hall, Mills & Co., 1852), 2:130 (hereafter cited as Hammond, New York Politics); Swift, Memoirs, p. 192. Professor Hay writes in the piece cited above that General Brown was "warm" for Calhoun's candidacy, and the involvement of Gardner and Dix in Calhoun's campaign in New York City is given as evidence of the general's attachment. But Gardner and Dix were much more enthusiastic about Calhoun than Brown ever was; Brown was ill at this time, and being his aide, Dix's duty was to be at his side. Dix decided, however, to stay on in the city to work with the Patriot. Christopher Vandevert, of course, was a native of New York as well, and he made several trips to that state in Calhoun's behalf.

60 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxey, June 25, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:182.

61 Adams, Diary, 5:538-539; 6:46.
editor, left no doubt that it opposed the radicals. After only the first few issues, a newspaper war was raging along the banks of the Potomac. 62

The political roles avidly played by the men of the War Department and the anti-military campaign rhetoric used against Calhoun by his opponents suggest that a martial shadow was cast over this presidential contest. Calhoun's presence among the contenders was responsible in the first instance for the unprecedented involvement of the American military establishment in the politics of the nation. A Secretary of War had never run for the highest office in the land before, nor would a Secretary of War ever again attempt to use the War Department as a springboard to the White House. 63 The involvement of soldier-politicians in the campaign of 1824 was not, of course, the most important feature of the contest, nor did it become a major issue, but neither did Calhoun's opponents completely ignore the possibilities with which "the army candidate" presented them.

It is worth noting that all of Calhoun's soldier-politicians were younger, well-educated men, anxious for their own success. Scott, Swift, and McKenney, for instance, were all younger than the Secretary himself, who was not yet forty when he announced that he would battle for the presidential succession. Calhoun's youth, success, and the audacity of his public ambition all made of him an appealing figure to men like himself. Jabez Hammond, a New York politico who was not enamored of Calhoun, remarked that at the beginning of the campaign that "there scarcely could

62 Ibid., 6:63.

63 Of course there would be other "military candidates" running for office, but none of these did so possessing the advantages which Calhoun enjoyed by supervising the War Department while a candidate.
be found an enterprising young man for whom Calhoun was not the favorite candidate."  

III

Calhoun remarked to a youthful supporter that he had rarely "seen a more propitious moment for young men of talents and energy," and in saying this he was really assessing his own fortunes. The disappointments of his own political youth had been few. That he was about to experience the vicissitudes of political failure, Calhoun had no fear. And yet the fact of his failure in the campaign of 1824 may have been one of the more salient features of his entire public life.

Reading Calhoun's campaign letters from this period, one might easily accept the Secretary of War's professions at face value. He thought of himself, he said, as the defender of the progressive Republicanism which the Monroe administration had manifested during the postwar years. It was a kind of Republicanism, Calhoun claimed, which was entirely consistent with that of the fathers of the party. Neither Jefferson, nor Madison, nor Monroe had ever argued that the party should remain static; they all believed, as Calhoun did, that national progress and political stagnation were incompatible. Calhoun's reading of his party's history convinced him that Republicanism was intrinsically a

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64 Hammond, New York Politics, 2:126.
65 John C. Calhoun to John P. Kennedy, June 10, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:101.
dynamic party. His own progressive nationalism was a demonstration of his faith in that ideal. Very late in the campaign, after he had all but capitulated to the other candidates, Calhoun defended himself to a conservative Virginian:

I have [never] done an act, which, if condemned in me, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison, and Mr. Monroe must not be equally condemned . . . must I then be judged more rigidly than these old Republican veterans, and they be excused for what I am condemned? 68

Calhoun did not trouble to reconcile nationalism and Republicanism, because for him they were identical. Thus, he saw no inconsistency in saying in one breath that he was faithful to "the principles of '76," and adding in the next that he supported "the system of measures, which the experience of half a century has shown to be necessary." 69 Those "measures" that Calhoun defended were precisely the problem for many Republicans when they considered the Secretary of War's candidacy: since his first days in Congress, Calhoun had argued for internal improvements, national banks, protective tariffs, and an enlarged national defense establishment. Robert Garnett feared Calhoun for his "ultra-federal politics on the subject of litigated question[s] between the States & the general Governments," 70 but Calhoun denied that he had any such proclivities. He insisted that he thought the balance of power between state and nation "the most novel and beautiful feature in our whole system." 71

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69 John C. Calhoun to Charles Fisher, August 1, 1823, ibid., 8:204.
71 John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, August 24, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:243.
Because Calhoun's orthodoxy was suspect in some quarters, he attempted constantly to convince others that his policies and those of "the political fathers of the Republican church" were precisely the same, and in particular he sought to portray himself as Monroe's rightful successor because of his ideological affinity with his President. This was Calhoun's public face, but his self-confidence carried him much farther than he ever publicly admitted. The Secretary of War considered himself the standard bearer of his party's evolution. Although he claimed to be the direct political descendant of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, Calhoun had in fact disagreed with Madison and Monroe sharply on the matter of internal improvements. While Calhoun was still in Congress, he had worked ardently for the so-called "Bonus Bill" in which revenues derived from the B. U. S. would be applied to works sponsored by the national government. After he and other young Republicans had shepherded the bill past a narrow vote, Calhoun was taken aback when President Madison vetoed the bill on constitutional grounds. Once again, when Calhoun was in the War Office, his stand on internal improvements was altogether too expansive to suit President Monroe's tastes, and Monroe insisted that Calhoun modify his views on the subject before the Secretary submitted them to Congress. During this last instance, a friend asked Calhoun how he and the President got along on constitutional questions,

72 Ibid.
73 John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, August 20, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:243.
74 Capers, Opportunist, pp. 54-55.
75 Adams, Diary, 4:218.
and Calhoun replied that there was no difficulty. Calhoun nevertheless nursed a desire to go beyond the policies which had been established by the men he said were his political forebears. If one views Christopher Vandeventer's remarkable 1818 "campaign biography" of Calhoun as being sanctioned by the Secretary himself, one statement contained there stands out as an expression of how Calhoun really viewed his place in the party: "The highest eulogium which can be paid to his political career," Vandeventer wrote, "is the circumstance that all parties have adopted his leading opinions as settled axioms of national policy." Calhoun may have seen himself, therefore, not merely as the arch-representative of evolving Republicanism, but as the harbinger of a new Republican faith which was a synthesis of principle and experience. Not even James Monroe was willing to undertake this kind of amalgamation.

Calhoun's eclectic Republicanism enabled him to see himself as the only bridge between the old and new politics, but there was one element of the political past which he would not alter. He had his sights set on a noble political future; it was a future peopled by benevolent aristocrats and statesmen, much as he imagined the past had been, when politicians were supposedly less interested in power than principles. He had an affinity for those days when suffrage was so restricted that the well-born and fortunate could afford to be democrats, days in which the credo

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76 John C. Calhoun to J. G. Jackson, March 31, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 2:216.
77 Christopher Vandeventer, "The Secretary of War," dated 1818, Vandeventer Papers.
demanded that offices should be awarded rather than fought over with the vulgar methods of demagoguery. 78

His attachment to the ideals of the gentleman politician was manifested in two ways. He first posed as the defender of what he called "the cause"; that is to say, the triumph of his kind of Republicanism over radicalism. By casting himself as the disinterested crusader, Calhoun acted out the only aspect of the Republican past of which he truly approved. He argued constantly that his political views were those of the party's founders, but in fact their images (as he saw them) were the only features of the past which he did not reject. Early in the campaign Calhoun wrote to a supporter in this style:

I know I am, without any self-deception, much more attached to the cause than to my personal advancement. I would much rather go down in pursuing, that system of policy, to which I am attached, than rise by pursuing [sic] any other. 79

Calhoun thought that only under the stewardship of such men could the nation progress. A man who watched over the happiness and greatness of the country, must inevitably be rewarded by the people. This, Calhoun said, was "the highest Republican principle, a fixed confidence in the virtue and intelligence of the people." 80

What, then, was the "gentleman politician" of old to do when set adrift in the turbulent waters of the era of good feelings? He


79 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Ingham, April 5, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:13.

80 Ibid.
first looked about and disapproved of what he saw. If the people were as virtuous as he supposed, how could a party rise up which was inimical to popular interests? The answer was clear enough to Calhoun: the people in their virtue believed their statesmen were also good. Dangerous and unscrupulous imposters had risen instead and were on the verge of gulling the people with their manipulations. It was in just such a light that John Calhoun saw Crawford and his radical supporters. Radicalism was not only the antithesis of Republicanism in Calhoun's view, but of democracy as well—"the last and most dangerous enemy," he thought. In order to combat the radical enemy, then, Calhoun sortied forth. If the tricks of deception, maneuver, and "political juggling" were used by the enemy, the true champion of Republicanism had on his side the certain knowledge that when the people were warned of the dangers they faced they would destroy this aberration.

So riddled with solecisms were Calhoun's elaborate justifications for his candidacy that it is doubtful that he ever understood completely how profound his delusions were. They were the products of a mind overtaken by itself, trapped somewhere between dreams and reality. Obviously Calhoun's candidacy could not hope to flourish if it was guided by such tortured opinions. The place where such views as Calhoun's had survived best had been in the congressional caucuses; but instead of besting radicalism in Congress, Calhoun took his disembodied views on the hustings, where they mattered least. His campaigns in the various states were handicapped from the beginning.

82 John C. Calhoun to Henry Wheaton, October 12, 1823, ibid., 8:308.
Calhoun submitted his candidacy to the states in the first place because he thought that victory had already been denied him in Congress by the radical phalanx, not because he had an aversion to this kind of president-making. None of the candidates opposing Crawford was willing to remind the voters that the last three Presidents had been chosen in just this fashion. Being the man most likely to win in a congressional caucus, Crawford certainly had no mind to attack this method. The Secretary of War considered the states a fair field, where political manipulation had not yet taken hold. He did not understand that as suffrage had expanded so had the techniques of power politics. The campaign was thus a bitter education for Calhoun, for as he came to realize that principles alone, dispassionately stated, would not win him the election, he found also that there were other candidates who were much more adroit at this new sort of politics than he.

The techniques and men used by Calhoun in the various states during the campaign of 1824 at once contradicted his own olympian pronouncements about the crusade against radicalism. At first, however, the Secretary seems to have thought that radicalism could be beaten merely by exposing it to the light of public opinion. A great deal of Calhoun's early campaign was devoted to the subvention of newspapers in areas where he thought he had the best chance of success. In March, 1822, the Franklin Gazette began to print, under the guiding hands of

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83 As shall be seen, Calhoun originally thought that his candidacy would succeed if only he could arrange for his friends to present a dispassionate and reasoned discourse of his principles to the people. See below, p. 332.

84 Calhoun's attempt to use the very kind of manipulative politics as his opponents (and his failure) can be seen below, p. 338.
Calhoun's partisans in the Family party, a life of the Secretary of War which immediately drew the fire of Crawford's Washington Gazette. The Franklin Gazette's pieces on Calhoun ran over a period of four months, reaching well into the summer. With each issue's appearance, Jonathon Elliot, the editor of the Washington Gazette, reached new peaks of hysterical invective against Calhoun. Calhoun was also careful to see that articles favorable to his candidacy reached newspapers which were not committed to one contender or another, and Professor Wiltse believes that some of these pieces may have been written by Calhoun himself. It is certain that Calhoun made suggestions about the contents of some of this campaign literature. In one letter to a partisan, Calhoun instructed him on the finer points of his own career suitable for publication:

My past services, my identity with the late war, & with the admn [sic], my uniform Republican course, my habits of industry and business, the distinctness of my political principles, and the openness and candour which even my enemies concede to me all furnish topicks [sic] for arguments to sustain the cause.

This was pretty dry stuff, but Calhoun was persuaded that it was the stuff of politics in the states. Another means of getting his message of anti-radicalism out to the states was by private correspondence. He entreated his trusted friends to "write and get your correspondents to write." Early in 1823 former general Joseph Swift visited the candidate

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85 City of Washington Gazette, July 9, 1822.
86 Wiltse, Calhoun, p. 258.
87 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, April 12, 1822, and John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, April 1, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 7:30; and 8:4.
88 John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, March 27, 1823, ibid., 7:546-547.
89 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, April 1, 1823, ibid., 8:4.
in Washington and returned home to New York with an extensive list of men dedicated to the cause with whom he was supposed to keep in touch. 90

At the same time Calhoun attempted to use what influence he had to dispense patronage, and in this he counted heavily upon Monroe's friendship. The Secretary of War entertained the idea that, since he was casting himself as the administration's champion, the President should endorse his candidacy as a matter of course. In the summer of 1822, having presented Monroe with a list of appointments he wished the President to make, Calhoun wrote to Ninian Edwards that Monroe "begins to feel the necessity of taking a decided stand." Calhoun had used the opportunity of their meeting to urge Monroe to come out against the radicals as soon as possible, but Monroe equivocated. 91 The President would not openly declare for one candidate or another, but insofar as he favored anyone, it was probably Calhoun. The Secretary thought that Monroe was quietly on his side: "That he has taken his stand to support [the] administration, I cannot doubt;" Calhoun said in October, "it is high time that he should." 92 However strict Monroe's neutrality has seemed to scholars of this period, the fact remains that the other two leading candidates in 1822 and 1823 believed completely in Monroe's partiality to the young Secretary of War. By the summer of 1822 John Quincy Adams thought that the President devoted most of his time to defending Calhoun against his opponents. 93 William Crawford had come

90 Swift, Memoirs, p. 122.

91 John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, August 20, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:247-249. Calhoun discusses patronage throughout this entire letter.

92 John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, October 5, 1822], ibid., 7:294-295.

93 Adams, Diary, 6:8; Russo, "Southern Republicans," p. 304.
around to the same opinion earlier. Calhoun managed to secure appointments normally outside his gift. The most notable of these was the appointment of Ohioan John McLean, first as Commissioner of the General Land Office (a post usually controlled by Crawford) and then as Postmaster General. The Secretary of War may also have had a hand in several appointments in the new Florida territorial government, including that of Governor William P. Duval. This last post was ordinarily within the gift of the Secretary of State. Quite a dispenser of patronage himself, William Crawford complained about the inroads being made into those gifts of office he wanted to hand out himself. "Certain it is, Crawford said, "that every appointment in Florida was made without my knowledge, and even the appointments connected with my own Department have been made without regard to my wishes."

It is easy to exaggerate the effect of Calhoun's relatively close association with Monroe, his modest success at handing out places, and the literary activities of Calhoun's friends. These methods could only have had a limited effect. Such techniques did have their political rewards for the candidate who used them well, but they were no substitute for the ability to manage oneself into a position of power. For this, one needed the new masters of political operation.

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96 Wiltse, Calhoun, p. 260.

97 See note 94, above.
Doubtless many of the men who worked for Calhoun's election were motivated in one way or another by their own self interest. One thinks immediately of Thomas McKenney and Joseph G. Swift, both of whom stood to benefit personally by Calhoun's elevation to the presidency. Winfield Scott's ardor for Calhoun's candidacy obviously went much deeper than his commitment to the cause of anti-radicalism. Samuel Ingham and George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania's Family party had their eyes on local power as much as did the energetic Henry Wheaton, who helped run Calhoun's New York Patriot. No doubt, too, every one of the contenders for the prize of 1824 had such men working for them, but among several of Calhoun's key supporters there was an optimism which transcended the Secretary of War's chances at any time, and indeed matched that of the candidate himself. Such confidence could only be possessed by the political dilettante.

For a candidate who had yet to be nominated by any method, Calhoun was beset by few doubts in 1822 that he would ultimately win the election. Actually, he had ample reason to be pessimistic. A caucus of the South Carolina assembly had pointedly recommended Lowndes over Calhoun, who was decidedly the second choice until the seriousness of Lowndes' illness became known. Even after Lowndes had left for England in the fall of 1822, Calhoun's friends back home were hesitant to make a move in the assembly for the Secretary. 98 Before the year was out, however, two

more candidates did win the support of their state legislatures. Andrew
Jackson was offered to the voters by the Tennessee legislature in July.
Henry Clay was unanimously acclaimed in Kentucky in November, but a
similar move for Clay in the Ohio legislature ended in a badly bungled
caucus. 99 Far from being distressed by the westerner's appearance in
the lists, Calhoun was heartened by the prospect that Clay and Jackson
might split the section so that he could win a unity vote. 100 The
Secretary was sure that he was the only candidate whose popularity
crossed the mountains. Alone, he said, the West "is too weak and young
to carry the Presidential election yet." 101 He knew that Andrew Jackson
would certainly try to block any move for Crawford in the western states.
The general had already made his position clear on the Georgian: "I
would support the Devil first." 102

Of all the candidates, Adams' fortunes seemed to Calhoun to be
improving. The western situation and the fact that the Secretary of
State was the only candidate from a free state gave Adams "great advan-
tages," Calhoun thought, "if he know how to improve them." 103 At the
same time, relations between these two candidates, once fairly close,
were becoming strained. Adams kept his dislike for the Secretary of War

99 Glyndon Van Deusen, The Life of Henry Clay (Boston: Little,

100 John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, August 22, 1822, Calhoun
Papers, 7:249.

101 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, January 20, 1823, ibid.,
7:432.

102 Andrew Jackson to James Gadsden, November 20, 1821, Bassett,
Jackson Correspondence, 3:141.

103 John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, August 20, 1822, Calhoun
Papers, 7:249.
confined to his diary, but only barely. Calhoun kept up a semblance of civility throughout 1822, but it became more evident that he too was not as open toward Adams as before. The South Carolinian was increasingly hard pressed in succeeding months to keep the focus of his campaign upon anti-radicalism, and he hoped that Adams and the other candidates would do the same; but Calhoun was also trying simultaneously to dispel the impression that he was merely a stalking horse for the New Englander. Just how much Calhoun had become a candidate in his own right, rather than merely the anti-radical crusader as he had originally styled himself, is indicated by a letter Calhoun wrote to Samuel Ingham late in 1822. Earlier, Calhoun had explained to William Plumer that he had become a candidate only because he feared that Adams was not strong enough to stop Crawford. Now a year later Calhoun told Ingham that an Adams-Calhoun coalition in Pennsylvania "would be fatal to the common cause." Yet Crawford and Adams seemed strong in New York. If Adams could, with Calhoun's help, win Pennsylvania, the Secretary of State would be in an excellent position to stop Crawford, the avowed purpose of Calhoun's candidacy. Samuel Ingham seems to have suggested just such a coalition to Calhoun, but Calhoun told his supporter not to take any step "at this

104 Adams, Diary, 5:524-525; 6:43.
105 John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, May 21, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:70.
106 John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, April 28, 1823, ibid., 8:37.
107 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Ingham, November 2, 1822, ibid., 7:327.
time particularly in your State which would have the appearance of yielding me up for him." Not only was Calhoun unwilling to share Pennsylvania with Adams for the sake of "the cause," he did not want to help anyone else against the radicals if he could not directly benefit. By the end of 1822 it is extremely doubtful that Calhoun's statesmanlike pose fooled anyone, except perhaps Calhoun himself.

During the following year Calhoun's image of himself was put to the severest test. That Crawford and Calhoun had few ideological affinities was unquestionable, but Calhoun's prejudice against the Georgian became almost obsessive. Calhoun became convinced that Crawford was aiming to dupe the people into giving him the presidency. How else could a man so devoid of principles hope for office? Calhoun wondered. Crawford's chances for the presidency rested, said Calhoun, "on a single ground, that of being a thorough partisan." Most disturbing to the Secretary of War was the thought that it was entirely possible that political management alone might decide the election. Referring to the election in New York, Calhoun told a friend:

If a candidate can be elected without services, or qualifications by sheer management, it must be by the instrumentality of that active, but unprincipled class of politicians, which a powerful combination of causes had engendered in your State. Unsustained by New York the cause [of intrigue] is desperate; but with its support the struggle must be severe and doubtful.

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109 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Ingham, November 2, 1822, ibid., 7:327.

110 See Calhoun's tirade against Crawford's character and political principles (or lack thereof) in Adams, Diary, 5:497.

111 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, August 2, 1822, Calhoun Papers, 7:231.

112 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Gouvener, April 29, 1823, ibid., 8:33.
Although the Calhounites made much of their candidate's attachment to certain principles, and despite the fact that Calhoun had associated radicalism with a contempt for democracy, his own techniques were scarcely distinguishable from Crawford's. Calhoun and his men demonstrated a willingness to use whatever means were available to win the approval of the key states, and local conditions—not principles—determined what those methods would be. Aside from the electioneering propaganda in the newspapers, there was not a hint of the elegant campaign on principle suggested in Calhoun's rhetoric.

Throughout 1822 Calhoun had been sure that Pennsylvania would stand by him, regardless of what happened elsewhere. It may have been that the leading members of the faction known as the Family party had been too optimistic in their appraisals of their strength within that state, but Calhoun took every bit of information he received from them to heart. Any rumor fed his enthusiasm.113 A Republican convention to nominate a governor was due to be held at Harrisburg in March, 1823, and its importance to Calhoun and the Family party lay in whether the nominee would support Calhoun. He was obviously counting upon the Family party to manage the convention so that he would receive the call of the state to run for the presidency, and he thought little about whether such a nomination would be ultra- or anti-democratic. George M. Dallas went to Washington to confer with Calhoun in February about making some sort of move at the upcoming convention. As always, Calhoun was hopeful. After having talked with Dallas, Calhoun wrote to his friend Virgil Maxcy in Maryland:

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113 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Ingham, April 5, 1822, ibid., 7:12-13.
I have but little doubt but a movement will be made at Harrisburgh [sic]. You see the importance of the moment. Should it take place and be properly managed, it must go far to decide the question which now agitates the country.\textsuperscript{114}

Perhaps Calhoun did not know that there was then a serious resistance building in the rural areas of the state to his nomination, which was spoken of as simply another measure "adopted by the dictatorial politicians of Philadelphia."\textsuperscript{115} It was known by the Family party surely that one of the leading gubernatorial contenders, George Bryan, was not impressed by Calhoun. Upon his return from Washington, Dallas and the other members of his faction set about trying to deny Bryan the nomination and substitute a nominee in his place who would owe his success to the Calhounites.\textsuperscript{116}

Dallas and the other Calhounites succeeded only partially at Harrisburg in early March. The man they backed, John A. Shultz, did win the nomination for governor, but when Dallas and his friends attempted to place Calhoun's name before the meeting, they were upstaged by the delegates from Westmoreland County, who presented the name of Andrew Jackson to the convention. What was described as a "bear garden scene" followed; the uproarious convention closed without a decision. In the commotion Dallas and the Family party members on hand thought it best not to bring up Calhoun's name at all, because of the wild aspect of the meeting.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{114}John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, February 23, 1823, ibid., 7:491.

\textsuperscript{115}Klein, \textit{Pennsylvania Politics}, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., pp. 134-135; see evidence of the Family party's support for gubernatorial candidate John A. Shultz in Samuel Ingham to Joseph G. Swift, October 10, 1823, \textit{Swift Papers}.

\textsuperscript{117}Klein, \textit{Pennsylvania Politics}, pp. 138-139. Klein theorizes that the Family party had agreed to back George Bryan after the first ballot; instead Dallas and his men had put their votes behind Shultz from the start. Dallas may have decided upon this strategy during consultations he held with Calhoun in Washington the month before the convention.
Descriptions of the volatile disposition of the convention members may have unnerved Calhoun, but he did his best not to show anxiety. Dallas had told him that, notwithstanding the fact that no presidential candidate had been approved, he still had two-thirds of the conventioneers pledged to his candidacy. 118 This being so, Calhoun said, all that was left to do was to "bring out the next Legislature at the comt. [sic] of the session." 119 The Secretary’s anxiety did show, however, in a letter to Congressman Thomas Rogers. Although Calhoun praised Dallas and his friends, he nonetheless asked Rogers if something more could be done "in the counties, when they come to act on the Govr's [sic] nomination? And could it not be so managed as to induce the Republicans of the Legislature to make some expression of their opinion before adjournment?" 120 In his suggestions to his workers in Pennsylvania, then, Calhoun was not in the least concerned about the mode of his nomination, only that it be finally made. As to the idea of a caucus deciding upon the next president, a matter which had become one of the true issues of the campaign, Calhoun was hardly opposed. The important question, he said, was not the mode of election, but the character of the man raised up by it. 121

Meanwhile in Pennsylvania it seemed to many that the Calhounites themselves were a mighty cabal, bent on dictating a presidential choice

118 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, March 12, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 7:515.
119 Ibid.
120 John C. Calhoun to Thomas J. Rogers, March 12, 1823, ibid., 7:516.
121 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Ingham, June 25, 1823, ibid., 8:131.
to the people. The friends of the defeated George Bryan were particularly chagrined; one Bryanite wrote that "there never was exhibited in any deliberative body such a scene of political juggling, manoeuvring and chicanery as was at Harrisburg on this occasion."\textsuperscript{122}

It was strange that did Calhoun see any threat in the wholly unexpected surge of Jackson's popularity at the Harrisburg convention. "I consider Jackson's strength as ours," Calhoun wrote. "We are personally friends and his intimate friends are my intimate friends. All he gains will be gained by us." The only danger Calhoun saw at this point from the Hero of New Orleans was "the possibility of Jackson's strength passing to Adams."\textsuperscript{123} By the fall of 1823 the general's strength in the state had become evident even to Calhoun, who acknowledged in September that he and Jackson divided the state between them.\textsuperscript{124} Members of the Family party were guardedly optimistic; John Conard wrote:

I am afraid we shall have more difficulty with the name of Jackson in this State than was apprehended some time back. It is a name that has great weight with the mass of uninformed and unreflecting people, but as for Crawford we consider him altogether out of the way in this State and [he] can give us no trouble unless their [sic] weight should be thrown into the scale of Jackson to destroy the vote of Penn'a. [sic] altogether.\textsuperscript{125}

One of the reasons that Calhoun had been so sanguine about his chances in Pennsylvania to begin with was because Crawford stood no

\textsuperscript{122}Andrew Boder to George Bryan, March 6, 1823, quoted in Klein, \textit{Pennsylvania Politics}, p. 139.

\textsuperscript{123}John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, August 24, 1823, \textit{Calhoun Papers}, 8:244.

\textsuperscript{124}John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, September 23, 1823, ibid., 8:281.

\textsuperscript{125}John Conard to Joseph G. Swift, September 18, 1823, \textit{Swift Papers}. 

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chance there, but in the state of New York an entirely different situation obtained. It was in New York that Calhoun and Crawford would send their partisans directly against each other, and, counting as he did on Pennsylvania's support, Calhoun believed that New York would decide the contest for the presidency. "The greatest danger" of radical success, he said, "is in New York. Her politics are so much a matter of calculation of personal interest and sudden combinations, that it is impossible to form a satisfactory opinion." 126

Calhoun's description of New York politics was a fair one. During the past two years there had been a general revolt among the Republicans of the state against the faction led by DeWitt Clinton. The guiding light of the so-called "Bucktails" was Martin Van Buren, already emerging as one of the wiliest politicians in the state. By 1822 Van Buren and his followers had control of the state government in Albany and had been christened "the Albany Regency." The Byzantinism of New York politics worked considerably against the development of any but the most flexible political principles. Jabez Hammond, who served in the legislature at the time, believed that there was "not a shade of difference between the Clintonian and anti-Clintonian democrats in this state." 127 This was the sort of politics in which a master operator like William Crawford could shine.

Van Buren did not immediately declare Crawford as the favorite of the Regency, but keen observers saw nevertheless that the Regency's organ, the Albany Argus, was slanting its articles in favor of the

traditional methods of president-making—that is to say, the congressional caucus. Rufus King suspected as early as February, 1823, that Van Buren meant to sustain the old New York-Virginia axis which had elected presidents since Jefferson.\footnote{Rammelkamp, "The Campaign of 1824," pp. 177-178.}

Calhoun's only hope to win New York, therefore, was to campaign as an anti-caucus, anti-Regency candidate, and however distasteful it must be, forge an alliance with any Clintonians willing to support him. The Secretary of War began his campaign in New York City with the establishment of the \textit{New York Patriot}, which was to be supported by the Republican committee of the city. But this was to be a foothold in the state only: "from this, as a center, measures will be taken to extend the operation over the State," Calhoun told a supporter.\footnote{John C. Calhoun to Samuel Southard, April 9, 1823, \textit{Calhoun Papers}, 8:10-11.} Upstate in Watertown, Calhoun's old friend Micah Sterling flatly told Calhoun that there the contest was chiefly between Adams and Crawford. For the present Calhoun decided to settle for a coalition with the supporters of Adams, Clay and Jackson against the "radical chief." Elsewhere, Calhoun thought that his prospects were "flattering."\footnote{John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, April 28, 1823, ibid., 8:36-37.}

Doubtless, to some figures in New York politics the intrusion of the presidential question was an unwelcome complication. What had been a contest of wills between the Clintonians and the Albany Regency was transformed into a battle over how the state would cast its vote for the next President. Committed to Crawford, and therefore bound to support
the congressional caucus, Van Buren and the Regency could only hold their ground, while the Clintonians and the friends of the other presidential contenders attacked the Regency— in an interesting turnabout—for being anti-democratic.  

Calhoun, who was less than concerned about the popular will in Pennsylvania, set his New York friends to propagandizing the cause of popular voting for presidential electors. Again in contrast to his tactics in Pennsylvania, in the case of New York Calhoun and his workers spoke out against "political management" from the beginning, and styled themselves as the true friends of the people. Elsewhere Calhoun had little enough to say on this score: it was only in connection with his New York campaign that Calhoun became the great democrat, albeit an anxious one. There, he said, the people were in danger. Crawford looked forward in New York, Calhoun said, to "advancement on principles, which cannot be sustained . . ." and "used means that were subversive of the publick happiness." Most alarming to Calhoun was the fact that in New York, unfortunately, "there abounds, but too much materials [sic] for his mode of operation." Other leading Calhounites displayed a similar flexibility on the question of popular democracy. George McDuffie, one of Calhoun's closest friends and advisors, saw in the early Jackson movement in Pennsylvania nothing but "grog shop politicians & the rabble." In a fair convention held in that state, McDuffie believed, nonetheless, that Calhoun was sure to eventually win the nod, but only

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132 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Southard, June 14, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:117-118.
apparently if the scum were excluded. Later, referring to the Albany Regency's opposition to the repeal of New York's election law, McDuffie told General Swift that "the miserable and ingenuous attempt to evade the wishes of the people by fraudulent manoeuver, will in all probability render the partizans of Crawford so odious, as to produce a union for the people's ticket, that will insure a majority."

McDuffie's remark concerning the "people's ticket" had reference to the latest spate of anti-Regency activity in the state. Beginning in the summer of 1823 the Calhounites, with the help of the new New York Patriot and Republican committeeman Ogden Edwards, staged a coup d'état against the Tammany machine in the city. Planning for the upcoming fall elections for gubernatorial and legislative seats, the Tammany committee had fashioned a list of candidates which looked as though it had been written by Van Buren himself. When the slate was presented to the Republicans of the city a general revolt broke out, probably because none of the prospective candidates had pledged himself on the method of choosing electors. Out of the revolt the so-called "People's party" was formed. At the forefront of the new party were Samuel Gouverneur (James Monroe's brother-in-law), Henry Wheaton (a major contributor to the New York Patriot), and Joseph G. Swift, Calhounites all.

All parties claimed victory in the fall elections of 1823. Calhoun was elated by the news that Wheaton and Gouverneur had been

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133 Quoted in Klein, Pennsylvania Politics, p. 130.
134 George McDuffie to Joseph G. Swift, January 23, 1824, Swift Papers.
135 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Southard, April 9, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:10-11.
elected to the legislature and counted the whole election as having been decisively in his favor. Whether indeed these elections told much about the desires of the people is highly uncertain; one student of this period guesses that most of the new legislators were favorable to a change in the old election law, but there were almost as many new formulae for casting the state's vote as there were politicians.

The lack of a clear decision at the polls meant that the presidential question would be agitated in the state legislature after all. That fall the Calhounites estimated their chances in the legislature and wondered about what position that the new governor, John Yates, would take. Henry Wheaton led off the discussions as soon as the legislative session began, proposing a bill for the popular election of presidential electors. The Regency men countered by proposing the creation of a committee of nine to consider the entire question; significantly, a majority of the committee was loyal to Crawford. When the committee of nine finally reported a bill which effectually postponed the question of presidential electors until the fall of 1824, it passed by a large majority. In both votes on the floor of the legislature, the numbers approving were signs that a Calhoun debacle was in the making.

In the aftermath of the vote to refer the presidential question to the committee of nine, the address of Governor Yates was anticlimactic. Yates managed to avoid the question entirely, recommending a constitutional

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137 John C. Calhoun to Samuel Gouverneur, November 9, 1823; John C. Calhoun to C. G. Haines, November 9, 1823; and John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, November 9, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 8:354-357.


139 Ibid., pp. 186-187.
amendment, a means hardly satisfying to the Calhounites. Wheaton was
disgusted by the governor's stand, but still hopeful that something
could be done to forestall a rush toward a state caucus. "Poor Yates
blubbers, & says he was deceived & made to believe the People did not
want to be set free," Wheaton told Swift. Before the work of the com-
mittee of nine was completed, Wheaton was still doing his best to work
for a state-wide convention. "If we push this as we pushed the electoral
Law [sic]--vigorously & zealously--we shall obtain a glorious Triumph--
The Country have not the slightest doubt of the practicability of
collecting a very respectable Convention. . . . Have at 'em my boys!" 

The decision of the New York state legislature to postpone the
question of choosing electors was a defeat for Calhoun. He contented
himself with believing that the choice would eventually come to the people
of New York in some fashion; the people had been too aroused (and in this
he was right) to let the old methods stand unopposed. The Secretary of
War's only solace was that Pennsylvania's decision on a favorite candidate
had yet to be made. New York did not matter so much after all, he
decided. "We can give them New York and still beat them," Calhoun said,
"Penna [sic] is as firm as a rock. The 4th of March will develope [sic]
her choice and we feel the fullest assurance, that it will be such, as
we desire." 

March 4 was the date chosen for the opening of the
Republican state convention at Harrisburg.

140 Henry Wheaton to Joseph G. Swift, [January?], 1824, Swift
Papers.

141 John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, January 25, 1824, Calhoun
Papers, 8:504.
During February, 1824, the Pennsylvanians went about the business of choosing delegates for the convention. In the Calhoun camp there was little anxiety. Samuel Gouverneur, conferring in Washington with Calhoun, was encouraged by what he knew of the delegates already chosen. Gouverneur believed that if Pennsylvania went for Calhoun then his own state of New York would insist on a popular election of presidential electors and assure his candidate's success. He depended as much as did Calhoun upon Pennsylvania to affect the course of the other states. "There is the least reason to expect, that he will [not] be nominated on that occasion by an overwhelming majority," Gouverneur wrote a fellow Calhounite back home. 142

But Calhoun's fate in Pennsylvania was decided much earlier than the Harrisburg convention. Just a few days after Gouverneur and Calhoun met, on February 18, a meeting was held in Philadelphia to choose that city's delegates to the convention. Calhoun had no inkling that anything untoward would occur there; Philadelphia was the stronghold of the Family party and most of his supporters in the state would be in evidence. It came as a great surprise to onlookers, then, as George M. Dallas addressed the meeting. The congressional caucus had been held at Washington only a few days before, Dallas told the audience, and William Crawford had been selected by "a miserable and infatuated minority." A crisis, he said, had been reached. It was now the duty of the friends of the people to unite behind the candidate who stood the fairest chance of defeating Crawford and the dreaded radicals. Accordingly, he proposed resolutions

142 Samuel Gouverneur to Joseph G. Swift, February 1, 1824, Swift Papers.
withdrawing the name of John C. Calhoun from consideration as a presidential nominee and substituting that of Andrew Jackson in his place.\textsuperscript{143}

Dallas' move was utterly unexpected, but the news of it determined the course of the Harrisburg convention the next month. Of the 125 votes cast at Harrisburg, only one did not go to Jackson. Eighty-seven votes were cast recommending Calhoun as Vice-President.\textsuperscript{144} Their business done, the Harrisburg delegates adjourned their convention in a hubbub, leaving Calhoun's presidential aspirations in a wreck.

Other Calhounites were dumbfounded at Dallas' apostasy. When news of the Pennsylvania defection reached Raleigh, North Carolina, B. B. Smith reported:

Such was the feeling on the occasion, that a general burst of indignation was manifested by three fourths of the Citizens of this city, and, had it been possible to have laid hands on that Judas Iscariot, George M. Dallas, nothing short of absolute crucifixion, could have appeased the wrath of the infuriated populace for his villianous [sic] desertion & political treachery.\textsuperscript{145}

Even staunch old Republican Robert S. Garnett of Virginia was shocked by the turn of events in Pennsylvania. "I cannot pardon such versatility," he said gravely, "such readiness—such eagerness to assist in consummating the change."\textsuperscript{146}

The candidate himself remained philosophical. Dallas had told him about a week before the meeting in Philadelphia that it was feared

\textsuperscript{143}See George Dallas' speech to the Philadelphia meeting reported in Klein, \textit{Pennsylvania Politics}, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{144}Ibid., p. 165.
\textsuperscript{145}B. B. Smith to Joseph G. Swift, April 17, 1824, \textit{Swift Papers}.
\textsuperscript{146}Robert S. Garnett to Joseph G. Swift, March 8, 1824, ibid.
the cause was lost in that state. Combined with the news of the caucus in Washington, Dallas had thought it best to throw his weight behind Jackson. Nevertheless, Calhoun had not expected the end to come so quickly. As to Dallas himself, Calhoun thought only (or would say only) that his move was "ill timed." That being so, Calhoun told Virgil Maxcy, "taking the U. S. together I never had a fairer prospect than on the day we lost the State."  

All that remained for the Calhounites was to assess the damage done in Pennsylvania, and it appeared to be considerable. Calhounites in other states had waited upon a decision in Pennsylvania; so certain was that state in Calhoun's favor, success there could only influence other states to take a stiffer stand for the South Carolinian. Now that the worst had happened in Pennsylvania, Calhoun's fortunes in Maryland and Ohio dropped accordingly. In North Carolina the congressional caucus' appeal to that state's delegation had already caused a good deal or worry among the Calhounites; by January, 1824, it looked already as though Calhoun's campaign there might stall. General Swift's brother wrote him from that state:

The activities of our Representatives in Congress [are] favorable to Crawfords [sic] pretensions & unless an immediate & corresponding zeal on the part of Mr. Cns [sic] friends is evinced, this State now unquestionably favorable to Mr. Cn [sic] is lost to a certainty. Rely upon this.  

147 John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, February 27, 1824, Calhoun Papers, 8:554-555.

148 John McLean of Ohio, for instance, was convinced even before the Pennsylvania defeat that Calhoun should content himself with the vice-presidency. After the Harrisburg convention, McLean became an Adams partisan. Weisenburger, Life of McLean, pp. 48-49.

149 W. R. Swift to Joseph G. Swift, January 26, 1824, Swift Papers.
After the decision in Pennsylvania was known, supporters in North Carolina simply capitulated. "Since fate has decided against us, it now becomes us to bow and acquiesce like Christians [sic] & philosophers, and not to repine at events, over which we have no control, however much & deeply we may lament their occurrence," wrote one North Carolinian. 150

It was left to Christopher Vandeventer, however, always so much at the center of events during the past several years, to sum up the impact of Calhoun's Pennsylvania defeat:

The late movement in Philadelphia by which the friends of Mr. Calhoun surrendered him, and fell into the ranks of Genl [sic] Jackson, was as unexpected here as it could have been to you. That measure was not founded on any communications from this place, but arose entirely from the great excitement which prevails in Pennsylvania in favour of Genl Jackson, and which a gentleman from that State affirms was as difficult to oppose as the fury of a whirlwind. . . . Pennsylvania was the foundation on which our hopes principally rested, and it is to be feared that the late movement in Philadelphia will not only lose us that state, but will greatly contribute to blast our prospects elsewhere. A short time will exhibit the full effect of the measure. In the mean time [sic] it appears to us here, that the Signified [sic] course for the friends of Mr. Calhoun . . . to pursue will be to stand by and suffer matters to take their own course. It certainly is not for us to surrender our favorite at the very first approach of adverse fortune, though at the same time candor would require at our hands an acknowledgement that his prospects have been very much impaired, if not destroyed.151

IV

February was the decisive month in the campaign of 1824. Not only had Jackson risen on the ashes of the Calhounites in Pennsylvania, but the long-awaited congressional caucus had gone awry. In late 1823 William Crawford had become gravely ill and when the caucus was finally

150 B. B. Smith to Joseph G. Swift, April 17, 1824, ibid.

151 Christopher Vandeventer to an unknown addressee, February [n.d.], 1824, Vandeventer Papers.
held in Washington on February 14, much of his support had eroded. It appeared that the toils of the campaigns in the states, together with Crawford's illness, had been too much for the radicals. The defeat of radicalism was John C. Calhoun's only consolation that year. 152

To all outward appearances Calhoun remained a neutral vice-presidential candidate during 1824 and was really the only one who had a serious claim on that office. He, Adams, and Jackson had always had difficulty in defining precisely how they differed, and although Calhoun made no profession of support for either Adams or Jackson he was not displeased with the prospect of having either man in the presidency. 153

Some Calhounites took the same view as Calhoun obviously did. In New York there was still work to be done, and Henry Wheaton outlined a post-Pennsylvania strategy for General Swift:

> Our principle is to oppose the Caucus Candidate [sic], who is also the Virginia & Radical Candidate, and to rally in every State on the Strongest anti Crawford man [sic]. In North & South Carolina we can no longer refrain from taking up Jackson, because he is strongest, because the People [sic] understand that without Pennsylvania it is wise to push Calhoun & because there is danger that Crawford may occupy Calhoun's Southern grounds if it [sic] is not immediately occupied by Jackson. 154

Furthermore, Wheaton added, "Mr. Calhoun acquiesces in taking any position his friends may assign him." 155

152Mooney, Crawford, pp. 240-241. See also John C. Calhoun to Thomas J. Rogers, June 6, 1824, Calhoun Papers, 9:140.

153John C. Calhoun to an unknown addressee, October 8, 1824, Calhoun Papers, 9:344.

154Henry Wheaton to Joseph G. Swift, March 11, 1824, Swift Papers.

155Ibid.
Not wanting to spoil the chances of success for any candidate other than Crawford, Calhoun nonetheless dabbled in New York politics in a way that was inexplicable, even to his friends. The ex-candidate believed that Adams would win New York by October, but he evidently calculated on the possibility that the New Englander's campaign might fail there. Calhoun considered, at least for a time, that in the event Adams could not carry the state, the Calhounites should throw their support to Crawford rather than Clay. Christopher Vandeventer was appalled that such a calculation would even cross the Secretary of War's mind. The chief clerk evidently discussed the matter with Calhoun at some length. On October 30, Vandeventer wrote to Micah Sterling that "our friend . . . fully agrees with me that it would be better to give it [their support] to Mr Clay [sic] if it can't be given to Mr. Adams." Why Calhoun thought (even for an instant) to give Crawford any help at all in New York is beyond understanding. Perhaps the Secretary of War had made some calculation that Jackson would be served by such a move—that the general could somehow win enough popular votes to keep the final decision on the presidency out of the House of Representatives, where it had long been assumed the outcome would be settled.

Knowing nothing of Calhoun's intentions, John Quincy Adams was doubly anxious, lest the Hero of New Orleans steal a march on him in the last few months of the campaign. Now that the number of candidates was considerably narrowed, Adams no longer pretended to have much affection for Jackson and devoted himself to winning out over the general. "The

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156 Christopher Vandeventer to Micah Sterling, October 29, 30, 1824, Vandeventer Papers.
army candidate," an epithet which had earlier been applied to Calhoun, now was attached to General Jackson, and Adams' supporters wondered at Jackson's unexpected new strength. Adams' friend Plumer wrote to his father:

Is it not a bad omen that mere military glory, for he has no character or reputation as a Statesman [sic], should thus captivate the popular feeling, & throw the nation headlong into the arms of a military despot? 157

In the summer of 1824, for the first time, Adams' friends began thinking about a rapprochement with Clay. Postmaster General John McLean, only recently attached to Calhoun, thought that such an alliance would be fruitful. "Mr. Adams is opposed to a union with Clay," McLean wrote, "but I have no doubt of its policy. . . . There is nothing against it on Principle [sic], for it would give a true representation of the public sentiment." 158

Suspecting that Calhoun really wanted Jackson to succeed, Adams began a campaign in October to woo the Secretary of War away from Jackson. Probably at Adams' request George Sullivan of New Hampshire began lobbying with other members of the House from New England to vote for Calhoun as Vice-President. On November 6 Adams' newspaper in the capital, the National Journal, made the Secretary of State's support for Calhoun official. 159 From Calhoun's point of view all of Adams' support was hardly necessary, but, of course, Adams was not thinking of Calhoun's welfare.

157 William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., February 29, 1824, Plumer Correspondence, pp. 102-103.

158 John McLean to Joseph G. Swift, October 29, 1824, Swift Papers.

159 Bemis, Adams and the Union, pp. 34-35.
The only way in which Adams could hope to gain the South Carolinian's help against Jackson was to promise Calhoun something for the future. In December, 1824, Adams made another overture to Calhoun through an intermediary. On the 11th of December, George Sullivan met with Christopher Vandeventer at the War Department. Adams' man told the chief clerk that "it was in the interest of Mr. Calhoun that his friends should support Mr Adams [sic]." In turn, Sullivan said, "all the New England States [sic] would support Calhoun for next president." The whole conversation seemed to revolve, Vandeventer wrote in his diary, on this proposition: "Let Calhoun's friends make Adams P. & [sic] New England will in turn make Calhoun."160

What Vandeventer thought of the proposition is indicated by the fact that he remained silent for over a month before revealing it to Calhoun. When he finally did hear of the meeting, Calhoun was unimpressed. He thought Adams' supporters now included too many old radicals "which would make it difficult for Mr. A. to form an administration which would have the support of the country." Although Calhoun said that "he would not move for either candidate," Vandeventer thought nonetheless that his superior "decidedly prefers Jackson."161

At almost the same time that Sullivan paid his call upon Vandeventer, Robert Letcher of Kentucky was opening discussions with Adams on Clay's behalf. Letcher told Adams that Clay's friends (Letcher professed that he did not speak with Clay's sanction) wanted some indication that an Adams administration could find a post for Clay. Adams was

160 Entry of December 11, 1824, Vandeventer Diary.
161 Entry of January 13, 1825, ibid.
diplomatic and noncommittal. Several other discussions between Adams and Letcher took place in December, and by January 9, 1825, the groundwork had been laid for a meeting between the principals. At this meeting Clay pledged himself to support Adams, but there is no evidence that Adams promised anything to Clay in return.\footnote{162}

Whether in fact Adams and Clay had reached a modus vivendi, the Secretary of State was at the very least interested in the votes of the Kentucky delegation. Two days before the Adams-Clay meeting, the state legislature requested their congressional delegation to cast their votes for Jackson. Upon hearing the news, the Kentuckians in Congress vowed to follow their own consciences in the matter; this boded ill for Jackson's fortunes.\footnote{163} Even before his candidate had met with Clay, William Plumer was counting up the states whose support an Adams-Clay alliance might create; Plumer reckoned on Ohio, Missouri, Maryland, and of course Kentucky.\footnote{164}

Rumors were certain to be bandied about in the wake of the first Adams-Clay meeting, and Christopher Vandeventer duly recorded them all in his diary. On January 14, Vandeventer heard that "the Adamsites are certain of Success [sic]--having formed an alliance with the Crawfordites to share equally the honors of the administration."\footnote{165} On the next day George Sullivan told the chief clerk that the rumor was patently absurd.\footnote{166}

\footnote{162}{Bemis, Adams and the Union, pp. 36-37.}
\footnote{163}{Van Deusen, Clay, p. 187.}
\footnote{164}{William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, Sr., January 2, 1825, Plumer Correspondence, pp. 126-129.}
\footnote{165}{Entry of January 14, 1825, Vandeventer Diary.}
\footnote{166}{Entry of January 15, 1825, ibid.}
But on January 19, Vandeventer learned from Charles Fenton Mercer of Virginia, a Clay supporter, new information which at least lay within the realm of possibility. Vandeventer wrote in his diary:

Colo. Mercer of H. R. [sic] told me that the friends of Mr. Clay had decided to go for Mr. Adams & that Mr. Clay was to be Secy [sic] of State--The Speech of Mr Webster [sic] on the bill appropriating money for continuance of the Cumberland Road to Zanesville was a confirmation of the understanding on the part of Mr. Adams. Genl [sic] Jesup who was a week ago as violently opposed to Mr Adams [sic] as any man in the country now thinks that Mr Clay's friends of whom I am one, will support Mr Â [sic] & will carry over to him 6 western States. La Miss Ill. Ohio Keny & Inda [sic] He talked as if this was on the whole, the best course.167

The clerk told Calhoun of his discussion with Mercer the very next day. Calhoun "replied it was an idle scheme." The Secretary of War thought that "Clay himself doubtless would give his arm to elect Adams--but neither he nor his friends dare do it--that Genl [sic] Jackson would be elected in spite of all their efforts." After their conversation Vandeventer wondered if Calhoun really wanted to see Jackson elected. "He has often said to me he did," the clerk wrote, "but I believe he prefers the election of Adams not because he thinks it [sic] would make the best president--but because a northern president would become his designs 4. [sic] or 8 years hence." There were wheels within wheels in John C. Calhoun's mind, Vandeventer mused, "He professes to act on higher grounds."168

The real truth behind the rumor which Vandeventer heard became entirely academic during the following days. On January 24, 1825, the Ohio and Kentucky congressional delegations announced that they would cast their votes for Adams. Charges of corrupt dealings began to fly

167 Entry of January 19, 1825, ibid.
168 Entry of January 20, 1825, ibid.
immediately thereafter, with the opening shot coming from an anonymous article in the *Columbian Observer* of Philadelphia, written by House member George Kremer. On January 31, Clay published a reply to Kremer's article in the *National Intelligencer*, demanding that the dastardly writer of the piece in the *Observer* acknowledge his authorship.\(^{169}\)

Calhoun derived a perverse satisfaction from all these doings, but by February 5 Vandeventer thought that the Secretary of War had finally resigned himself to being Adams' vice-president instead of Jackson's.\(^{170}\) Four days later, John Quincy Adams was elected president by the House of Representatives, and Calhoun became Vice-President by a large majority vote.\(^{171}\) On February 12, 1825, Adams offered Henry Clay the post of Secretary of State and shortly after the Kentuckian accepted.\(^{172}\)

When the presidential choice was finally made known, Calhoun appeared somewhat overwhelmed by what had happened. Just after the House had made its decision for Adams, the new Vice-President elect wrote to his old friend Maxcy that "things have taken a strange turn" at the capital and cautioned him not to accept at face value everything he saw in the newspapers.\(^{173}\)

For the rest of the month Calhoun quietly prepared to take his leave of the Department of War. On March 3, 1825, John C. Calhoun gave

\(^{169}\)Van Deusen, *Clay*, pp. 188-189.

\(^{170}\)Entry of February 5, 1825, Vandeventer Diary.

\(^{171}\)Niles' *Weekly Register*, February 12, 1825.

\(^{172}\)Van Deusen, *Clay*, p. 192.

\(^{173}\)John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, February 18, 1825, Calhoun Papers, 9:570.
up his post. As the officers of the department drew up to bid Calhoun farewell, Christopher Vandeventer stood among them. The clerk remarked that Calhoun "appeared much affected in separating himself. . . . My own feelings were warmly excited by his warm and friendly manner toward myself." Calhoun took up his duties as Vice-President the next day. He did not look back.

It was not in Calhoun's nature to ruminate about his past mistakes, nor indeed to admit that he ever made any. When he permitted the writing of his biography eighteen years later, his time in the War Department would occupy only a small space. Fewer pages were devoted to his career as a Secretary of War than the number of years he had served in that position. Too many momentous events had intervened in the meantime.

A few days later the new Secretary of War appointed by Adams, James Barbour of Virginia, arrived to assume the office. Barbour called all the officers together and assured them that he was entirely dependent upon their experience and good will. After his remarks the conversation grew increasingly stiff and uncomfortable. Barbour ventured that it might be well to take a close look at the engineer and Indian departments, both of which promised "the greatest difficulty." General Macomb, chief of engineers, answered that the Quartermaster's department was important too. Barbour agreed politely. Quartermaster General Jesup volunteered that the engineers needed more men. When the vast extent of the country was taken into account, the corps of engineers was disproportionately small. Moreover, Jesup added, there were considerable

174 Entry of March 3, 1825, Vandeventer Diary.
differences between the situation in America and that in Europe. It was the beginning of James Barbour's military education.¹⁷⁵ Doubtless the War Department would handily survive his administration as it had all the others.

¹⁷⁵ Entry of March 8, 1825, ibid.
Calhoun had predicted that the election of John Quincy Adams would "distract" the party and the nation, and that inevitably a new party would rise up in opposition to an Adams presidency.¹ But why Calhoun helped bring this renascence of faction about by gradually moving toward an alliance with Andrew Jackson is a question worth asking.

Superficially, Adams and Calhoun were much alike. Adams certainly had a wider experience than the younger Calhoun, but both men were cultured, well educated, and polished. Civility was no effort for them; this was certainly not true in Jackson's case.² Both Adams and Calhoun prided themselves on their mental gifts, and justly so. Each man professed to have certain political principles and sought to articulate them, believing that in politics, principles were still important. Because their principles were so similar, these two candidates had

¹John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, March 27, 1823, Calhoun Papers, 7:547.
²John H. Eaton to Mrs. Andrew Jackson, December 18, 1823, Bassett, Jackson Correspondence, 3:217. Margaret Bayard Smith reported that at the height of the campaign, she saw Adams, Crawford, and Calhoun joking together at a party. Later, in a conversation with Mrs. Smith, Calhoun claimed that he kept his personal associations quite separated from his political activities. He would, he claimed, take the result of the election (of 1828) "with moderation, but above all, as far as possible to avoid mingling personal, with political feelings. Margaret Bayard Smith to J. Bayard H. Smith, January [n.d.], 1829, in Smith, First Forty Years, p. 269.
difficulty in disentangling themselves from one another during the campaign. By contrast, Jackson's candidacy seemed to represent something about politics that was dark, inexplicable, and faintly absurd. Little of Jackson's political creed could be divined, and what was worse, his obscure politics seemed not to matter to the electorate. Calhoun—and perhaps Adams to a lesser degree—consistently underestimated Andrew Jackson. The Secretary of War first did so during the Florida controversy, and later when he thought that he could conceal his earlier opinions from the general. In 1824 the possibility of Jackson's winning in Pennsylvania seemed so remote to Calhoun that he and his supporters could not believe the result when it came. Yet in the end Calhoun rejected Adams' proffered alliance and went instead to the general's side. "War is the general cry and will come speedily too," wrote Calhoun's friend Samuel Gouveneur, "Jackson and Calhoun will lead the peoples [sic] party, & who would wish to follow more honest & efficient men.[sic]"³

Far from having nothing in common, Jackson and Calhoun shared perhaps the most crucial affinities of all: a contempt for doctrine and a certain impatience with the restraints of democracy. Being a more elemental sort, Jackson expressed his proclivities in his actions—Calhoun by his thoughts. Jackson had less guile than Calhoun, but in the end their natures showed through just the same. These were the characteristics of the leiter: to Jackson or Calhoun doctrine was important only if they were responsible for its invention. They believed that democracy could reach its fullest potential in America if they were appointed its

³Samuel Gouveneur to Joseph G. Swift, [n.d., probably March, 1825], Swift Papers.
stewards. This was not a role which could be played by someone who was merely an archtypical democrat; a special figure was required, one who transcended doctrine and form.

Intransigence played an important part in both men's character as well, and it fed their vindictiveness. Once again, Jackson was more forthright than Calhoun, and the episodes in which the general allowed these characteristics to work upon his actions are so many as to defy enumeration. Calhoun's utter belief in himself and his ideals was somewhat obscured by his brilliance in the early part of his career, and during the war the Republicans generally found these qualities useful against the Federalists, but the campaign of 1824 brought them into full view. When the results of the campaign did not satisfy Calhoun's expectations, his only refuge was to lay the blame elsewhere and to turn the fury of his disappointment toward John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay. Less than a week after he had assumed his new office, Calhoun declared:

The mass of moral and political power which carried the late administration through in triumph, has been wholly neglected in the new organization; and in the final stage of the situation, the voice and the power of the people has been set at naught, and the result has been a President elected not by them, but by a few ambitious men with a view to their own interest, I fear. There is a solemn feeling of duty, that it must be corrected at another election, or the liberty of the country will be in danger. It is my opinion, that the country will never be great till the example is corrected, and the Constitution so amended as to prevent the recurrence [sic] of the danger. . . . Principles cannot be violated in this country with impunity. . . . I cannot but see what must come; and I shall never separate from principles, let the consequences be what it may [sic].

The affinities which Calhoun and Jackson possessed were hardly of the kind that made for lasting personal or political relationships. In Andrew Jackson, John Calhoun would eventually encounter a will every

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4 John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, March 10, 1825, ibid.
bit as strong and unbending as his own, and the result would be a des­
perate constitutional crisis of awful promise.

It was only after Calhoun left the War Department that the
foundations of the nullification crisis were laid by the South Carolinian. Walking along the Potomac with John Quincy Adams during the Missouri
debates, Calhoun impressed the New Englander with his lack of passion for
the subject.\footnote{Adams, Diary, 4:531.} He was so unconcerned with state rights during his presi­
dential campaign that he actually suggested that his own expansive views
were entirely orthodox.\footnote{John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, August 24, 1823, Calhoun
Papers, 8:242-243.} In 1824 he had the temerity to explain his
opinions of the Constitution to Robert S. Garnett in terms which could
only have impressed the orthodox Garnett as "variable construction."
Calhoun argued that the Constitution should be interpreted broadly in
some cases and strictly in others.\footnote{John C. Calhoun to Robert S. Garnett, July 3, 1824, ibid.,
9:198-202.} Just four years later, Calhoun would
secretly write his most famous discussion of the state rights doctrine,
The South Carolina Exposition and Protest. This document and the momen­
tous events which succeeded it fixed Calhoun's place in American history
and threw a shadow over his earlier accomplishments as a Secretary of
War, as though the Exposition was lurking all the while within John C.
Calhoun, waiting for its chance to emerge.

Calhoun's War Department years were a period in which he received
an extensive political education, and in the process, a severe test of
his own character. His reaction to his experiences were a kind not
unknown to human beings: he retreated within his own thoughts, the only kind that would satisfy him completely. There in those thoughts was born Mrs. Martineau's "cast-iron man."

Calhoun's service as a Secretary of War created a reputation for the American military establishment that it had never before enjoyed in times of peace. It was no less his goal than President Monroe's to make of the United States a modern and self-sufficient nation militarily. Under Calhoun's stewardship and Sylvanus Thayer's adroit management, West Point finally began to function in the way that its earliest promoters had imagined. Elsewhere in the military establishment, officers of intellect and promise found in the Secretary of War an enthusiastic ally and supporter. With the help of such men as General Jacob Brown and the military explorer, Stephen Long, Calhoun sought ways in which the army could be put to peaceful uses beneficial to an expanding nation. That Calhoun's grandest designs failed hardly diminished the Secretary in the eyes of his soldiers. To them the blame lay elsewhere.

In truth the War Department and the army formed the perfect constituency for John C. Calhoun. His relationship with the military establishment was not one which could be called democratic, but it was one in which Calhoun's magnanimity was allowed as much play as its master dared. He was not often the martinet as a Secretary of War. Having received what was doubtless a favorable description of Calhoun's way of working in the department from Christopher Vandeventer, former Secretary of War John Armstrong replied to the clerk:

There is an order of men, upon whom a little brief authority, does great mischief, perverting morals, manners temp- [sic] er and understanding. To be obliged to be near such and subject to their caprices, is quite as bad as the oar of a galley, but, on the other
hand, to be near a liberal, intelligent man, who, while he exacts from others what may be due to himself, never forgets what is due to them—is nothing—the harness is to [sic] easy and light, that one forgets it is on; and if we do remember it it is only as a wholesome [sic] restraint from things, which ought not to be done which are better omitted.  

It is entirely possible that the changes which occurred during the Calhoun years would have taken place regardless of who the Secretary happened to be. Mahlon Dickerson had been correct in telling his fellow congressmen that a revolution had taken place in the public mind regarding the American military establishment. Not even the most stridently anti-military politicians contemplated totally abolishing the army after the war of 1812; the great question to be resolved was the role of the army in democracy. Congress provided the answer in the reorganization of 1821: the army could be maintained, but only with the proviso that it not intrude upon the nation's life. The role for the army as the bellwether of national expansion which Calhoun and others had contemplated was thus rejected. Expansion would remain the business of civilians. It is probable, too, that the professionalism which leading officers of the army had lately acquired would have found expression without Calhoun's encouragement. Calhoun merely attempted to fashion an organization which exploited this new professional mentality, and so made for himself a certain reputation in American military history.

Certain it is, however, that few men could have brought the American military establishment into such intimate political associations as did John C. Calhoun. If his role as a Secretary of War enabled the military establishment to evolve beyond its amateur beginnings, Calhoun's

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8 John Armstrong to Christopher Vandeventer, November 11, 1819, Vandeventer Papers.
role as a leading politician interfered with that evolution and shaped it in a way in which Calhoun and his officers had not reckoned upon. Seldom, perhaps, had so many officers taken a direct interest in politics. Regardless of the fact that two candidates for the presidency in 1824 had claims upon the officers' sympathies, they nevertheless went about their political chores in mufti. No attempt was made from any quarter to turn the political contest into a military campaign. It is fitting, then, to close this work with Hezekiah Niles' description of the day in which the House of Representatives decided the presidency:

The house of representatives assembled an hour earlier than usual. The galleries were already filled, to overflowing, with spectators from almost every part of the union, and the lobbies and apartments adjacent, were crowded with well dressed and orderly persons—but there was not any bustle or confusion—no officer appeared to command the peace, nor did any one in the garb of a soldier pollute the walls of the capitol with his presence. Such was the respect voluntarily paid to the majesty of the constitution.⁹

⁹ Niles' Weekly Register, February 12, 1825.
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