

THE INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES:
CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF AN EVOLVING MISSION, 1924 - 1994

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(ABSTRACT)

This study assessed the changing mission of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces as it evolved from the institution's founding as the Army Industrial College in 1924 to its 70th anniversary in 1994. The study drew heavily from archival materials in the Special Collections of the National Defense University in Washington, DC.

The problem investigated in this research was to analyze how and why the institution's mission changed over time within the context of internal and external forces and events. Based upon the historical method of research, the study identified six periods in the institution's development over seven decades: its origins in the aftermath of World War I from 1918 to 1924; its growth in the interwar years, 1924 to 1940; the institution's temporary closure and subsequent reconstitution as the Industrial College of the Armed Forces during and after World War II, from 1940 to 1947; a formative period during the Cold War from 1947 to 1962; its continuing evolution throughout the Vietnam era from 1962 to 1974; and finally the College's modern development as a joint service educational institution from 1974 to 1994.

The study found that the institution has changed dramatically over much of this century, just as the world and the country's national security concerns have changed profoundly in the same period. The mission of the College has evolved from a narrow focus on training military officers in procurement and industrial mobilization to that of a graduate institution dedicated to educating a select group of promising senior military and civilian officials in the political, economic, and resource dimensions of national security. Over time, the focus has shifted from training to education, from military to national issues, from internal and external educational programs to primarily internal ones, and from a predominant interest in domestic issues to an equally strong concern for international matters.

The study finds that a variety of internal and external events and forces have impelled these changes. A wide range of influential individuals and stakeholders, bureaucratic power structures, governmental agencies, special review boards, and various political, economic, military, and social considerations have influenced the mission of the College.

The study also concludes that several factors have likely contributed to the institution's relatively unusual longevity as a government entity. Its dual identity as an educational institution and a government organization set apart from the mainstream bureaucracy has had a favorable influence. So too has the institution been aided by the unique service it has provided to multiple customer constituencies. In fact, the College's mission has made it unique as an institution of adult education and learning in this country and perhaps the world.

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I am equally indebted to the many faculty members and students at the Industrial College who have been friends and colleagues over the past 10 years. The obvious enthusiasm and commitment of these professional men and women are part of what inspired me to explore and understand the historical roots of this important institution of adult education and learning.

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Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, Joseph Francis A'Hearn. A humble but proud second generation immigrant from Ireland and a veteran of World War I, he told me often when I was a young boy how important it was that I get a good education. I have never forgotten his sage words. And now I believe I have fulfilled the legacy he asked of me. Somewhere, somehow, I think he knows.

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