
Toward a Prozac Presidency?

"*Travails of the Chief*" by Robert E. Gilbert, in *The Sciences* (Jan.-Feb. 1993), New York Acad. of Sciences, Two E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933) is remembered as an indifferent president who favored short workdays and long naps. When he died, only four years after leaving the White House, writer Dorothy Parker asked: "How can they tell?" But Northeastern University political scientist Gilbert says that Silent Cal had not always been so given to lassitude.

Elected governor of Massachusetts in 1918, Coolidge proved a vigorous executive and won national acclaim for breaking the Boston police strike of 1919. Elected to the vice presidency the next year, he became president in August 1923 when Warren Harding died of a stroke. "Coolidge moved swiftly and surefootedly to consolidate his hold on the reins of government," Gilbert writes. "He worked long hours and appeared to enjoy himself immensely. In his first message to Congress he set forth in direct, unequivocal language his positions on a wide range of issues. He spoke as a strong, even activist chief executive—quite the antithesis of his historical reputation."

The turnabout in Coolidge's political ways, Gilbert says, came in the summer of 1924, when he was on the verge of a landslide electoral triumph. His 16-year-old son, Calvin, Jr., died of blood poisoning, which had developed from a blister. The tragedy shattered the president. "Unbeknownst to all but a few intimates, Coolidge began suffering

from a paralyzing depression," Gilbert writes. He "withdrew almost completely from interaction with Congress and showed little interest even in the departments of his own government. His workdays shrank, and his naps grew longer and more frequent." Coolidge was only 60 when he died of heart disease.

One way or another, it seems, the stress of life can take a heavy toll in the White House. Leaving aside the four presidents who were assassinated (Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley, and Kennedy) and the six who are still living, Gilbert points out that 21 chief executives died before their time. Only 10 defied the actuaries. The longest-lived ones, ironically, were the first 10 (George Washington through John Tyler), who died at an average age of 77.9 years—well *beyond* their life expectancy.

Stress makes depression and other psychological woes an occupational hazard of the presidency. Yet there are no adequate safeguards to protect against a recurrence of the Coolidge phenomenon.

The 25th Amendment, enacted in 1967, puts the burden on the vice president and the Cabinet to act if the president becomes incapacitated. Determining if a president is physically incapacitated can be difficult enough, Gilbert notes; challenging a president's mental fitness is almost unimaginable.

Suppose in the case of Coolidge, apparently suffering from a major depression, that Vice President Charles G. Dawes had declared the chief executive "psychologically impaired," and then set about removing him from office. The public reaction can only be imagined, Gilbert says, but it "seems unlikely that even Silent Cal would have remained mute in the face of such a challenge."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The New Jingoists

"*The New Interventionists*" by Stephen John Stedman, in *Foreign Affairs* (special issue, 1992-93), Council on Foreign Relations, 58 East 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

The intoxicating post-Cold War freedom from old constraints has spawned a new breed of American interventionist. Invoking the moral obligations of the international community, these "new interventionists"—an odd coalition of Wilsonian internationalists and former anticommunist crusaders—

now call for the United Nations to intervene in civil conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and elsewhere. Stedman, a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, contends that many of these "new interventionists" are unrealistic.

To begin with, he notes, civil wars are no more frequent now than they were before the Cold War ended. There are 18 civil wars raging today; in 1985 there were 19. Such conflicts have been among the hardest to settle politically, and today's "should not be expected to be more amenable to

negotiation" than yesterday's. While the superpowers still had leverage, before the Cold War clearly ended, "to settle various disputes such as Angola and El Salvador," their influence over their former allies is now much reduced.

Armed intervention to enforce peace among warring parties, even if undertaken by the UN, is no more likely to succeed in the post-Cold War era than before, Stedman says. Some interventionists have called upon the UN to use military force to compel Cambodia's Khmer Rouge to abide by the 1991 Paris Peace Accords. Why, he asks, "should the United Nations be expected to succeed where the Vietnamese army, one of the world's most disciplined, could not?"

The UN is already "overextended and underfunded," Stedman points out. During the last three years, it has been involved in 14 peace missions—the same number as in all its preceding 43 years. The estimated cost of peacekeeping has grown

from \$750 million in 1991 to \$2.9 billion in 1992, of which member nations have contributed only \$2 billion. "The United Nations has somehow taken on a mythic status as the cure for all ills," Stedman says, "yet it has not received the resources necessary to carry out even the tasks it has embarked on already."

Humanitarian concerns are not enough to justify intervention, Stedman argues. If they were, he says, then, in terms of deaths and genocidal campaigns, Bosnia would trail Sudan, Liberia, and East Timor. "Serbian thugs are certainly rank amateurs compared [with] Cambodia's Khmer Rouge and Mozambique's RENAMO, both of whom have been accorded international legitimacy in the search for peace."

The end of the Cold War, Stedman insists, has not altered the fundamental logic of intervention. It is justified only when international security is clearly at stake, and some civil wars threaten it

Patriotism and Other Loves

The military's resistance to lifting the ban on service by homosexuals has many sources. Not all of them are easy to dismiss, Paul W. Kuhn, a professor at Yale Law School, argues in the *New Republic* (Mar. 8, 1993).

The debate over gay service should be seen as rooted in a conflict between the highest and most serious values and aspirations of our culture. It is a debate not about "lifestyles" but about the conflicting forms and expressions of love. At this level, it is the same debate that we are having about the introduction of women into combat roles. In both cases, the military has reason to worry about the introduction of a wholly virtuous form of private love—the love that founds the family—into the domain of public love, which characterizes the field of battle

The state is held together by a kind of love. That love is most at issue in the management of the military. Instead of "love," we speak of "patriotism." But this is nothing other than the emotional attachment of each citizen to every other and of all to the public order. Plato warns us that between the love of the state and the love of the family there are likely to be deep tensions

When the members of the armed forces worry about homosexuality within the military, the real concern is the threat sexual love poses to the non-sexual love upon which the military is based. Sexual love differentiates. It places one body above all others. To love sexually is not to love everyone. We are each willing to make unique sacrifices for our loved ones—spouses, partners or children. The armed services are the domain of a non-sexual love that expresses the unity of each with every other. This is apparent in the organization of physical space: the "lack of privacy" within the armed services, uniforms and serial numbers are all symbols of the disappearance of the private individual. If women and gays represent a threat to the military, it is the threat of private love to the domain of public love

The border between public and private love was maintained in the past by the division of sexual function. The exclusion of women from the army served, in part, as an exclusion of private love from the army's public space. The introduction of homosexuals into the armed services threatens this same boundary. Both exclusions have had high costs. But unlike the exclusion of blacks in an earlier era, we should not think that these exclusions are simply "mistakes" that can be corrected by a proper understanding of equality.

more than others. "The war in the Balkans is a greater danger to international security than civil wars in Somalia, Liberia or Sudan because it may overwhelm Europe's political stability and economic productivity, prerequisites for Third World development."

Likewise, the goals of any intervention still must be clearly defined. "Only a combination of coherent strategy, sufficient leverage, and a keen sense of timing will allow a third party to bring peace. Most civil wars become amenable to settlement only after they have played themselves out with ferocity." A short-term emphasis on ceasefires, or the provision of humanitarian aid, may sometimes only prolong the bloody conflict rather than end it. Many civil wars, in Stedman's view, may just have to be allowed to run their tragic course.

It Can't Happen Here?

"The Origins of the American Military Coup of 2012" by Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., in *Parameters* (Winter 1992-93), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5050.

The year is 2012 and the White House is abruptly taken over by General Thomas E. T. Brutus, heretofore merely the uniformed chief of the unified armed forces. Upon the president's death and the vice president's not entirely voluntary retirement, Brutus declares martial law, postpones elections, and names himself permanent Military Plenipotentiary. The coup is ratified in a national referendum.

This scenario may seem like a fanciful Hollywood film treatment, but Dunlap, an Air Force lieutenant colonel, is afraid that it is becoming all too possible.

Casting his argument in the form of a letter from a senior officer imprisoned for resisting the imagined coup of 2012, Dunlap notes that high public confidence in the military after the Persian Gulf War and disillusionment with most other arms of government made it tempting, with the Cold War over, to give the armed forces major responsibilities for dealing with crime, environmental hazards, natural disasters, and other civilian problems. Other institutions did not seem to be up to the job. Even before then, in 1981, Congress had expanded

the military's role in combating drug-smuggling. "By 1991 the Department of Defense was spending \$1.2 billion on counter-narcotics crusades. Air Force surveillance aircraft were sent to track airborne smugglers; Navy ships patrolled the Caribbean looking for drug-laden vessels; and National Guardsmen were searching for marijuana caches near the borders." Proposals were made to have the military rebuild bridges and roads, rehabilitate public housing, and even help out urban hospitals. U.S. troops were given humanitarian missions overseas, in such countries as Iraq, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Somalia. When several African governments collapsed around the turn of the century, according to Dunlap's imaginary account, U.S. troops were called upon to provide basic services—and never left. At home, the armed forces had gotten involved in many vital areas of American life, and 21st-century legislators called for even greater involvement.

By taking on civilian tasks, Dunlap contends, the military is diverted from its main mission—waging war and preparing to wage war—and "the very ethos of military service" is eroded. Instead of considering themselves warriors, people in the military come to think of themselves as "policemen, relief workers, educators, builders, health care providers, politicians—everything but warfighters."

"With so much responsibility for virtually everything government was expected to do," his imaginary prisoner recalls, "the military increasingly demanded a larger role in policymaking." Well-intentioned officers, accustomed to the military hierarchy of command, "became impatient with the delays and inefficiencies inherent in the democratic process," and increasingly sought to circumvent it. General Brutus's coup was nothing more than the next logical step.

Rambo Retires

"War Without Killing" by Harvey M. Sapolsky and Sharon K. Weiner, in *Breakthroughs* (Winter 1992-93), Defense and Arms Control Studies Program, MIT, 292 Main St. (E38-603), Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

The American military has always gone to great lengths to minimize deaths in wartime. Now, however, it may be going too far.

It is one thing to keep U.S. soldiers and civilians,