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## Is the Pentagon Your Friend?

"Welcome to the Junta: The Erosion of Civilian Control of the U.S. Military" by Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., in *Wake Forest Law Review* (Summer 1994), Wake Forest University, School of Law, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27109.

Opinion surveys show that Americans now have more confidence in the military than in any other

institution. The hostility toward those in uniform so evident during the Vietnam War—and in earlier periods of American history—has disappeared, and the "can do" military is seen as virtually the only part of government that works. A 1993 Gallup poll found that 32 percent of Americans have a "great deal" of confidence in the armed forces while only 19 percent have as much faith in the president, and only eight percent in Congress (which, accord-

ing to another survey, half the populace regards as corrupt). Once, Americans detested "standing armies"; now, they revile their democratically elected political leaders.

Dunlap, an air force lieutenant colonel, finds these trends alarming. Not that Americans need fear a military coup. Today's officers "are no more *consciously* disposed toward the improper aggrandizement of power" than past ones, he writes. The danger comes from the growing, and increasingly unchecked, influence of the military in American life.

In 1981, Congress committed the armed forces to the "war against drugs." Today, the \$1.2 billion program includes regular patrols by troops—more than 5,000 on any given day—in certain high-crime urban neighborhoods and along American borders. "America is witnessing the beginning of . . . a *national* uniformed police agency," Dunlap contends. Last year, Congress authorized another expansion of the civilian role of the military. The armed services are now involved in local schools, the provision of medical care to underserved communities, programs for high school dropouts, and disaster relief.

This stepped-up involvement in civilian affairs is popular not only with an increasing

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## At Sea in the World

In *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Summer 1994), former secretary of state Henry Kissinger points to profound sources of confusion in U.S. foreign policy.

*How might America apply the concept of equilibrium in the post-modern world? In order to apply the concept of the balance of power, you have to know what your vital interests are. What is it you will defend no matter how it is challenged? America has never faced that issue before. It did have the Monroe Doctrine, which was gradually expanded until it had attained a hegemonic character. But that was mostly in relation to conjectural, not actual, threats.*

*America has never had a concrete definition of the vital interest in the way Britain did when it maintained that the Low Countries must never be occupied by a major Continental power, or in the way France did when it was still dominant and adhered to the rule that Central Europe must not be controlled by a single power.*

*In this same way on a global scale, it is a vital American interest to see to it that Eurasia not be controlled by a single power center. In essence, we have fought two wars over this issue.*

*With respect to modern Europe, I think we have learned to live with a United Europe, though probably because we don't think it can be more powerful than we are. If all the countries of Asia formed a single group, it would pose a serious long-term problem for America.*

*Therefore, in Asia—in the interplay of Japan, Russia, China, Korea, and Southeast Asia—we are in a position of having to play a role very similar to that of Britain in the 19th century vis-à-vis Europe. The trouble is that we have no theory or experience for such a role. The diplomacy sketched here would require us to be closer to each of the participants than they are to each other. . . .*

*The way you get outstanding policy is to think about your basic concept so that when something important comes along you don't have to discuss the goal and can focus on the tactics. But if everything has to be analyzed from scratch as the deadline approaches, it is human nature that we prepare for the photo opportunity.*

number of senior officers but with the public. Soldiers are no longer the dregs of society: "With 94 percent of military recruits possessing high school diplomas, enlisted personnel are better educated than the general populace. Virtually all officers have graduated from college, and most senior officers hold post-graduate degrees."

Free of the "civilianizing" influence of the draft, the armed services are also more united than ever, thanks to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, and more politicized, thanks to the legacy of Vietnam. Well-versed in international relations, congressional politics, and public relations, most high-ranking officers today "are intellectually prepared to challenge political leaders, particularly when they believe military interests are at stake." And civilian leaders, from President Clinton on down, increasingly lack any military experience or knowledge.

The commitment of those in the armed forces to the democratic political system, while real, is abstract, Dunlap points out: "Military personnel are untroubled by the authoritarian system in which they live; indeed, they cherish the harmony it provides. [They] do not necessarily admire or desire the unbridled individualism enjoyed by civilian society." As its civilian responsibilities multiply, Dunlap warns, the military may start "to assume it has the right, and even the *obligation*, to intervene in a wide range of activities when it perceives it can advance a broadly defined notion of the national interest."

## Sons of the South

"Dixie's Dove: J. William Fulbright, the Vietnam War, and the American South" by Randall Bennett Woods, in *The Journal of Southern History* (Aug. 1994), Rice University, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251.

Historian C. Vann Woodward claimed in 1968 that by expanding U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk had betrayed their southern heritage. The South's history of "defeat and failure . . . frustration and poverty . . . slavery and its long aftermath of racial injustice," he argued, should have led them to see things from the Viet-



"A Senator Fulbright to see you, Sire. Seems he can't reconcile himself to your infallibility."

By 1966, Senator J. William Fulbright was a leading critic of President Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam policy.

namese point of view. Ironically, says Woods, a historian at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Johnson and Rusk did appreciate "the burden of southern history"—and it helped inspire them to intervene in Vietnam. One of their most powerful opponents, however, was another son of Dixie, Senator J. William Fulbright (D.-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His convictions sprang in part from a very different reading of the South's history.

Johnson had encountered in the Hill Country of Texas, and Rusk, in the hills of Georgia, "poverty, racial exploitation, ignorance, and human degradation," Woods notes. The experience turned them into reformers, representatives of "southern liberalism at its best and at its worst." Such liberalism produced the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, Medicare, the War on Poverty, and other Great Society measures. But it also bred in Johnson and Rusk, "if not a desire to carry the blessings of liberty and democracy to Southeast Asia, at least a wish to create a viable society in South Vietnam when forced by the exigencies of the Cold War to do so." In Johnson's eyes, the Vietnamese peasants were much like the poor farm laborers of the South.