

Republicans in Uniform

The hazards of an increasingly politicized military are described in *The New Republic* (Dec. 8, 1997) by Andrew J. Bacevich, of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, and Richard H. Kohn, a historian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In recent years, Republicans have increasingly regarded the 1.4 million members of the all-volunteer military and their families as a political interest group—a part of the Republican coalition to be showered with benefits in the name of a strong national defense, just as Democrats have courted teachers' unions and environmental groups. And, according to a mounting body of political research, the professional officer corps that leads the armed forces is reciprocating. Heretofore a matter of temperament, military conservatism has become a matter of ideology. Today's officers scorn 'liberalism' and all its works, and consider Democrats presumptively anti-military and therefore untrustworthy. . . .

This reciprocal relationship is certainly good for the Republicans: nothing helps at the polls like the hearty endorsement of a decorated veteran. And it may be good for the armed forces, too, in the myopic sense of protecting the current level of military spending. But over the long haul, a politicized military, not to mention one whose officer corps is so closely identified with one party, is both bad for the services and bad for democracy. . . .

There are many possible causes for this trend. One may be the advent of the all-volunteer military in the mid-'70s that, along with the Vietnam trauma, had the effect of

Since economic sanctions have worked less than five percent of the time—not 34 percent—“the world would have to change considerably before sanctions could become a credible alternative to force,” Pape concludes. The hope that greater international cooperation will increase the effectiveness of sanctions is a mirage. “The key reason that sanctions fail” is that the target states are not fragile, according to Pape. Nationalism often

makes them “willing to endure considerable punishment rather than abandon their national interest.” External pressure against even the weakest of states is “more likely to enhance the nationalist legitimacy of rulers than undermine it.” After five years during which “the most extreme sanctions in history” shrank its economy by nearly 50 percent, for example, Saddam Hussein's rogue state of Iraq still has not buckled.

Will OPEC Rise Again?

“OPEC: An Obituary” by Fadhil J. Chalabi, in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1997–98), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

It is a very big dog that has not barked in a very long time. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has seen the oil revenues of its 11 member nations tumble from \$283 billion in 1980 to \$132 billion in 1995, notes Chalabi, who served as OPEC's acting secretary-general between 1983 and '88. A world that once trembled when the OPEC oil ministers convened now yawns.

Founded in 1960 by Venezuela and four Persian Gulf producers (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia) seeking to stabilize falling oil prices, OPEC stunned the world with its October 1973 decision to boost the “posted” price of oil by 70 percent, to \$5.11 per barrel. (By then, Algeria, Indonesia, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates had joined the cartel.) Then the Arab powers cut production to punish the

making the self-selected military subculture even less ideologically representative of American society. And increasing affinity for Republicans was also fed by President Ronald Reagan's defense build-up in the 1980s, which restored the self-esteem of career soldiers who had hung on after Vietnam, and for which officers not illogically gave the Republicans most of the credit. . . .

The victorious World War II-generation of officers was overwhelmingly nonpartisan. General George C. Marshall, for example, never even cast a ballot in any election while on active duty and pointedly let others know that he refrained from doing so. . . .

Marshall understood that the more the military becomes identified with one party, the more likely government officials and the voters are to perceive its recommendations as part of a political agenda—rather than the considered judgment of disinterested professionals. Within the military itself, partisan affiliation can jeopardize morale and, hence, effectiveness. If, for example, partisan views prompt soldiers to speak out for or against specific policies, this can only erode support among the troops for unpopular missions or those in which the U.S. national interest is unclear (such as Bosnia, Somalia, or Haiti, to name just a few deployments Republicans opposed).

At the same time, partisanship emboldens soldiers to take sides—even publicly to become advocates—on the great and controversial issues of the day, whether it's the prevalence of crime in the streets and the effectiveness of public schools, or gay rights and the character of the president. It engenders among soldiers (and some short-sighted civilians) dangerous notions that military institutions are morally superior to those of civilian life and that the armed forces may have a responsibility to save American society from its own decadent inclinations. Another name for the imposition of military ideals on the rest of society is, of course, militarism.

West for supporting Israel in that year's Arab-Israeli war.

A second oil "price shock" came in the winter of 1978–79, when domestic protests against the shah of Iran sharply curtailed Iranian production. By early 1981, the price of oil had soared to \$34 per barrel. But that, says Chalabi, was "OPEC's last hurrah."

What happened? A "market backlash" stole some of OPEC's power, Chalabi notes. By 1996, the world's industrialized countries were consuming *less* oil than they did in 1978, even though their economies were 42 percent larger. Oil prices now hover around \$20 per barrel. Chalabi cites several related developments:

- Consuming countries turned to natural gas, nuclear energy, and coal.
- Oil companies increased exploration in non-OPEC countries.
- The rise of an oil futures market allowed the market to fix a truer value on oil, reducing OPEC's ability to set prices.
- New technologies and techniques allowed oil companies to cut the costs of finding and pumping oil. For example, big oil companies have cut the share of "dry holes" hit in exploration from roughly 60

percent in the mid-1980s to about 40 percent today.

Internal political disarray and fallout from the 1991 Persian Gulf War have also hurt OPEC. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, already spending lavishly on arms and domestic subsidies, were staggered by the costs of the war. Now even routine maintenance in the oil fields is being deferred. The cartel's production quotas are becoming increasingly meaningless. Even OPEC stalwart Saudi Arabia sells more oil than OPEC quotas allow. If postwar sanctions limiting Iraq's oil output were lifted, OPEC would likely collapse.

OPEC is not dead yet, Chalabi says. Global energy demand may grow 40 percent by 2010, and OPEC countries control 76 percent of the world's oil reserves. But the Persian Gulf states have not adjusted to the times, he maintains. They need to give up futile anti-Western crusades and to recognize that there is now a "hypercompetitive" global market in oil. What they need most, Chalabi argues, is a bracing dose of "privatization, deregulation, and fiscal discipline"—hardly a prescription for restoring the big dog's same old bark.