

## Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises

by *Richard K. Betts*

(Harvard; 320 pp.; \$15.00)

### David McLellan

It is striking that a subject as important as this has for so long gone largely unexplored. Apart from *War and Politics* by Bernard Brodie and *Neither Peace nor Honor* by Robert Gallucci, few works of scholarship have focused exclusively upon the character and potency of military influence on presidential decisions involving intervention or escalation where the life and welfare of millions of people were at stake.

This study is a masterpiece of scholarly investigation and analysis. It fully justifies the blurb on the cover by Samuel Huntington: "... a comprehensive and definitive picture and analysis of the nature of and reason for military recommendations on the use of force during the Cold War years."

Betts organizes his analysis, not around a case-by-case study, but around the issues in which political scientists have characteristically treated decision-making. First and foremost Betts seeks to explicate the influence of the military in terms of two competing models of presidential decisionmaking. The "objective-control" model holds that the president decides on the basis of purely military advice provided by a rational and objectively calculated assessment of military issues. The "bureaucratic-revisionist" model (Neustadt-Allison-Halperin) holds that the military, like any other bureaucracy, make recommendations that are based on bureaucratic self-interest and biases, misperceptions, and organizational rivalries. To test these competing models Betts examines in successive chapters the following influences on the advice given by the military leadership to a succession of presidents: professional expertise and bureaucratic power, the framework of cold war policy and strategy, the organizational doctrines and incentives to which the services have tied their missions, the imperatives that govern the military services in the preparation and disposition of their forces for action, the role of precedents, personalities, and chains of

command, and, finally, a chapter on misperceptions due to careerism, to manipulation of intelligence, and to refusal to recognize or admit the significance of negative evidence of military failure and ineffectiveness. No one can fail to appreciate the subtlety and richness of detail Betts has brought to bear on each of these topics.

For purposes of refining his analysis Betts breaks down the military leadership into its several role components: the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the chairman of the JCS, the service chiefs, the field commanders, and other commanders. By comparing their recommendations with the advice of the civilian leadership, Betts finds that on the twenty issues of military intervention (Korea, Vietnam, etc.) the Army chief and the chairman of the JCS have been about as aggressive as their civilian counterparts (agreement existed in 79 per cent of the cases), but that the chief of Naval operations and the Air Force have favored aggressive action more often than have the civilians. Once intervention has taken place, however, the military have favored escalation far more often than have the dominant civilian advisors.

Betts's analysis leads him to conclude that "...with exceptions the military have had neither more nor less influence than they should have (and) they have erred—albeit in different ways—neither more nor less than their civilian colleagues...." Whatever abuses have occurred or mistakes have been made are no more than one might expect from any bureaucratic situation. This is perhaps the weakness of American political science even at its best—namely, in offering explanations, responsibility tends to get washed away. What is, is; there is either little room for greater responsibility to be exercised or there is not much to be done about it. And this is born out by the feeble conclusions to which Betts comes in his final chapter.

However, if one shifts one's focus to the responsibility that both civilian and

military leaderships bear, then it becomes evident that each has reinforced the other in its errors, and Betts's analysis constitutes a far more devastating critique of the military role. The case-by-case approach on which Betts draws for his evidence shows that in a great many cases presidents were powerfully reinforced in their aggressiveness and pressured by the military to intervene, to escalate, and to resist bombing halts that might have led to negotiation. A case-by-case approach also shows that on a number of occasions it was the advice of a single service chief—Army Chief of Staff Ridgway in particular—that helped a president resist the pressure of the other military chiefs. In two critical episodes—Indochina, 1954, and the 1954 Quemoy-Matsu crisis—only Ridgway's character and the high intelligence of his advice succeeded in reinforcing Eisenhower against the hot-heads, both military and civilian, who were ready to go to war with Communist China.

Perhaps if we shift Betts's assumptions on several points just slightly, we might obtain a more penetrating picture of reality. First let us dispose of Betts's assumption that the military is just another bureaucracy, for everything in the study suggests otherwise. Its practitioners claim an expertise that is exclusively their own and into which, the issue once joined, civilians have no right to trespass. Even more than most bureaucrats the military "rarely admit a conflict between organization interests and ideologies and their political responsibility." They adhere tenaciously to the conviction that they are giving strictly military advice, when, in fact, their views are profoundly political (conservative, deterministic, and doctrinaire) and may have political consequences for which they invariably escape responsibility.

Betts argues that critics of the military overstate the degree to which military experts imprison their political superiors by controlling information and narrowing options. I would say that his findings demonstrate precisely the opposite. Betts cites Johnson's knowledge of one military estimate that the Vietnam war would take seven years and a million men as evidence of the fact that he went into the war with his eyes open. But the *Pentagon Papers* present many more examples of highly optimistic military assessments—so far off the mark,

incidently, that it is embarrassing to cite them. In fact Admiral Mustin had options A and B, providing for negotiation and withdrawal from Vietnam, stricken from the Bundy interagency recommendations of 1964 in favor of all-out military intervention. Certainly if the single estimate of a seven-year, million-man war had been known to the American people, Johnson's wishful thinking might have been dispelled. But the military, maneuvering for an all-out war, had no intention of letting the American people or Congress know what the country was in for. Once one understands that the military is not just another bureaucracy, any more than the CIA is just another bureaucracy, one sees the role of the JCS somewhat more clearly. Actually Betts's study is replete with evidence and statements that military recommendations are *not* politically neutral and that they do exercise potent independent political power over presidents.

Let us shift a second Betts assumption and see what happens. Betts's study is skewed by the assumption that, because the military (except for the Navy and Air Force) were not more hawkish than their civilian counterparts in pressing for intervention, their advice was well within the range of professionalism. But just going along with an aggressive civilian leadership may not be the mark of a professional, as General Ridgway demonstrated on several occasions. One expects of professionals the ability to learn and profit from experience (Betts gives many examples that this is not characteristic of the U.S. military). One also expects professionals to advise and restrain the civilian leadership against unpredictable interventions that they know in advance will be long and costly as well as politically embarrassing. If, instead of starting from the premise that the military have just as much right to push for an aggressive decision as the civilian leadership, one takes the position that, as professionals, they ought to be better informed about strategic matters, then the record of the JCS looks very poor indeed.

For example, one would expect a military professional to have some notions about "grand strategy." Why shouldn't the military leadership be expected to recognize the global costs and the limitations upon its country's global capabilities when pushing for policies

that carry the risk of large-scale involvement at the expense of America's strength at home and abroad? If military men knew that Vietnam would take seven years and a million men, they should have been against it from the beginning. Why should the military leadership be absolved from recognizing the existence of something as significant as the Sino-Soviet split? Instead the military leadership constantly admonished the civilian leadership that if Saigon fell, all of Southeast Asia would collapse (reinforcing the domino theory) and that Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines would be mortally endangered, as if Hanoi and China had navies able to defeat the American.

Shouldn't a professional soldier be expected to give advice that shows cognizance of the military capacity of the enemy? The military capacity of an opponent such as Red China, or North Vietnam, or Cuba calls for awareness of the force of nationalism and of the military tenacity of a well-disciplined society. One searches the *Pentagon Papers* in vain for evidence that the American military were cognizant of these factors. Of the military William Colby writes in *Honorable Men*: "it soon became clear that the military wanted to do its own thing, and neither wanted nor listened to the CIA's political ideas of how to fight the war." In fact the JCS was so intent on fighting a conventional war that it could not abandon fast enough its own highly touted counterinsurgency doctrines. What can be said of professional advice that leaves out the most important ingredient in contemporary conflict—the human will and morale of the enemy—and sets out to deceive its own countrymen, thereby deceiving itself about its own country's will and morale as well as that of the enemy.

But even on matters strategic and tactical the American military has not been at all professional. Despite the campaign of tacit blackmail that the Air Force waged in favor of an annihilative bombing campaign in Vietnam, "The Air Force [and Navy] historically refuse to recognize or admit the significance of negative evidence on bombing effectiveness." In other words the Air Force and Navy argued for a policy of annihilation bombing with no demonstrable evidence that the shock effect would succeed. In addition, Westmoreland's tactics and strategy were ill-adapted to the Vietnamese situation, yet

he never considered changing them.

Once embarked upon an intervention, Betts finds, the military were far more determined to escalate than the civilians—and this not only because of prejudice against a negotiated settlement but because of dishonesty and stupidity. Betts writes of Vietnam that proof that policy was or was not working was neutralized by a combination of "fraud at the bottom of the chain of command, selectivity in processing data at the middle...and selectivity of perception at the top."

Vietnam is not the only example of this chicanery: "The Bay of Pigs is a clearer example of misproper influence...the zealotry of [U.S.] officers on the scene [training and commanding the Cuban battalion] led them to dangerous overconfidence and, at least according to testimony of exile soldiers, criminal deception and deliberate insubordination." One passes over in silence the actions of General Lavelle, but not the fact that the bombing halt with which Johnson eventually initiated negotiations had been opposed time and again by the JCS and that it was the Joint Chiefs and the commander-in-chief, Pacific, Admiral Gaylor, who were among the principal spoilers behind the collapse of the Paris negotiations after Kissinger's "peace is at hand" statement in October, 1972. Can one possibly believe that the military were politically neutral or professionally competent when they put the country through much of its agony from 1965 to 1975? Had the president yielded to the Navy and Air Force demand for prior authorization to take action in the Formosa Straits or in the Cuban missile crisis, God knows where we might have been. Yet this kind of pressure flows from an a priori determinism about the military role that has no place in crisis management in the nuclear age.

In sum, this meticulous study brings us, paradoxically, to just the opposite conclusion from that reached by the author. In almost all its professional and bureaucratic manifestations the military reinforces the aggressiveness of the civilian leadership, and on many occasions has failed to provide the kind of professional balance and judgment one should expect.

If we shift Betts's premises on these two counts—namely, that the military is *not* just another bureaucracy and, second, that professional competence is

not proven simply by demonstrating that, except for the Navy and Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were no more aggressive than their civilian counterparts—the evidence serves equally well to show that the military have used and abused their political neutrality and, second, that their professional advice has been bad on strategic and tactical as well as political grounds. If by professionalism we mean a recognition of the limitations of military power, a recognition of the imperviousness of nationalism and resentment against foreign (mainly white) imperialism to modern violence, and a recognition of the need for balance between military commitments or expenditures considered vital and what one can ask the American people to sacrifice, then the military

might have employed their influence in a more competent, professional manner. There is some evidence, however modest, that Vietnam has been a learning experience. But one has the sinking feeling that much of American military training and professionalism is still superficial when it comes to understanding what the Kremlin calls the correlation of world forces.

Nonetheless, this superb book provides the most authoritative study thus far of the mainsprings of military influence on presidential decisionmaking. One finds here, however, a powerful case for far more fundamental improvements in the kind of advice and performance we have gotten from our military than even the author suggests.

## Solitude in Society: A Sociological Study in French Literature

by Robert Sayre

(Harvard; 256 pp.; \$12.50)

## Harvey Cox

A full generation has passed since David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* provided material for innumerable sermons and supplied us with the terms "inner-directed" and "outer-directed," without which many a cocktail party conversation would surely have foundered. It seemed so right, somehow, that the observations of an American social psychologist could cohere so nicely with the regnant voices of religious existentialism—Berdyayev, Tillich, Marcel—and explain—on the basis of population curves—how the foibles of the Fifties were related to such darker denizens as *Einsamkeit* and *Entfremdung*. More recent books on the subject, such as Robert Weiss's *Loneliness, The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation* (1973), probe the most painful instances of loneliness—the death of a loved one, moving to a new community, divorce.

But despite it all, we have not come to terms with the problem, and the stubborn suspicion lingers that in our era loneliness is not just a matter of individual suffering—though that is the way it

is inevitably felt—but a plague. We sense that in modern, money-oriented societies loneliness is endemic and pervasive. Although we sometimes long for at least a little of the communion and solidarity of less profit-oriented cultures, still we rarely try to probe the connection between the economic dimensions of our common life and the erosion of human bonds. We settle, usually, for therapy or for accepting the *angst*, or for a little of each.

In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* the young Karl Marx pondered this question. Looking around at the dissolution of personal relations, he saw that although capitalism had set large numbers of people free from constrictive social bonds, it had done so at a terrible cost. Individuals now competed with each other in a faceless urban marketplace, where work was auctioned off as a commodity. Human relations came to be "reified," mediated through the exchange of cash. Traditional communities became increasingly atomized, and what he called the "illusory community" of the state emerged. Further-

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