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# Huntington: The Soldier and the State

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## REVIEWS

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THE SOLDIER AND THE STATE. By Samuel P. Huntington. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957. Pp. xiii, 534. \$7.50.

THROUGHOUT most of human history, armed combat has been a natural part of man's lot, and military command a normal attribute of political leadership. In many primitive communities this is still so. Even in modern civilization the warrior-dictator crops up; Napoleon, Simon Bolivar, Francisco Franco and Chiang Kai-shek are familiar examples.

For the last two centuries, however, the warrior-dictator has been a dwindling, if not vanishing, species. The rise of the great nation-states, cultural advance and economic growth, the establishment of standing armies and the burgeoning of military science are among the many causes of separation of the military calling from civil government and civilian pursuits. The necessary corollary of separation is relation, and it is with the political aspects of civil-military relations that Professor Huntington's book is concerned.

Whether by luck or good management, the British have seldom been troubled on this score; but France and Germany have been bedevilled by the problem ever since the time of Napoleon, and Japan since its emergence from feudalism in 1868. The Tukachevsky purge of 1937 and the contemporary political prominence of Zhukov and other Russian officers have revealed the same tensions within the seeming monolith of the Soviet Union. In the United States, a host of generals and admirals were precipitated into positions of unprecedented political scope and influence during World War II and the ensuing "cold" war and Korean campaign. Today there is a much more general awareness of what only a few had realized before: the nation's military security is in jeopardy and is likely so to remain as long as can now be foreseen; in peace as in war the man in uniform is in the mainstream of national welfare; and it is high time for the public role and responsibility of the military leaders to be carefully examined and better understood.

To this profoundly important quest, Professor Huntington, who teaches political science at Harvard, has made an impressive and provocative contribution. Karl von Clausewitz, exploring "the nature of military phenomena," concluded that war is "the continuation of state policy by different [i.e. military] means" and therefore "an affair of the whole nation."<sup>1</sup> Building on this theoretical foundation, Professor Huntington concerns himself not so much with war as with the attainment and maintenance of "military security." He centers his analysis on the military calling and its proper relationship to civil government.

"The modern officer corps is a professional body and the modern military officer a professional man. This is, perhaps, the most fundamental thesis of

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1. Pp. 55-58.

this book."<sup>2</sup> So Professor Huntington opens his exposition, and he develops this thesis with power and a wealth of illustrative detail. Expertise, responsibility and corporate consciousness are his indicia of professionalism, and he finds all of them necessary attributes of the officer corps in modern western civilization.

"The principal focus of civil-military relations is the relation of the officer corps to the state."<sup>3</sup> Professor Huntington accepts the basic concept of "civilian control" of the military, but rightly recognizes that "this concept has never been satisfactorily defined" and sorely needs exegesis. He seeks to give it contour and substance by drawing a distinction between "subjective civilian control," which is bad, and "objective civilian control," which is good.<sup>4</sup>

These two expressions are the principal theoretical tools which Professor Huntington has devised, and their statement and application to the facts of life are the core of his analysis. There is no "civil corps" in which civilian power is vested. Except in a dictatorship, civilian power is divided in constantly fluctuating ratios between a number of varied and competing political, economic, and social groups. These civilian groups vie with each other for control of the military. "Subjective civilian control" is the domination or assimilation of the military by a particular segment of civilian power, whereas "objective civilian control" preserves the professional autonomy of the military, so that its unique outlook and ethic will be brought to bear on all segments of civilian power. As Professor Huntington puts it:

"Subjective civilian control achieves its end by civilianizing the military, making them the mirror of the state. Objective civilian control achieves its end by militarizing the military, making them the tool of the state. Subjective civilian control exists in a variety of forms, objective civilian control in only one. The antithesis of objective civilian control is military participation in politics: civilian control decreases as the military become progressively involved in institutional, class, and constitutional politics. Subjective civilian control, on the other hand, presupposes this involvement. The essence of objective civilian control is the recognition of autonomous military professionalism; the essence of subjective civilian control is the denial of an independent military sphere. Historically, the demand for objective control has come from the military profession, the demand for subjective control from the multifarious civilian groups anxious to maximize their power in military affairs."<sup>5</sup>

After a chapter designed to illustrate his theory by a discussion of German and Japanese military history, Professor Huntington devotes the balance and bulk of his book to tracing the course of civil-military relations in the United States. As he sees it, the American officer corps lived in isolation until World War II. Then its leaders acquired great political power, but only by the sacrifice of their professional outlook and their acceptance of the unmilitary "liberal" values dominant in civilian government and society.

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2. P. 7.

3. P. 3.

4. Pp. 80-97.

5. Pp. 83-84.

This last conclusion reflects another fundamental ingredient of the book, which sweeps far beyond the bounds of the civil-military equation, and is of so controversial a nature as to preclude general acceptance. "Liberalism," says Professor Huntington, "has always been the dominant ideology in the United States."<sup>6</sup> He defines liberalism as an amalgam of several ingredients—individualism, faith in human capacity for improvement, hostility to power and distrust of the military. In contrast, the military ethic is "at one with" conservatism, as exemplified not by Herbert Hoover, but Edmund Burke. Violence is rooted in the nature of man, whose weakness and selfishness can be governed only by "organization, discipline, and leadership." Man "realizes himself only in groups," and therefore: "the military ethic is basically corporative in spirit. It is fundamentally anti-individualistic."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in Professor Huntington's view, a well-nigh irreconcilable conflict exists between military professionalism and the prevailing temper of civilian life in the United States. Because of this tension, the officer corps developed in isolation, and our military leaders have achieved political influence only by an apostate embracement of the liberal viewpoint.

Whatever the reader may think of these premises, the author's deduction is logical and categorical: "The requisite for military security is a shift in basic American values from liberalism to conservatism."<sup>8</sup> Again, "the stronger the military voice, the less the likelihood of conflict" between the United States and the Soviet Union. Accordingly, we should renounce our liberalism and the Russians their communism in favor of conservatism. And we should listen respectfully to the generals, whether of the Pentagon or the Kremlin; only then will the prospects of a "peaceful adjustment between the two nations" be good.<sup>9</sup>

It seems bootless here to discuss whether liberals and conservatives correspond to the stereotypes—one might almost call them daguerrotypes—in the author's mental gallery, or whether the military man is by virtue of his calling inherently conservative, or whether Professor Huntington's pungent penchants are "right" or "wrong." What seems most unfortunate, at least to this reviewer, is that the author's political opinions have surged like a tidal wave over the theoretical and historical structure of his book. Much of his message has thus been engulfed in needless controversy. "The military officer must remain neutral politically," Professor Huntington admonishes his readers.<sup>10</sup> If so, the same precept might well be taken to heart by those who grapple with the vexed question of civil-military relations, at least while they are in the throes of the struggle.

For lack of restraint in this regard, the high hopes kindled by the sober, searching and often brilliant opening passages are dashed as the book changes

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6. P. 143.

7. P. 64.

8. P. 464.

9. P. 463.

10. P. 71.

character and moves toward a conclusion that is nothing more than a political tract for the times. In the process, the author's chosen concepts disintegrate and then return as ghosts to haunt him. Having condemned "subjective civilian control" because it makes the military into a "mirror" of the civilian state, Professor Huntington turns full circle and exhorts the civilian to abandon "liberalism" and mirror the "conservative" outlook of the military. What would this be but "subjective military control" of the civilian world? Perhaps that is what Professor Huntington really wants; his closing lesson for the day is that America can learn more from West Point than West Point from America.

True, the civilian and the professional soldier have much to learn from each other, and for nearly a century the lessons went unlearned on both sides. For this the blame must rest chiefly on the civilian, or rather on the complacent, isolated American environment which fostered civilian indifference and hostility to the man in uniform. Many would say that during World War II and its aftermath the ice has been broken, and that there has been a considerable growth of mutual respect and understanding. But not Professor Huntington, for whom the civilian has learned little or nothing from the military, and the military has picked up a mess of bad, "liberal" habits from the civilian.

All this provocative overlay is likely to distract the reader from the book's more solid features. The expression "professional soldier" has now been taken into everyday usage; nevertheless, as the author points out, in neither military nor social literature has the officer generally been treated as a professional man. For most purposes, this is a sound approach to the civil-military equation. The drive of professionalism stimulates skill and foresight, independence of mind, pride in a noble calling, responsibility to an ideal. Any officer corps will benefit enormously if animated by such concepts, which also help define the officer's proper role in affairs of state.

Of course, the characterization must not be taken too literally. Profound differences exist between the military calling and the "classic" professions—medicine, law, and theology—which turn on a counseling relation to the threatened or stricken individual, to aid him in coping with bodily ills, the slings and arrows of his enemies, or the awfulness of infinity. An officer's responsibility is to the State; so he is in part a bureaucrat. But he is the State's counselor and agent against its enemies foreign and perhaps domestic. And while his calling embraces a wonderful variety of skills, at the top of his profession the officer becomes, in Professor Harold Lasswell's phrase, a specialist in "the management of violence."

The principle of "objective civilian control" is perhaps the most original and certainly the most important of the book's contributions to politico-military theory. "Civilian control" has become a piece of cant that politicians mouth worshipfully but with little understanding. This is an area where iconoclasm is badly needed; Professor Huntington's store of this commodity seems virtually inexhaustible, and it is refreshing to follow his trail of destructive exposure.

To the Senator or Representative, "civilian control" means Congressional power over the military, at the expense of the Executive. To Franklin D. Roosevelt, it meant control by the President as Commander-in-Chief, not by the Secretaries of War and Navy. To the National Guardsman, apparently, it means control preferably by the National Guard Association, if necessary by Congress, but in no event by the federal executive branch.

As an aid to clear thought and perception, the distinction between "subjective" and "objective" civilian control is useful. Substantively too, it is plainly desirable that no one branch of the government, and no one segment of civilian power, should dominate the military establishment. To a degree the constitutional separation of powers prevents such a result, but Professor Huntington views this factor with a very jaundiced eye, perceiving that rivalry between the legislative and executive branches tends to draw the generals into "political conflicts." Therefore, he concludes, the separation of powers "has been a major hindrance to the development of military professionalism and civilian control in the United States."<sup>11</sup>

Once again, the confusion results from the intrusion of Professor Huntington's own political preconceptions. At bottom, it appears, he does not himself believe in "objective," but rather in "conservative," civilian control. He declares for a "politically neutral officer corps," but defines the "military ethic" as essentially "conservative." He wants the American military voice to be heeded, but usually does not like what he hears when it speaks. His historical treatment of American military institutions is both readable and enlightening, but his only heroes, military or civilian, are those who fit his particular "conservative" description. Among those who conspicuously fail to pass through the eye of this needle are Herbert Hoover, Douglas MacArthur, Andrew Carnegie, and, from abroad, Erich Ludendorff.

The book has many gaps and a few sad lapses. Of the latter, perhaps the worst is the section on German military history. The German officer corps embodied solid values, but it also glistened in a way that seems to have blinded Professor Huntington to certain of its other, less attractive features. Under his own definitions, technical competence is not equivalent to professionalism, and Professor Huntington seems to have learned little from his reading of Gordon Craig's monumental study, cited among his reference notes.<sup>12</sup>

Reviewing *The Soldier and the State* in *The New York Times Book Review*,<sup>13</sup> Walter Millis reveals that his copy is "marked with explosive disagreement" on "nearly every other page." So is mine, by way of notes on the blank pages at the back. Mr. Millis concluded that Professor Huntington's work is "well worth reading" but "in the end . . . a failure." There is no doubt about the first of these verdicts, but the second seems unduly harsh. No book is a failure that cuts deep into a tangle of vital problems of state policy and struc-

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11. P. 177.

12. CRAIG, *THE POLITICS OF THE PRUSSIAN ARMY 1640-1945* (1955).

13. April 28, 1957, p. 6, col. 1.

ture at a point where few have attempted and fewer have achieved a penetration. Professor Huntington has broken new ground, and no one who is seriously concerned with civil-military relations in the modern state should fail to read his book.

TELFORD TAYLOR†

THE SUPREME COURT. By Bernard Schwartz. New York: The Ronald Press, 1957. Pp. vii, 429. \$6.50.

THE Constitution, Mr. Justice Jackson observed shortly before his death, provides the President and the Congress with "a fairly formidable political power over the Supreme Court, if there were a disposition to exert it."<sup>1</sup> Recent history suggests that, however successful in the nineteenth century, attempts to change the number of Justices, narrow the Court's appellate jurisdiction, ignore its mandates or sharply reduce its appropriations today would probably offend what appears to be entrenched popular sensitivity to threats to the Court's independence. More important, any growing impetus to serious consideration of such curbs is usually dissipated by a Court that maintains respect for its authority by responding, sooner or later, to felt public needs. The Supreme Court must in the long run operate within the limits of popular acceptance, and this fact imposes a heavy obligation upon those whose task is to mediate between the Court and the man in the street. Editors, columnists, commentators and articulate community leaders of course do more than reflect the public's attitude; they shape it. Their criticism must be informed, thoughtful and responsible if the Court is to function in a climate that is compatible with the exercise of enlightened judicial conscience and is in turn productive of it.

Such criticism presupposes understanding. Professor Schwartz, troubled by what he deems to be unwarranted abuse of the Court, has written this book in an effort to explain the Court to the opinion-molders. He "has sought to deal with all the important areas of the Court's work, while at the same time seeking to avoid the arid pedantry all too often characteristic of the legal treatise."<sup>2</sup> The substance of the book is an effort to show, by particularized analysis of legal issues, the Court's relationship to the Congress, the President, the administrative agencies and the states. The author's special focus is upon the past twenty years.

The "central theme" is the Court's dramatic abandonment in 1937 of its post-Civil War inclination to act as a "super-legislature" that freely invalidated laws whose wisdom was disputed by five of the nine Justices. In the broad perspective of Professor Schwartz's study, deference to the elected representa-

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1. JACKSON, *THE SUPREME COURT IN THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT* 11 (1955).

2. P. iv.