

FORUM

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"The next real war we fight is likely to be

— William S. Lind, a military analyst who has been influential on the doctrinal thinking of the Marine Corps

Our civilian-military

By Thomas E. Ricks

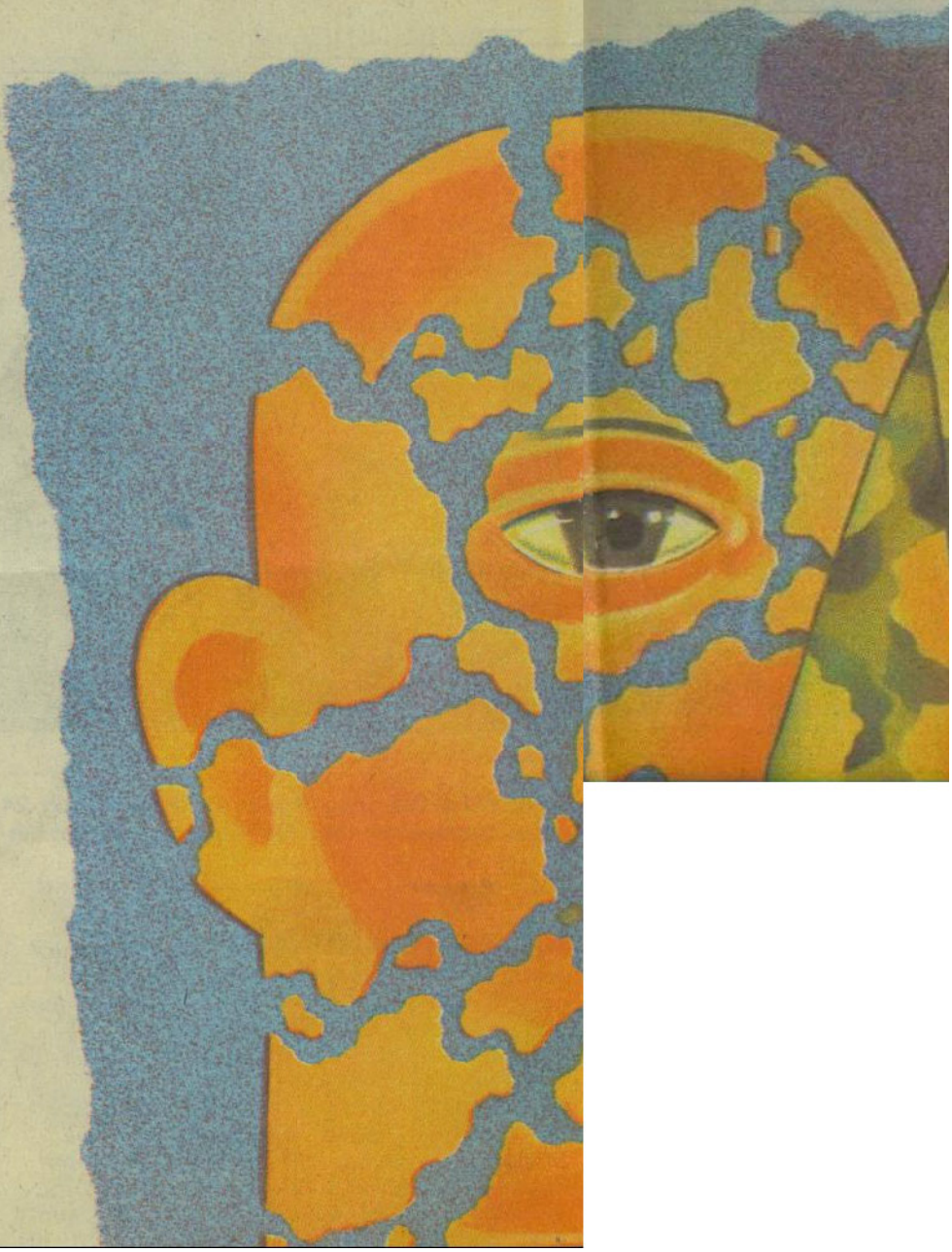
SOME MARINES say they can see the day when the Corps will be required to execute Haiti-like missions, or worse, within the borders of the United States. "The next real war we fight is likely to be on American soil," three writers argue in a 1994 essay in the Marine Corps Gazette, capturing in a sentence Marine estrangement from American society.

The idea of a gap between the military and American society is hardly new. For much of the nation's history, notes Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington in "The Soldier and the State," the classic study of the role of the military in the American system, the armed services had "the outlook of an estranged minority."

But because of changes both in society and in the military, that "divorce" or "gap" appears to be more severe now than it frequently was in the past. There are two overarching reasons for this. First, after 20 years without conscription, the ignorance of American elites about the military has deepened. Second, with the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has entered into historically unexplored territory. If the Cold War is indeed considered to be a kind of war, then for the first time in American history, the nation is maintaining a large military establishment during peacetime, with 1.4 million people on active duty and millions

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Today the armed forces are no longer representative of the people they serve. More and more, enlisted as well as officers are beginning to feel that they are special, better than the society they serve. This is not healthy in armed forces serving democracy



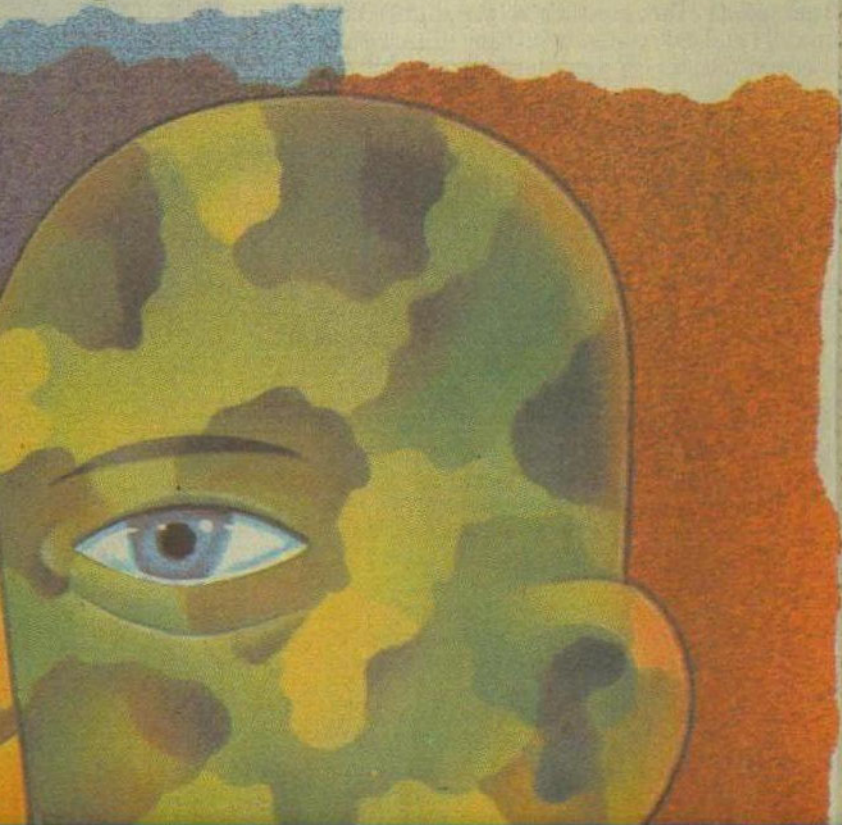
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be on American soil."

rines, writing in the Marine Corps Gazette

ry face-off



The Bill of Rights no obstacle for Corps

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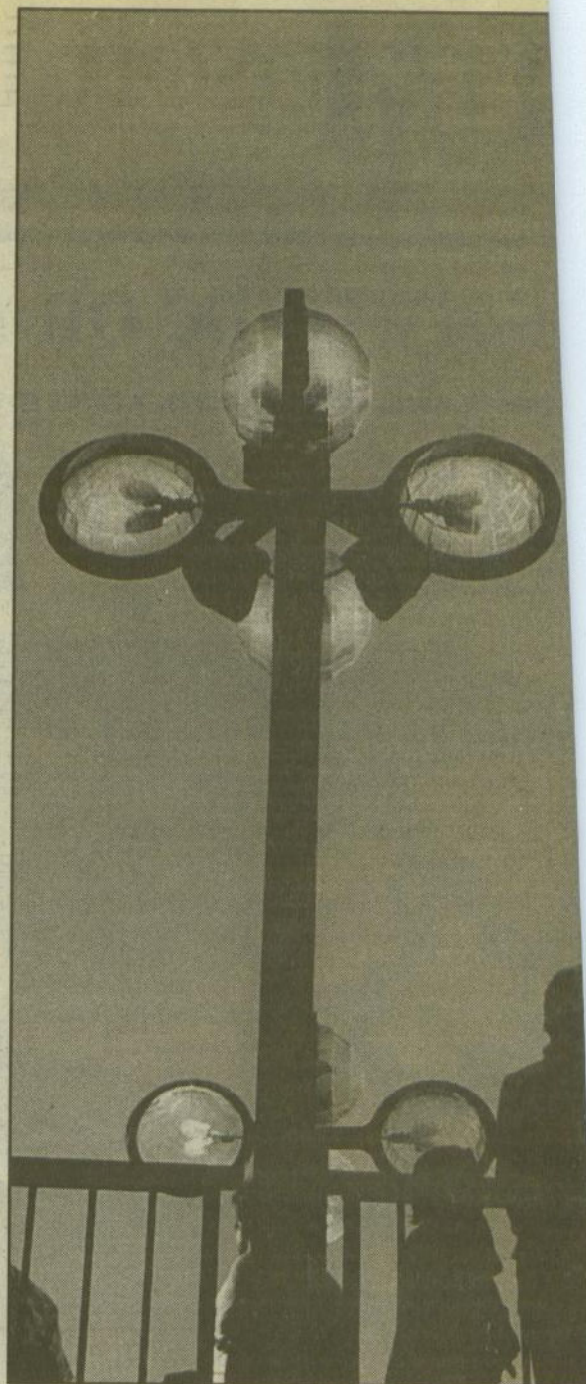
"They talk about themselves as 'we,' separate from society. They see themselves as different, morally and culturally. It isn't the military of the '50s and '60s, which was a large semimobilized citizen military establishment, with a lot of younger officers who were there temporarily, and a base of enlisted draftees." What's more, as Samuel Huntington observed in "Soldier and the State," the American people have never much liked professional militaries, theirs or anybody else's. Reviewing American history, from the Hessian mercenaries of the American Revolution to the German militarism of World War I, he observes that, in the American view, "the professionals have always been on the other side."

IN ADDITION, two related post-Cold War trends are further isolating the military: base closing and privatization. The base closing process is returning the military to its pre-World War II political and geographical remoteness, when most military posts were in the South and West. The base closing process so far has hit especially hard in the Far West and the Northeast — areas that have the twin characteristics of being more liberal and more expensive than the rest of the nation.

The military is also "privatizing" some logistics and much of its huge depot structure, which has the effect of getting many military officers out of the job of performing or supervising "civilian-type" work. One of Professor Janowitz's key conclusions was that the military inextricably was becoming "civilianized" by new technological tasks. Privatization may be reversing that trend.

Meanwhile, broader changes are occurring in American military culture, the most notable being the relative politicization of the officer corps. There has, of course, always been a conservative streak inherent in U.S. military culture, just as there has always been an element of antiauthoritarianism inherent in American journalism. But today's officers appear to be both more conservative than their predecessors, and more politically active.

The evidence is skimpy, and the definitions of "conservative" are unstated but almost certainly shifting. But the data that is available indicates that a massive reversal is underway in how the



As civilians in the foreground watch, U.S. Marine Andrew Lynch propels himself to the

where the U.S. military is today, but instead of where it is heading. The Corps was less altered by the Cold War than any of the other services. With the end of the Cold War, the other services are becoming more like the Marines as they too become smaller, insular and expeditionary.

In the Quantico survey 50 percent of the new officers studying at the Basic School identified themselves as conservatives. In a parallel survey of midcareer officers at the Command and Staff College, 69 percent identified themselves as conservatives. In a striking indication of alienation

found that the inclination tended to take a non-partisan form. Military honor, he wrote, required the professional soldier to avoid "open party preferences." He also found the military becoming more representative of society, with a long-term upward trend in the number of officers "willing to deviate from the traditional conservative identification." And he detected a correlation between rank and intensity of conservative attitudes.

Today *all* these findings appear to have reversed. The military increasingly appears to lean toward partisan conservatism. It also seems to be becoming less politically representative of society, with a long-term downward trend in the number of officers willing to identify themselves as liberals. Open identification with the Republican party is becoming the norm – even, suggests former Army Maj. Dana Isaacoff, part of the implicit definition of being a member of the officer corps. And the few remaining liberals in uniform tend to be colonels and generals, perhaps because they began their careers in the draft-era military. By contrast, the junior officer corps, aside from its female and minority members, appears overwhelmingly to be hard-right Republican, largely comfortable with the views of Rush Limbaugh.

ODDLY, THIS trend has been exacerbated by the controversy over gays in the military which has resulted in some universities banning ROTC from their campuses: Air Force Col. Charles Dunlap, a thoughtful commentator on the estrangement of the U.S. military from the society it protects, notes with dismay that some officers welcome the expulsion of ROTC units because it reduces the number of officers educated in liberal environments.

A variety of recent formal and informal surveys point toward the conclusion that the military is moving toward a new kind of open and active political conservatism. At Annapolis, midshipmen, who in 1974 were similar in their politics to their peers at civilian colleges, are now twice as conservative as the general population of students, according to an unpublished internal Navy Survey. "The shift to the right has been rather remarkable, even while there has been an infusion of rather more liberal women and minorities," concluded one person involved in conducting the survey.

Similarly, Major Isaacoff, who taught at West Point in the early 1990s, routinely surveyed her students on their politics, assessing about 60 students during each of six semesters. In a typical section, she reported, 17 would identify themselves as Republicans, while none would label themselves Democratic or Independent. She concluded that to today's cadets at West Point, being a Republican is becoming part of the definition of being a military officer.

THESE TENDENCIES toward right-wing attitudes aren't limited to malleable students at the military academies. A 1995 survey of Marine officers at Quantico found similar views. The Marines aren't the most representative example, but rather – because they are the most tradition-bound and unabashedly culturally conservative of the services – the most dramatic. They should be viewed not as an indicator of

to the values of the founding fathers than are the values of society. A majority of officers also agreed that a gap exists between the military and society, and stated that they expected it to increase with the passage of time. Fewer than half believed it desirable to have people with different political views within their organizations.

"I believe these results indicate the potential for a serious problem in civil-military relations for the United States," concludes Army Maj. Robert A. Newton, who conducted the survey and analyzed the responses in a study titled "The Politicization of the Officer Corps of the United States." "In particular, I believe these results indicate a growing alienation of the officer corps from society. Instead of viewing themselves as the representatives of society, the participating officers

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Because of 'the rising potential for civil disobedience within the inner cities' it is 'inevitable' the U.S. military will be employed more often within American borders.

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Timothy Reeves

"The U.S. Marine Corps and Domestic Peacekeeping," a paper written at the Marine Command and Staff College

believe they are a unique element within society."

Not only do today's officers appear to be more conservative than in the past, they also appear to be more active in politics, both in their identification and their voting behavior. This change is all the more striking because, while conservatism has long been present in the American military, political involvement is something of an anomaly.

AFTER THE Civil War, reported Professor Huntington in "The Soldier and the State," "not one officer in 500, it was estimated, ever cast a ballot." In "Once an Eagle," one of the more illuminating novels about the 20th century U.S. Army, Anton Myrer has his young hero tell a congressman, "When I serve my country as a soldier, I'm not going to serve her as a Democrat or as a Republican, I'm going to serve her as an American." In a similar novel, "A Country Such as This," James Webb has his hero, a naval aviator, grasp his brother by the shoulder and emphatically state, "I ain't any Republican. I ain't a Democrat, either. I'm a Navy man, that's all. I go anywhere in the world they tell me to go, any time they tell me to, to fight anybody they want me to fight." As Huntington emphatically concluded, "the participation of military officers in politics undermines their professionalism, curtailing their professional competence, dividing the profession against itself and substituting extraneous values for professional values."

Here again, the long-term consequences of the end of conscription are still unfolding. Without a draft, it has been easier for the middle class in