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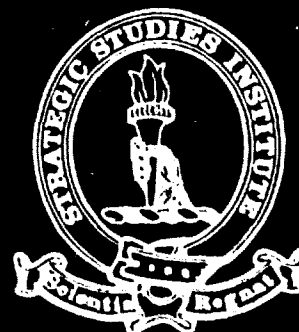
**Strategic Studies Institute
U.S. Army War College**

**THE NEW FRESHMEN,
THE 103rd CONGRESS,
AND NATIONAL DEFENSE:
SEPARATING RHETORIC FROM REALITY**

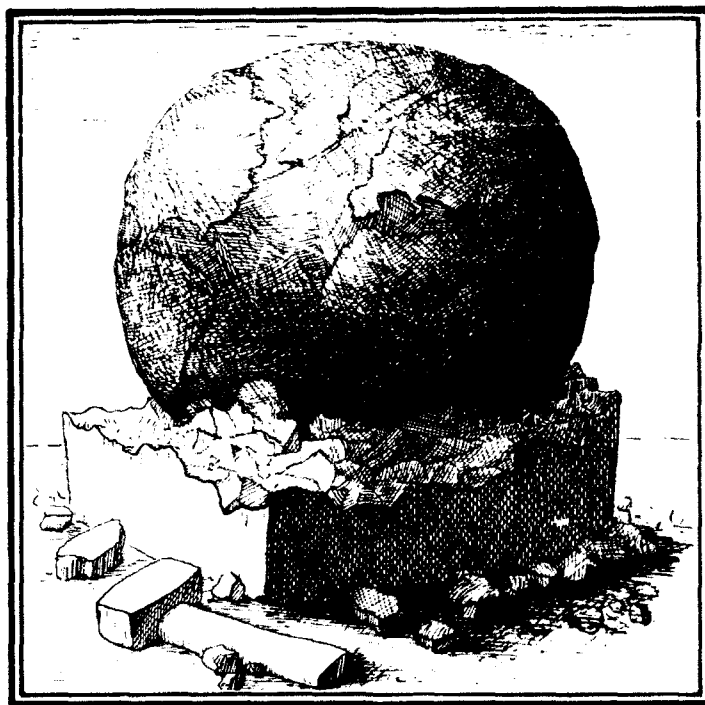
Robert J. Bresler

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UNCLASSIFIED

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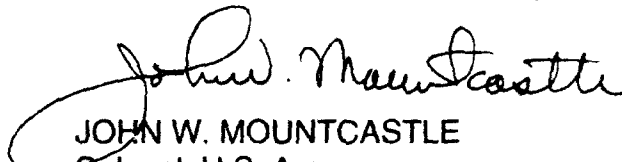
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FOREWORD

The author of this report considers the potential impact of the 124 new members of the 103rd Congress. These new members, elected in a time of economic dislocation, focused their campaigns on domestic concerns. National security issues, ever present in the elections of the cold war era, received little attention. How will this Congress, then, think about national security? The author speculates that freshmen members may have their minds elsewhere, dealing with the federal deficit, spiraling health care costs, and the creation of new jobs.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish this report as a contribution to the debate on the policymaking process.



JOHN W. MOUNTCASTLE
Colonel, U.S. Army
Director, Strategic Studies Institute

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

ROBERT J. BRESLER is Head, Division of Public Affairs, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg, where he has taught since 1969. A graduate of Earlham College, he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. at Princeton University. He has taught at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay; the University of Delaware; and the U.S. Army War College.

THE NEW FRESHMEN, THE 103rd CONGRESS, AND NATIONAL DEFENSE: SEPARATING RHETORIC FROM REALITY

INTRODUCTION

The entry of 124 new members into the 103rd Congress (1993-95), the most since the 1948 election, reflects powerful undercurrents in our political life, yet to be articulated or understood. Previous changes in the composition of Congress have been accompanied by substantial changes in national policy. The mandate in this election, if there is one at all, is to be found at the presidential level. Despite the substantial increase of new members, the changes in Congress are less pronounced and more subtle. This stands in sharp contrast to the last two elections (1964 and 1974) that brought in large numbers of new congressmen and senators. Those elections substantially altered the ideological and partisan balance. The 1992 election changes the racial and gender composition of Congress and perhaps the tone of the institution. The new members reflect the national concern with domestic issues and, if their campaigns are any indication, they seem to have given little thought to national security policy. Deciphering their impact is far from simple because of the low saliency of national security issues. In no other national election since 1936 have these issues been given such meager attention.

The changes brought by the freshman elected in 1964 and 1974 congressional elections were immediately visible. What the 1992 class will bring is far less certain. In all likelihood the results will be more ambiguous.

THE 89TH CONGRESS: SOLDIERS IN LYNDON JOHNSON'S ARMY

The election of 91 new members to the 89th Congress (1965-67) included a large number of liberal northern Democrats, giving President Lyndon Johnson the majorities in the Senate and the House he needed to pass the Great Society legislative program. The 1964 election created the most one-sided Democratic majorities in Congress since 1936 (68-32 in Senate; 295-140 in the House). The result was legislation which extended the influence of the national government into new areas of national life.

These new members were determined to fulfill the domestic agenda of American liberalism, articulated by President Truman in the Fair Deal and President Kennedy in the New Frontier. From Pearl Harbor to the Tet Offensive, Congress had followed the President's lead on issues of major strategic importance. During the same era, however, the Congress was dominated by a Conservative Coalition of Southern Democrats and Republicans that thwarted the domestic initiatives of Truman and Kennedy. These included such measures as health insurance for the elderly, federal aid to education, and civil rights. The election of many northern liberal Democrats in the House allowed President Johnson to complete the Truman and Kennedy agendas. In addition, Lyndon Johnson added his own programs—Model Cities, the Arts and Humanities Foundations, Teachers Corps, Clean Air, Water Pollution Control, Urban Mass Transit, Rent Supplements, Child Nutrition, Truth in Packaging, a New G.I. Bill of Rights, Manpower Retraining—which the Congress readily approved. Post-World War II American liberalism was at its apogee, and these new members of Congress were eager volunteers for the final enshrinement of its agenda into American life. Elected prior to the escalation of the war in Vietnam and the assault on the so-called imperial presidency, the 89th Congress left unchecked the growing power of the President in national security policy. These new members raised few objections to Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War in 1965. Their agenda was domestic, and in that regard the 89th Congress was remarkably productive.

Three other factors, not present in contemporary American politics, influenced the success and productivity of the 89th Congress:

- Most of the key congressional Committee Chairmen were vested with substantial powers and were willing to use those powers on behalf of President Johnson's agenda. For example, Johnson worked closely with Rep. Wilber Mills (D-AR), Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, to shepherd the Medicaid and Medicare Bills through the Congress.
- A growing economy in the mid-1960s generated higher tax revenues for Congress to dispose. In the years 1964-66, the gross national product (GNP) grew at an average rate of 8 percent; the average inflation rate was less than 3 percent; the average unemployment rate was only 4.5 percent, declining to only 3.8 percent in 1966; the budget deficit averaged slightly below \$4 billion. The 89th Congress was spared the painful choice of guns or butter as it authorized substantial increases for education, health, manpower training, community development, and supplemental appropriations to fund our expanding involvement in Vietnam.¹
- Entitlement programs, (Medicare, Medicaid, indexing of Social Security benefits and other government retirement programs, food stamps, supplemental security income) were either in their infancy or yet unborn. Discretionary civilian and military spending, at approximately 36 percent of the federal budget in FY93, was at 65 percent in 1965. In such a climate it was far easier for the President and Congress to initiate new programs and to fund defense at levels the President thought appropriate.

The impact of the class of 1964 on the ways of Congress was slight, but their influence on the direction of American life was far-reaching. In later years, many of these freshmen were to become leading opponents of the Vietnam War and fierce critics of the imperial presidency. But in the 89th Congress,

there was nary a whisper of that. The rumblings of discontent came from established senior Senators such as J. William Fulbright, Wayne Morse, and Ernest Gruening.

THE 94TH CONGRESS: THE WATERGATE CLASS JOINS A REVOLUTION IN PROGRESS

In contrast to the 1964 freshmen, most of whom came to Washington to support President Johnson's agenda, the 1974 freshmen came to Washington to do battle with a Republican President and to a lesser extent with the congressional leadership. They were rebels who joined a revolution in progress, and their numbers may have accelerated the pace of change.

The Class of 1974 entered Congress at time when the Vietnam War was in its final phase and public interest in supporting the faltering South Vietnamese government was virtually nonexistent. Beyond Vietnam, the public was critical of the current levels of military spending and suspicious of any potential overseas military involvements. According to a 1974 Gallup poll, only 12 percent of the public felt we were spending too little on defense as contrasted to 44 percent who felt we were spending too much. Isolationist sentiment was at its highest point since World War II, with 36 percent of the general public believing America should stay out of world affairs. Defense spending had been declining in constant dollars every year from 1969 to 1974.²

The 93rd Congress (1973-75), elected prior to the uncovering of the Watergate scandal, had already begun to challenge heretofore unquestioned Presidential prerogatives. Chaffed by their inability to affect Vietnam policy and encouraged by the political weakness of President Nixon, in July 1973 Congress passed the Fulbright Amendment, which prohibited the use of funds for any combat operation in Indo-China. Thus began a flurry of laws restricting Presidential authority in foreign policy and an era of congressional assertiveness.

The War Powers Act, passed over President Nixon's veto in 1973, placed a 60-day limit on the Presidential authority to

commit troops to combat; the Nelson-Bingham Amendment empowered Congress to disapprove any foreign arms sales valued over \$25 million; in October 1974, Congress imposed on a reluctant President Gerald Ford an arms embargo on Turkey in response to the Turks' July invasion of Cyprus; the Hughes-Ryan Amendment to the 1974 Foreign Assistance Act (revised in 1980) required that the President notify the Congress when a covert action was undertaken and certify its importance "to the national interests of the United States"; the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, passed in 1974, made most-favored-nation (MFN) status for the Soviet Union contingent upon the free emigration of Soviet Jews and impeded Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's pursuit of detente.

The election of 92 new House members to the 95th Congress (1975-77), the so-called Watergate class, continued the assault on executive prerogative and challenged President Ford in numerous areas of national security policy. The House freshmen of 1974 were clearly the most dovish elected in the 1968-78 decade and stood in sharp contrast to many of their senior colleagues. According to the rating system of the hawkish American Security Council, the average national security support score of the House freshmen during the 94th Congress was 44.6 percent as compared to a 64.5 percent support score for non-freshmen. The impact of the 11 new Senators elected in 1974 was not as significant for two reasons: the Senate was already far more dovish than the House; and, the new members had National Security support scores quite close to that of the senior members (46.2 percent for freshmen and 53.6 percent for non-freshmen senators).³ In several important areas of national security policy the impact of these new members was obvious as the 94th Congress continued to wrest control of policy away from President Ford. The 94th Congress marked the clear end of the bipartisan foreign policy consensus that guided it from the time of Pearl Harbor. For example:

- As Communist forces began their final military offensive in South Vietnam and Cambodia, the Senate Armed Services Committee, long time a bastion of

support for military programs, refused to approve the \$722 million aid package that President Ford had requested to assist South Vietnam.

- Despite heavy lobbying from the Ford Administration and Turkish threats to shut the American bases, the House rejected a motion to lift the Turkish arms embargo in July 1975.
- In December 1975, the Congress cut off President Ford's efforts to support the pro-West UNITA faction in Angola by prohibiting the use of "funds for any activities involving Angola other than intelligence gathering."

The Democratic majorities in the 94th Congress compared to those in the 89th Congress (291-144 in the House and 60-37 in the Senate). Of the 75 Democratic freshmen, 67 were Northern Democrats; and of the 8 Southern Democrats, most were moderates elected with the support of Black voters. These new Democrats had little allegiance to a congressional establishment which was already witnessing a challenge to its authority. Congress had passed the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 which opened the Congress to more public scrutiny by requiring (in most cases) open committee meetings and recorded committee votes. In 1973, the House Democratic caucus adopted a Subcommittee Bill of Rights which stripped the Chairmen of their authority to name subcommittee chairs.

When the House Democratic caucus of the 94th Congress convened, they voted a series of additional reforms which dealt a major body blow to the seniority system and permanently altered the power relationships in Congress. Although the votes within the caucus were taken by secret ballot, there is little doubt that the Watergate class provided the necessary majorities. The changes dealt a blow to the power barons (many of whom were more conservative Southern Democrats) who chaired the major committees. The result was a Congress both more fractious and more assertive, making it easier to check executive power but more difficult to lead.

- By a vote of 146-122, the caucus removed the power to make Democratic committee assignments from the Democratic members of the influential tax-writing Ways and Means Committee and placed it in the hands of a new Steering and Policy Committee. This body's membership was more representative of the caucus and thus, more liberal. Although this did not affect those who won their committee assignments under the old system, the change did give the newer (and generally more liberal) members a better chance at choice committee assignments.
- By a vote of 147-116 the Democratic caucus required that nominations of all chairmen of the Appropriations subcommittees be approved by caucus vote.
- By a voice vote the House Democratic Caucus mandated that all committee chairmen must be nominated by the Steering and Policy Committee and approved by the caucus in a secret ballot. Consequently, three Committee chairs were deposed, including Rep. F. Edward Hebert (D-LA) of the Armed Services Committee. Hebert was considered "a conservative who gave unflinching support to the military and voted with the Republicans on many issues."⁴ He was replaced by Rep. Melvin Price (D-IL), a far less imposing and influential presence. In 1985, the Democratic caucus replaced Price, then considered too old and ineffective, with Rep. Les Aspin (D-WI).

These reforms hastened the changes already taking place in the Democratic composition of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC). This committee had been a bastion of solid (if not unquestioning) supporters of military programs who rarely challenged their chairmen. Their interest was largely in securing bases, contracts and installations for their districts. The process of change in the membership of HASC began in 1970 with the appointment of then freshman Rep. Les Aspin, who had served in the Army as an aide to the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and campaigned for Congress as

an opponent of the Vietnam War. The 1972 election brought two more outspoken doves to the Committee, Rep. Ron Dellums (D-CA) and Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-CO).⁵ The two 1974 Watergate Babies were Rep. Bob Carr (D-MI) and Rep. Tom Downey (D-NY), also strong critics of military programs. This group (Aspin, Dellums, Schroeder, Carr and Downey), a constant irritant to the senior members, challenged the pro-military majority on the Committee by offering amendments on the House floor to cut the defense authorization bills. They rarely succeeded and were dubbed "the feeble five."⁶ Carr and Downey eventually left the committee while Dellums, who is now Chairman, and Schroeder, who is a now a senior member, remained as outspoken critics of many military programs.

In addition its hawkish membership, HASC had a history of imperious chairmen—Rep. Carl Vinson of Georgia (1935-65) and L. Mendel Rivers of Louisiana (1965-70). Rivers ran the Committee as his own fiefdom and kept the agenda under his tight control. According to Rep. Samuel Stratton (D-NY) a senior member under Rivers, "If you did not go along with him [Rivers], he would see to it that certain things were taken away."⁷ For example, during the 91st Congress (1969-71), Chairman Rivers assigned only 12 percent of the legislative proposals to subcommittee. By the late 1970s almost the entire legislative agenda of HASC was assigned to subcommittee.⁸

Although the HASC remained far more conservative and supportive of the military than the Democratic caucus, it was no longer run by an imperious chair. Its recommendations were often challenged on the House floor. In short, the Watergate class helped to alter the culture of the House of Representatives. For the first time in several decades, defense programs were vulnerable and open to challenge both in committee and on the House floor. Prior to the 1974 revolution, the chairman of HASC, be it Vinson or Rivers, could speak for the entire House on defense issues without much fear of contradiction. By the mid-1980s Chairman Aspin could barely claim to speak for the committee on such matters.⁹

NEW MEMBERS OF THE 103RD CONGRESS: ONWARD TOWARD FREEDONIA

Political Environment of 1992.

Domestic issues dominated the 1992 elections, and national security issues had their lowest saliency than in any previous Presidential election since 1936. The campaign was rife with the anti-incumbent and anti-establishment rhetoric. It fueled the campaign of H. Ross Perot, scared many into early retirement and forced the primary defeat of many. Yet, this rhetoric, which tapped an inchoate public anger, was filled with contradictions. Liberals campaigned for comprehensive health care and a middle class tax cut; conservatives campaigned against the deficit and against any increase in taxes. Concern over the economy, jobs, and the costs and availability of health care overshadowed any serious discussion of national security issues.

Many conservatives who throughout the cold war had made a strong national defense and an assertive foreign policy a centerpiece of their philosophy reverted to a pre-cold war isolationism. The outspoken journalist and one-time Nixon and Reagan adviser, Pat Buchanan, challenged George Bush in the Republican primaries. His campaign speeches were full of references to America first and the need to avoid foreign wars and other entanglements. Although most Republican voters rejected Buchanan's appeal, the question remains whether his candidacy represents a rebirth of the isolationism of Robert A. Taft and Herbert Hoover.

Liberal candidates agreed without exception that the defense reductions of the Bush administration did not go far enough. Democratic candidate Bill Clinton was quite explicit that another \$60 billion had to be taken from the defense budget over the next 5 fiscal years. Both Republicans and Democrats placed the creation of new jobs and the reduction of the federal deficit above any concern over national security issues.

The election of a Democratic President and a strongly Democratic Congress in November 1992 has changed the political environment in which national security issues are

decided. The absence of a Republican President, committed to a strong national defense, has removed an important leverage point in the process of constructing and defending the Pentagon budget. Republicans, who were in the minority in Congress throughout the Bush years, at least had a Republican President to assist them in their efforts to protect the defense budget from further cuts. In the present environment, power shifts away from the Republican minority entirely. Their role on national defense issues will be to make whatever alliances are possible with conservative Democrats. If the early flap over gays in the military is any indication, the role of the Southern Democrats, particularly Sen. Sam Nunn (D-GA), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, will be pivotal.

But the larger question remains whether the Republicans, particularly those elected in this first post-cold war election, will be as concerned or interested in national security issues as their predecessors. The Republican caucus in the Senate and the House may be more conservative. But an unanswered question remains: What will be the nature of post-cold war American conservatism? Can conservatives who caution against military involvement in Bosnia or anywhere else, absent a major threat to our national security, at the same time make a plausible argument against deeper cuts in the military budget? If conservatives are unable to articulate a major threat to our national security, on what then rests their argument for a stronger national defense?

The larger issue of the federal deficit hangs as a shadow over any debate on defense issues. The political constituency for entitlement spending (older Americans, the health care lobby, retirees, farmers) is far more constant and powerful than the defense community. Entitlement spending as a percentage of the federal budget has been on a steady incline since 1950, while defense spending has varied with international environment. Defense spending has witnessed sharp increases during the Korean War (1950-53), a levelling off during the Eisenhower years (1953-61), another increase during the Kennedy buildup and Vietnam (1961-69), then a decline in the post-Vietnam era (1969-79), another increase

during the later Carter and Reagan buildup (1979-87), and then another decline as the cold war concluded (1987-present).

Salient Characteristics of the 1992 Freshman Class.

As the 1992 election drew near, strong anti-incumbent sentiment created expectations that over 150 new members could be elected to the House of Representatives (exceeding the post-war record of 118 set in 1948). In the spring of 1992 public anger at the Congress reached a boiling point with the revelation that 269 current members had overdrafts at the little-known taxpayer-subsidized House bank without incurring any financial or legal penalty. Expectations of a major change were fed by a rash of congressional retirements (66) and the primary defeats of 19 House members.¹⁰ Those who harbored such expectations were to be disappointed. Although the bank scandal played a role in the election, only 24 House incumbents were defeated in the general election.¹¹ The result was 110 new members elected to the House (and 12 to the Senate). Although this was the largest freshman class since 1948, most of the turnover came from retirements and primary defeats. The result was only a slight change in the partisan balance in the Congress. The class, nonetheless, does have some unique characteristics that could affect the institution:

- The 1964 and 1974 classes were overwhelmingly Democratic and shifted the partisan balance sharply in that party's favor. The class of 1992 was more balanced (63D-47R in the House and 7D-5R in the Senate)¹² and will have a less partisan effect on the Congress. Its distinctive qualities are found in areas of gender, race and ethnicity, age, and prior military experience.
- Among the House freshmen there were 16 blacks and 8 Hispanics; all the blacks and 6 of the Hispanics were Democratic. This increase in minority representation, the largest in history, was a result of recent judicial interpretations of the 1982 Voting Rights Act requiring that minorities be given maximum opportunity to elect their own to Congress. During the

1992 reapportionment, congressional districts in 13 states were specifically drawn to provide for a black or Hispanic majority. Consequently, for the first time since Reconstruction, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia have black members in their House delegation. In addition, the first black female, Carol Moseley Braun (D-IL) was elected to the Senate. By contrast, the Watergate class only increased black House membership by one and saw no gains in the Senate.¹³

- Many had proclaimed 1992 as "The Year of the Woman." Over 100 women ran for House seats and 11 ran for the Senate. As a consequence, the increase in female members of both the House and Senate was equally dramatic. A record number of 48 women were elected to the House (24 new members) and 6 to the Senate (4 new members).¹⁴
- Of the 48 women in the House, 37 are Democrats and 11 are Republicans; 5 of the 6 female senators are Democrats. Of the 39 black members of the House, only Gary Franks of Connecticut is a Republican; of the 19 Hispanics, only 3 are Republicans. Most of the female and minority Democrats come from the liberal wing of the party and thus the new members are likely to shift the Democratic caucus in both Houses slightly to the left.
- Only 18.2 percent of the House freshmen and 3 of the 14 freshmen Senators had prior military experience. Two freshmen senators and 13 House freshmen had wartime service. Two representatives—Paul McHale (D-PA) and Frank Tejeda (D-TX) reported combat experience. This is in contrast to the 47.7 percent of the current House incumbents and 60 percent of the 1974 House freshmen class who have had military experience. This reflects a generational shift as the 1992 class represented both the Vietnam and the post-Vietnam generation. The median age of the House freshman was 45.¹⁵

- Despite the campaign rhetoric about being "outsiders," the most salient characteristic of the freshmen class was their prior political experience—70 percent had previously served in an elective office. This includes two former governors—Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) and Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE). The three freshmen—Senators Russell Fiengold (D-WI), Carol Moseley Braun (D-IL) and Patty Murray (D-WA)—who placed the greatest emphasis on the outsider theme, had all served in their state legislature.¹⁶

Likely Impact on the Institution.

Unlike 1964 and 1974, the 1992 elections did not bring a substantial swing in the ideological composition of the Congress (according to the author's estimates, the new members would add two to four more conservative votes in the House and make no change in the Senate). The addition of more women and minorities to the Democratic caucus in the House may make that body slightly more liberal. Of particular note is the changing composition of the Southern House Democrats. Since the last days of the New Deal, the states of the Old Confederacy have sent to the House moderate-to-conservative white males, many of whom joined with Republicans to create a conservative coalition. In this election 13 of the 20 new Democrats in the House from the South are black or Hispanic and three are white females. Of the four remaining males, one comes from a black and Hispanic district (Gene Green of Texas), and the others are moderate-to-liberal.¹⁷

The number of Southern Democrats in the 103rd Congress (85) is the same as the number in the 102nd. Of that number, however, 68 are whites and 17 are blacks, compared with 80 whites and 5 blacks in the 102nd. Thus, there will be fewer conservative Southern Democrats available to join with the Republicans to create a conservative coalition majority. One senior House Democrat, Chief Deputy Majority Whip Butler Derrick (D-SC) sees the Southern Democrats using their influence in the Democratic Caucus rather than in coalition with the Republicans. "I think [Southern Democrats] are going to

play a key role," predicts Butler," but not in some obstructive sense. I think they will help form the consensus that will be led by the administration."¹⁸ Southern conservative Democrats who chaired 13 of the 20 standing committees in the House in 1965 will chair only 4 of 22 such committees in 1993. As a measure of how much things have changed since 1965, three black members and two Hispanic members will chair committees in the 103rd.¹⁹

The Conservative Coalition in the House historically has been a major player either in blocking liberal initiatives (as was the case during both the Truman and Kennedy administrations) or in assisting Republican initiatives (as was the case during the Reagan administration). On national security matters, the coalition has been crucial. During the 102nd Congress (1991-93), the coalition blocked attempts to tear down the budget walls established in the 1990 budget agreement. This agreement, which lapses in 1993, required that defense savings be used for deficit reduction not for domestic programs. The conservative coalition also defeated floor amendments to cut the Strategic Defense Initiative by \$1 billion. The presence of a Southern Democrat in the White House may well draw those from that region away from the Republican orbit.²⁰

Soon after they arrived in Washington, the 63 Democratic freshmen in the House asserted their influence upon the Democratic caucus. They insisted that three of their members be given seats on the Policy and Steering Committee. The Democratic leadership offered two seats, but the freshmen appealed to the caucus and won on a voice vote to expand the Committee and gain their seats. The freshmen Democrats were also able to cajole the leadership into giving them three Deputy Democratic Whip positions and seats on such prestigious committees as Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Appropriations.²¹

On the other side of the aisle, the 47 freshmen House Republicans made an impact on the Republican caucus. Their votes were crucial in electing a group of activist conservatives to caucus leadership positions. This included: Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois, chairman of the Republican Policy Committee;

Dick Armey of Texas, chairman of the Republican Conference; Tom DeLay of Texas, secretary of the Republican Conference; and Bill Paxson of New York, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee. Rep. Armey's election was particularly important since he unseated an incumbent, Rep. Jerry Lewis of California, considered a conciliatory moderate.

The freshmen, then, supplied the votes to give this leadership the power to instruct House-Senate conferees. Some House conservatives felt that too many senior moderates had represented the party in the conferences. As one freshman member, Rep. John Linder (R-GA), summed it up, "We've moved the Republican Conference to the right, not just in pure ideology, but we're looking for activity."²²

The increasing willingness of junior members to assert their influence may increase as the result of the term limitation movement. In every state where the question of congressional term limitations was on the ballot, the issue carried by overwhelming margins. Including Colorado, which approved terms limitations in 1991, 181 members of the 103rd Congress are now under the constraints of term limitations. In eight states, House members were limited to 6 years (Arizona, Arkansas, California, Michigan, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming); in four states they are limited to 8 years (Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, and Ohio); and in North and South Dakota, they are limited to 12 years. In every state with such limitations, Senators are limited to 12 years. Should the courts approve the constitutionality of these measures, more members will feel the pressure to make a mark on Congress early in their careers. Members may be less interested in the short-term issues of pork and more interested in the long-term issues of policy.

Even if term limitations are not adopted by the nation as a whole and remain the law in selected states, the impatience and assertiveness of the members elected under such constraints could affect the behavior and the norms of the entire institution.

Impact on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees.

When committee assignments for the 103rd were sought and made, it was clear where the priorities of the freshman could be found. Freshmen rarely gain seats on the three exclusive House committees—Appropriations, Ways and Means, and Rules. As a testimony to the clout of the 1992 class, one Democratic member (Carrie Meek of Florida) and two Republican members (Ernest Istook of Oklahoma and Henry Bonilla of Texas) gained seats on the House Appropriations Committee; one Democratic freshman (Mel Reynolds of Illinois), a new black member, gained a seat on the Ways and Means Committee; and no freshman from either party was appointed to the Rules Committee.

Of the remaining committees in the House, three—Public Works and Transportation, Energy and Commerce, and Education and Labor—appeared to be in the greatest demand. In fact, the demand for seats on the Public Works and Transportation Committee (dubbed Pork Central by the *Economist*), which will handle new infrastructure legislation, was so great that the House enlarged its membership from 57 to 63. Fifteen Democratic freshmen and 13 Republican freshmen joined that committee. The size of the Energy and Commerce Committee was altered slightly to reflect the new ratio of Democrats and Republicans. Four freshmen Democrats and two freshmen Republicans joined this committee. The Education and Labor Committee saw eight new freshmen Democrats and four new freshmen Republicans. All of these committees were also sought after by incumbents.

The HASC, by contrast, was not in great demand by the new members. There were a large number of vacancies in the HASC due to retirements and defeats. Nine new Democratic freshmen joined the committee; it was the first choice of only five; and by the end of January 1993, one Democratic vacancy remained. Of those members who made HASC their first choice, three (Jane Harman of California, Bart Stupak of Michigan and Don Johnson of Georgia) came from districts

with military installations or major defense contractors; the two others who had made HASC their first choice—Frank Tejeda of Texas and Tim Holden of Pennsylvania—had a military service background and may have a strong interest in defense policy.²³

Of the seven new freshmen Republican members of HASC, all with the exception of two—Steven Buyer of Indiana and Roscoe Bartlett of Maryland—come from districts strongly dependent on defense funds. Rep. Buyer, a captain in the Army reserves and a veteran of the Gulf War, was one of the few new members who made his opponent's vote on that war a major campaign issue.

The influx of new members to HASC with a primary focus on issues of pork, the appointment of Les Aspin as Secretary of Defense, and the retirement of ranking Republican Rep. Bill Dickinson of Alabama could weaken the influence of HASC on major issues of military policy. In the past, both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have been players in the military policy arena. For example, the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 was a congressional initiative foisted on the Reagan administration. Given the eagerness of the Democratic party in Congress to demonstrate that gridlock, it is unlikely that they will foist unwanted initiatives upon the Clinton administration.

If HASC is likely to be more compliant, no one can quite predict what its leadership will do. No change in HASC will be quite as dramatic as the election of Rep. Ron Dellums (D-CA) to be chairman. The Democratic caucus by an overwhelming vote (198-10) confirmed his appointment. Since his election in 1970, this product of the radical politics of Berkeley in the 1960s has been an outspoken critic of U.S. military policy. He vigorously opposed American intervention in Grenada and the Gulf War. Yet Dellums's reputation as a flame-throwing opponent of military policy stands in sharp contrast to his behind-the-scenes reputation among Republicans and Democrats as a fair-minded colleague. His general approach has been to work within the committee to develop a defense authorization bill and then to oppose it on the House floor with a fiery speech against the arms race.²⁴ With his former

chairman Les Aspin heading the Defense Department, a Democrat in the White House, and himself as the committee chair, Dellums is unlikely to be as vocal in opposing what his committee and the administration can accept. His interest, as it is with many new members, is in developing a large economic conversion program and a shift of defense funds to domestic programs.

The impact of the new members of the Senate on SASC appears to be slight. Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-WY) gave up his seat to join the Finance Committee, and Sen. Connie Mack left the committee for the Appropriations Committee. The views of the two freshmen Republican senators who are joining SASC—Dirk Kempthorne of Idaho and Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina—should be similar to those of their predecessors. On the Democratic side, the elevation of Sen. Al Gore of Tennessee to the vice-presidency, the retirement of Tim Wirth of Colorado, and the primary defeat of Alan Dixon of Illinois created three vacancies. They will be replaced by Bob Graham of Florida, Charles Robb of Virginia, and Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut—all moderates (and incumbents) who should give the committee a conservative-to-moderate cast.²⁵

CONCLUSION

The 103rd Congress is the first of the post-cold war era. Its new members, elected in a time of economic dislocation, focused their campaigns and, it appears, their congressional careers on domestic concerns. National security issues, ever present in the elections of the cold war era, received only a glancing attention in the 1992 campaign. Those new members of Congress who joined the Armed Services Committees did so largely out of an apparent need to protect the interests of their district rather than out of a broader interest in military issues.

While such prophesy is difficult, it is hard to find in the mix of new members any future Sam Nunn, Les Aspin, or Bill Dickinsons. But national security issues are unlikely to disappear regardless of where congressional attention may

presently lie. Congress is likely to be forced to take a stand on such issues as gays in the military, the mix of active duty and reserve forces, and future of such important weapons systems as B-2 and SDI, which involve important strategic choices. The new Congress will also see the end of the budget firewall, erected in the 1990 budget agreement, which forced any defense savings into deficit reduction. The relaxation of this fiscal discipline will make the defense budget an even more tempting target for the pent-up demand among domestic liberals for more civilian spending.

Behind such questions looms the larger issue of how to think about national security in the post-cold war era. The 1992 campaign provided little evidence that the public or its leaders have given this question any serious thought. What will people expect of the military? Will new missions be developed—disaster assistance, drug wars, a closer link between military and civilian research and development? With the end of the Soviet threat, how will we fashion the mission of our military force? What will be the new synergism between threats and interests?

The 103rd Congress may have its mind elsewhere, dealing with the federal deficit, spiraling health care costs, and the creation of new jobs. The interest of many new members in military matters begins with a domestic perspective. How can we ease the path of defense contractors and retired military personnel into a new civilian economy? Will conservatives, staunch defenders of the military during the cold war, be willing or able to make such a case in the wake of communism's collapse? Will liberals, suspicious of military programs since Vietnam, see the defense budget as something other than a pork barrel or a piggy bank from which to finance their favorite domestic program? And will the Congress, long accustomed to an adversarial role, allow President Clinton and Secretary Aspin to call the tune on defense matters? If they do not, who beyond Sen. Sam Nunn will have the clout and the expertise to provide credible opposition? The Republican House leadership, more ideological than before, seems poised to become more oppositional. But such opposition will be largely for the record. Given the changing nature of the Southern

Democratic delegation (more minorities and liberals), the ability of these Republicans to forge the Conservative Coalition may be severely limited.

One can hope that the helter-skelter approach that characterized congressional military policy after World War II and Vietnam (President Eisenhower's leadership in the post-Korea era may have made an exception) will not guide the future. But a question asked of the new members of the 103rd does not give one reassurance. When 20 new members were asked in jest by a reporter from *Spy* magazine, "What should the United States do to stop what's going on in Freedonia?" (The country, of course, does not exist and is a fictitious nation from the 1933 Marx Brothers movie "Duck Soup."), they responded with ignorant solemnity. One member blurted, "Yeah, it's a different situation than the Middle East."²⁶

The desires that Americans have long harbored to be released from world responsibility and to be granted, in President Warren Harding's memorable phrase, a "return to normalcy," still remain in the American psyche. This Congress and its new members will have to be reminded that the normalcy Harding once desired has long passed into memory.

ENDNOTES

1. Jim F. Heath, *Decade of Disillusionment: The Kennedy-Johnson Years*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975, pp. 213-215.

2. Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, *Vital Statistics on American Politics*, Third Edition, Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1992, pp. 342, 358.

3. Bruce A. Ray, "The Responsiveness of the U.S. Congressional Armed Services Committee to Their Parent Bodies," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 4, November 1980, pp. 506-507.

4. *Origins and Development of Congress*, Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1976, p. 161.

5. Dellums was elected to Congress in 1970 but did not join the Committee until 1972.

6. "Democrats' Panel Defends More for Defense," *Congressional Quarterly*, March 31, 1984, p. 733.

7. Quoted in Barry M. Blechman, *The Politics of National Security: Congress and U.S. Defense Policy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 32.

8. Frederick L. Black, "The Military and Today's Congress," *Parameters*, December 1987, pp. 41-42.

9. James M. Lindsay and Randall B. Ripley, "Foreign and Defense Policy in Congress: A Research Agenda for the 1990s," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, August 1992, Vol. XVII, No. 3, pp. 426-427.

10. The House bank scandal made its greatest impact in the primaries. Of the 269 sitting members with bank overdrafts, 77 retired or were defeated in the primaries, and 19 were defeated in the general election. The most senior member of HASC affected by the bank scandal was Rep. Albert G. Bustamante (D-TX) whose 30 overdrafts cost him his seat in the general election. *Current American Government: Spring 1993 Guide*, Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1993, p. 45.

11. In 1974 there were 40 incumbents defeated in the general election, and in 1964 there were 45 defeated in the general. Thus, the turnover in the 103rd had far less impact on the partisan balance. In fact, there was only a shift of nine seats from the 102nd Congress (268D-166R-1 Ind.) to the 103rd (259D-175R-1 Ind.)

12. Not included in this count were two Democratic Senators, Robert Krueger of Texas and Harlan Mathews of Tennessee, appointed to fill the seats of Sen. Al Gore (D-TX) and Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX), now Vice-President and Secretary of the Treasury, respectively.

13. Black representation in the House increased from 4.8 percent to 9 percent. Blacks make up 12 percent of the population and the level of House representation is the closest its ever been to the population as a whole. Hispanics, on the other hand, remain under-represented with 4 percent of the House and 9 percent of the population. There are no Hispanics in the Senate. *Congressional Quarterly*, November 7, 1992, p. 8.

14. After the 1974 elections, Frances Farenthold, chairman of the National Women's Political Caucus, proclaimed it "the year of the breakthrough for women." Six new women were elected to the House, and none of the three women who won major party nomination for the Senate were elected. *1974 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 853.

15. The two freshman senators with wartime military experience were Ben Nighthorse Campbell (D-CO)—Korea, and Sen. Harlan Mathews (D-TN)—World War II. *Congressional Quarterly*, November 7, 1992, p. 10.

16. *Congressional Quarterly*, January 16, 1993, pp. 28, 32; Jeffrey B. Trammell and Gary P. Ositchin, *The New Members of Congress Almanac: 103rd Congress*, Almanac of the Unelected, Inc., Washington, DC, 1993, pp. 8-9, 44.

17. For a further discussion of this point see, John J. Pitney Jr., "Going for the Silver: Why the GOP Placed Second in The Race for Congress," *Policy Review*, No. 93, Winter, 1993, pp. 20-25.

18. Andrew Taylor, "Southern Democrats May Score If Fading Alliance Dissolves," *Congressional Quarterly*, December 19, 1992, pp. 3845-3848.

19. This is largely a result of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the subsequent 1982 amendments which were interpreted by the courts as requiring the drawing of legislative boundaries to maximize the chance of minority representation. *Thornburg v. Gingles*, 478 U.S. 30 (1986).

20. *Congressional Quarterly*, December 19, 1992, p. 3845.

21. Phil Duncan, "Quietly Assertive Freshman Arrive for Orientation," *Congressional Quarterly*, December 5, 1992, p. 3746.

22. Beth Donovan, "Freshman Throw Weight Around, Make Their Parties Listen," *Congressional Quarterly*, December 12, 1992, p. 3794.

23. *Congressional Quarterly Special Report: The New Congress*, January 16, 1993, pp. 54, 79, 96, 130, 137.

24. Pat Towell, "Dellums Vows Collegiality Mixed with Advocacy," *Congressional Quarterly*, January 30, 1993, p. 230.

25. In general both SASC and HASC have attracted members more supportive of the Conservative Coalition and more conservative than their colleagues. This has changed little over the past several decades. In 1989 the average Conservative Coalition support score for SASC members was 70 percent as compared to a Senate average of 51 percent; the average Conservative Coalition support score for HASC members was 73 percent as compared to House average of 56 percent. Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin, *Vital Statistics of Congress, 1991-1992*, Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1992, pp. 204-212.

26. *The New York Times*, January 13, 1993, p. A12.

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