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LBJ Gives Free Reins to Military

WASHINGTON — Before the Senate votes money for 200,000 more U.S. troops to Vietnam, it should take a careful look at two things:

1—The slip-and-slide manner in which we have become involved in a major war without the consent of Congress.

2—The manner in which the American military more and more are shaping, now almost directing, foreign policy.

The trend toward military dictation of foreign policy has been developing for some time, but has reached a peak under Lyndon Johnson. Today there are only

three civilian advisers whom he consults — Secretary of State Rusk, who has become so entrenched regarding Vietnam that he has lost his perspective; Walt Rostow, who was responsible for our original involvement in Vietnam under Kennedy and now wants to justify his mistake; and the new secretary of defense, Clark Clifford, who has kept his perspective.

These three lunch with the President once a week. Secretary of Defense McNamara, now retired, is reported to have had a feeling of remorse that he was partly responsible for leading the country deeper and deeper into war. Clifford, who has taken his place, is a tough, shrewd observer and not as much of a hawk as originally reported. It now develops that he was against the bombing of North Vietnam on the fatal night of Feb. 7, 1965, when the Johnson administration took its biggest escalation step. He felt the decision was a serious error.

IT WAS THE military who persuaded the President to take this step. Acting Secretary of State George Ball vigorously opposed the escalation. Ball argued that Pre-

mier Kosygin, who had been in office only four months, had arrived in Hanoi only the day before, and to bomb at that time looked like a deliberate slap at him. Later it developed that Kosygin had been on a mission to persuade the North Vietnamese to talk peace.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have been the guiding factor in setting American policy in Vietnam ever since. Simultaneously the war has been going from bad to worse.

The encouragement of the American military on foreign policy under Johnson is not entirely new. To some extent it began under Franklin Roosevelt, who gave the Navy a much bigger role than the Army. Roosevelt had served as assistant secretary of the Navy under Wilson, and resented the manner in which the Republicans under Coolidge and Hoover had scrapped battleships and curtailed cruisers. FDR rebuilt the Navy at a tremendous speed, but never let the admirals or the generals run World War II.

Harry Truman, a veteran of Battery D in the Old Missouri National Guard, reversed this, gave more power to the Army. His close friend and military aide, Gen. Harry Vaughan, was a staunch Army man, and on occasion helped siphon arms to Latin Ameri-

can nations despite the opposition of the State Department. Truman, however, never let the Army get out of hand, and fired Gen. Douglas MacArthur when he stepped over the line.

SIGNIFICANTLY it was a military president, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who curbed the Army more than any other recent president.

The generals used to complain that Ike cut the military budget more than any civilian president. Ike understood Army politics, and was tough with his old buddies when they tried to lobby on Capitol Hill. He also warned, as he left office, of the danger of an alliance between the defense contractors and the military.

Kennedy returned the military to a position of power, emphasizing a 50-year fact that the military have always prospered under Democratic presidents.

However, no Democrat has given the military so much scope as Lyndon Johnson. Lyndon's kowtowing to the brass began when he was a young lieutenant commander in the South Pacific in World War II. Later he served on the House Naval Affairs Committee, then as chairman of the Senate Preparedness Committee.

As such, he teamed up with the generals and admirals to blast Eisenhower for the missile gap. As Senate majority leader he was in a potent position to give the military the appropriations they wanted, and he did.

The generals and admirals, in return, put more military bases in Texas than in any other state in the union. If the civilians, who were supposed to run the military under Ike, tried to economize on a base in Texas, they heard from Lyndon in no uncertain terms. And the military always rushed to his defense. Texas bases, no matter how outmoded, were not curtailed or transferred out of the state.

This alliance between LBJ and the brass hats has continued as the onetime senator from Texas has moved

into the White House.

THE PRESIDENT'S latest romance has been with Gen. William Westmoreland, who was caught napping during the Tet lunar holiday in a manner almost as serious as Admiral H. E. Kimmel and Gen. Walter Short were caught napping at Pearl Harbor. They were removed from command and disciplined.

Gen. Westmoreland, instead of being removed, has asked for and will probably get 200,000 more troops. Significantly, the oldest friend the President has on Capitol Hill had been publicly critical of Westmoreland. When LBJ, very young senator from Texas, aspired to be Senate majority leader in 1953, it was Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia, Southern elder statesman, who got on the long distance telephone to absent senators, then not in session, and rounded up the votes.

Today, Russell, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has joined the

public critics of Gen. Westmoreland. But his old friend, now in the White House, seems mesmerized as far as military mistakes are concerned.



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