

## Mac Bundy Said He Was ‘All Wrong’

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by William Pfaff

*Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam*

by Gordon M. Goldstein

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The debate over foreign policy that culminated in President Barack Obama’s address to the nation on December 1, 2009, concerns a war that began with the attack of a mainly Saudi Arabian group of politically radicalized Muslim men on New York and Washington, targets symbolic of American capitalism and alleged imperialism. These attacks, according to the group’s leader, were to punish the United States for its decision, following the first Gulf War, to establish permanent American military bases in the region, blasphemously located (in the view of Osama bin Laden and his followers) in the holy territories of Saudi Arabia.

How these attacks, and the American reaction, led to American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, so that nearly a decade later the war in Iraq remains incompletely resolved, while the United States, with NATO allies, is engaged in the war in Afghanistan against a resurgent Taliban movement and against those in Pakistan who harbor or support the Taliban, makes a tangled story, not to be recounted here. But it raises persistent parallels with the Vietnam catastrophe, the subject of Gordon M. Goldstein’s *Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam*. Goldstein’s is perhaps the most important book yet published on the United States’ Vietnam experience, which changed the nation’s history and continues to exercise a powerful influence on American foreign and security policy.

In 1995 the seventy-six-year-old Bundy, who had served in the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations as national security adviser, felt himself challenged by the controversial memoir just published by his fellow member of both those administrations, ex-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. McNamara had concluded that on Vietnam “we were wrong, terribly wrong,” and expressed his sense of guilt for what had been done.

Bundy had since his government service refused on principle to criticize his former superiors, and invariably defended what had been American policy, its failure notwithstanding. He had remained silent on the moral issues raised by the war. The McNamara confession inspired him to reexamine his own experience.

This is where Gordon Goldstein enters. Bundy hired him as his research assistant. But as James G. Blight of Brown University says, in a review of Goldstein’s book in the online magazine Truthdig,<sup>1</sup> the two of them—Goldstein was less than half the age of Bundy—became true collaborators as Bundy struggled with his own memories and written records in the light of the documentation and testimony provided by the younger man about the events of those years. However, Bundy died in September 1996, long before the book was drafted.

With the agreement of the Bundy family, Goldstein now has published his own book about the unfinished Bundy memoir. Blight describes it as an account of Bundy’s “personal, historical and even moral” quest for the roots of his own mistakes and culpability. While these were undoubtedly hard for Bundy to confront, they do not seem hard to identify,<sup>2</sup> and are relevant today, to the extent that the present war against terror, or whatever we are to call it, has close resemblances to the cold war, of which the Vietnam War was a product.

The theory—or theories—that put the United States and the Soviet Union into the cold war were Marxism-Leninism and its later Chinese derivative, Lin Biao’s 1965 theory that the “emerging forces” of the poor countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America constituted a “rural world.” This rural world, following the precepts of Maoism, would eventually surround and overcome the “urban world” made up of rich cities and countries. Finally there was the United States’ own belief in its millenarian world role—its “Manifest Destiny”—as expressed, for example, by the State Department’s George Ball in a 1965 article (see below) on America’s exceptional destiny to exercise disinterested global responsibility.

These theories were, in effect, congruent. From the time of *The Communist Manifesto*’s publication it was considered by many a document of universal relevance, proposing the next step in human society’s development. Lenin and the Bolsheviks undertook to promote, through their party apparatuses, the revolutions that were supposed to break out spontaneously in such advanced industrial societies as Germany. Revolution in peasant Russia was a theoretical anomaly, and the early Bolsheviks believed their survival in Russia depended on alliance with other revolutions elsewhere: hence the Communist International was created, and Soviet state organs were commissioned to promote subversion abroad. After World War II, with the Soviet Union having become a great military power, these policies seemed an intimidating challenge to the democracies, a challenge reinforced by the fall of China to communism. To Americans, this appeared a challenge that they, as the most powerful democracy, were destined by history to meet and overcome.

The nature of the US reaction to the September 11 attacks makes apparent that the new challenge to the United States was immediately fitted into a frame of ideas ideologically parallel to the cold war (the cold war itself having just ended). The calls for a global jihad against the United States and the West heard from al-Qaeda and other radical Muslim groups—especially the fantasy of a reconstituted grand caliphate incorporating all the Mediterranean countries and then Europe itself—provided paranoid circles in the West with a replacement for the threat of Marxism-Leninism. Al-Qaeda was soon described as the new Comintern. It and related manifestations of radical jihadism were taken as a mortal and ubiquitous threat to the United States, to the West as a whole, and indeed to Western civilization. Al-Qaeda therefore had to be driven from its lair in the mountainous badlands of Afghanistan and Pakistan, from which its adherents could launch global terrorism and insurrection.

The threat of jihad was further enlarged in American official thought by the assimilation to it of current manifestations of political radicalism found elsewhere in the non-Western world, responsible for “disorderly regions, failed states, diffuse enemies”—to quote President Obama’s West Point address in December—which together with the jihadists comprised what Donald Rumsfeld had, early in

the affair, described as a global “insurrection.” The American role as destiny’s appointed pacifier of this universal world threat seemed to be the same role it had successfully fulfilled in the cold war.

It is often forgotten that one of Franklin Roosevelt’s World War II aims, in addition to defeat of the Axis powers, was to dismantle the European empires, beginning with the British and the French. The eminent American diplomat Charles Bohlen made a postwar comment on

the extraordinary twist of history [that] the American President morally opposed British imperialism, yet counted on the power of Great Britain—essentially powerful as the leader of a great Empire—as an equal democratic power in the postwar world. I do not believe that Roosevelt thought of his anti-colonial attitude as a factor in Britain’s decline

—as of course it was, as were a series of postwar American economic and political measures.<sup>3</sup>

As for the French colonial empire, Roosevelt’s and his administration’s hostility to what Secretary of State Cordell Hull referred to as the “so-called Free French” was reinforced by Roosevelt’s personal dislike of General Charles de Gaulle, whom he looked upon as some kind of quasi-fascist military adventurer.<sup>4</sup> The postwar French effort, initially under de Gaulle’s provisional government, and after 1946 under the Fourth Republic, to recover France’s Indochina possessions simply reinforced this American view of France—and of other European empires. The Netherlands also dispatched a military force to recover its Netherlands East Indies colony, which after wartime occupation by Japan had been declared the independent state of Indonesia by local nationalists; and another of America’s wartime allies, Belgium, reaffirmed its control of most of Central and East-Central Africa.

This hostile view of imperialism, all but universally held in the United States at the time, had anticipated that the end of World War II would be followed by an overdue general decolonization. It assumed that the United States, itself born in rebellion against Britain, would be recognized as the natural ally and protector of all the newly liberated people of Europe’s Asian, Middle Eastern, and African colonies. This proved mistaken.

The cold war intervened. All of mainland China fell to the Communists in 1949. A war between North Korea and an American-led United Nations coalition began in June 1950 and legally has not ended, although a cease-fire has been observed since 1953. France resisted Communist insurrection in Vietnam, and the British another such rebellion in what then was Malaya, and like France it reclaimed its colonial position in the eastern Mediterranean. The Dutch fought the Indonesian nationalists until 1949. Vietnam was partitioned in 1954, after France’s defeat at Dien Bien Phu, and the United States became effectively the patron of the republic created that year in the south, but not (yet) its military defender.

In 1965, early in the development of the Vietnamese-American crisis, the following remarks were published by George W. Ball, then an assistant secretary of state in the administration of John F. Kennedy:

We find ourselves in a position unique in world history. Over the centuries a number of nations have exercised world power, and man have accepted at least some of the responsibilities that go with power. But never before in human history has a nation undertaken to play a role of world responsibility except in defense and support of a world empire....

[The European nations] have had little experience in the exercise of responsibility divorced from the defense of territories or the advancement of quite narrow and specific national interests. To undertake—alongside the United States—to play a role of responsibility in a world where colonial empires have largely disappeared would require them to develop a whole new set of attitudes toward world affairs.<sup>5</sup>

Ball’s views did not meet much objection in Washington at the time. Modesty about American power and political virtue had never been in fashion in policy circles.

Goldstein’s book should settle for good the controversy over whether President Kennedy, had he not been assassinated, would have enlarged the war or would have withdrawn the still-limited number of American troops in Vietnam. (These at the time of Kennedy’s death consisted of two battalions of Marines, sent to protect the Danang airport, and some 12,000 Americans with missions as advisers and trainers for the South Vietnamese military.) As we shall see, the evidence of the Bundy material is conclusive.<sup>6</sup>

Before leaving the White House in 1961, Dwight Eisenhower had warned Kennedy of the crisis posed by the insurrection occurring in Laos, the key to the entire area of Southeast Asia. Clark Clifford attended the meeting as Kennedy’s private counsel and reported that “the outgoing President considered the fate of that tiny, landlocked Southeast Asian kingdom the most important problem facing the US.” The former president said American troop intervention might even be required—a statement in contrast with the position his administration had taken at the time of Dien Bien Phu. When Paris in 1954 had asked for American intervention, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, according to French sources, had offered the French two nuclear bombs to use as they saw fit (they refused), but the position of President Eisenhower at the time was that he would not consider an American troop intervention unless he first had congressional approval and an indication of British support.

He told his staff that “without allies and associates,” military intervention would be the act of “just an adventurer, like Genghis Kahn.” He also recalled that he had been elected to end one war in Asia, in Korea, which could have become a total war with China, at a time when the United States had allies and a UN mandate, and that he “was in no mood to provoke another one in Indochina....”<sup>7</sup>

President Kennedy had repeatedly asserted privately that a guerrilla war could not be won by foreign troops, even in large numbers. Eventually foreign troops go home, he said; the guerrillas stay. No lasting “victory” is possible for the foreigners.

When the Laos issue came up before Kennedy as president, he asserted American support for Laotian sovereignty but was spared the problem of intervention when Britain and Russia conveniently proposed a conference on Laos in Geneva. It was convoked in May 1961 and ended in a neutral coalition government under the restored prime minister Prince Souvanna Phouma, who had been deposed in an earlier military coup. The clandestine fighting did not end, as survivors from the CIA-supported montagnard tribes of Laos, the first large group of Indochinese made victims of a war they didn’t ask for, would undoubtedly still attest.

With respect to Vietnam, the new President sought the advice of another eminent American soldier. He invited Douglas MacArthur to Washington. According to Robert Kennedy's account, MacArthur said that it would "be foolish to fight on the Asiatic continent," and that "the future...should be determined at the diplomatic table." Kennedy's aide Kenneth O'Donnell has added that MacArthur said to Kennedy that "there was no end to Asia and even if we poured a million American infantry soldiers into that continent, we would still find ourselves outnumbered on every side."

General Maxwell Taylor, Kennedy's military adviser (who favored sending combat troops to Vietnam), said that MacArthur "made a hell of an impression on the President," adding that when presented with further proposals from the Pentagon for military intervention, Kennedy would say, "Well, now, you gentlemen, you go back and convince General MacArthur, then I'll be convinced." Taylor said, "None of us undertook the task."

The pressure on Kennedy was to send combat troops to Vietnam, just as Barack Obama, on taking office, was urged to escalate the American commitment in Afghanistan. As with Kennedy, most of the pressure came from the Pentagon and the Republican opposition (and reinvigorated neoconservatives in Obama's case), as well as from most of his own appointments and staff from the Washington foreign affairs establishment, and from much of the press (and in Obama's case, by a radio and television that are partisan and ideological to a degree unthinkable—and indeed which would have been illegal in Kennedy's time, when the FCC required an overall impartiality in network news broadcasting).

However, Kennedy was in a much better position than Obama to resist. He was a war hero, wealthy and glamorous, well accustomed to Washington power plays, and, above all, the one official who had come out of the Bay of Pigs fiasco as having been right while all the rest were wrong. He had not been overawed by the generals and admirals and intelligence chiefs—including Richard Bissell, who had been one of his professors—all of whom assured him that the exiles' invasion of Cuba arranged by the Eisenhower administration would succeed, and all of whom secretly believed that if it looked like it was failing, they would have placed the President in a position where he would be compelled to reverse his stated determination not to intervene.

It failed; President Kennedy refused to intervene; and he fired Bissell and Allen Dulles, head of the CIA, and placed the joint chiefs of staff under the authority of the National Security Council. When the Cuban missile crisis arrived, he managed that successfully, refusing to accept advice to bomb Cuba, and he had the self-confidence to make the agreement to remove Jupiter missiles from Turkey without sending it through the Washington bureaucracy.

A third and crucial crisis arrived in the summer of 1963, when Kennedy lost control of the policy forces at work in his administration. He had handled the developing Vietnam situation coolly thus far, resisting pressure from part of the Pentagon and much of the civilian foreign policy community to commit American combat troops to the region, placating or temporizing with his critics by sending Special Forces teams (of which the President was much enamored, and they of him, as he had returned to them their prized green berets) on trainers' assignment to the Vietnamese army.

However, by 1963 the political situation in Saigon preoccupied Americans on the scene and officials in Washington more than the serious military setbacks being encountered by the Vietnamese army. The problem was President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother and chief adviser, Ngo Dinh Nhu, both authoritarians and anti-American.

Diem was a Catholic member of the established French-educated mandarin class of pre-war colonial Indochina. During World War II, Vietnam was administered by Vichy French authorities, under Japanese occupation. While most anti-Japanese (or anti-French) nationalists had moved into a Communist-dominated underground, Diem formed a separate clandestine nationalist group. He refused an invitation to join the Communist-proclaimed postwar government, which the returning French army was to overturn.

During his subsequent exile in the United States, Diem, whose older brother was an archbishop, had met many influential Catholics as well as academic and US government figures concerned with Asian developments. When South Vietnam became a separate state, following the French withdrawal, Washington considered Diem a reformer and a leading choice for political leadership.

After the Geneva negotiations in 1954 partitioned Vietnam, leaving an independent state in the South, its ruler remained Emperor Bao Dai. He recalled Diem from political exile, appointing him prime minister. Diem was to cause Bao Dai's ouster a year later, through a rigged referendum. The general election that the Geneva peace agreement had scheduled for summer 1956 never took place. Diem became president.

He soon proved an unfortunate choice, at least in American eyes, stubbornly independent, largely concerned with reestablishing the pre-war Vietnamese social and political order and with dealing with the challenge of the hostile Communist counterpart state in the north and the developing and potentially very powerful Communist domestic insurgency, sustained from the north, which the Americans called the Vietcong. He was also ill-served by his younger brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, a ruthless and allegedly corrupt political manipulator, and the latter's wife, an arrogant and despotic woman who made herself despised by Vietnamese and Americans alike.

The South Vietnamese army was ineffective, influenced by sectarian currents and the political ambitions of senior officers. Americans and other foreigners in Saigon in the summer of 1963 were all but unanimously convinced that the Diems had to be unseated, despite the evident lack of any serious political alternative other than among the officers of an army that—with honorable exceptions—increasingly proved itself outclassed, outmaneuvered, and outfought by the Vietcong and its sponsors in the new Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north. (It may be said that this also proved true of the American military command that took over the war in the south after Diem's assassination.)

Kennedy understood the elements in this situation and had dispatched a small military training force of seven hundred, subsequently increased to 12,000 men, but he was resolutely opposed to sending American combat forces to Vietnam. In response to the political difficulties surrounding President Diem, he had sent as ambassador the Republican Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., an ambitious man who liked to display to correspondents the personal pistol with which he felt it necessary to be armed in his perilous assignment. American officers and officials were reporting contacts with Vietnamese officers who wanted to overthrow President Diem. These added to the pressures on Kennedy, who stubbornly resisted Americanizing the war.

In August 1963, in an episode that still has not been entirely clarified, Kennedy's subordinates in Washington took action during a weekend while the President was in Hyannis—and nearly every other senior administration figure was on vacation or away for the weekend—to launch a coup d'état in Saigon.

Averell Harriman, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, and two second-level figures, Roger Hilsman, who was to become Harriman's successor, and one of Bundy's young NSC staff, Michael Forrestal—all of them convinced that there had to be major change in Saigon—sent a cable to the Saigon embassy that said:

U.S. Government cannot tolerate situation in which power lies in Nhu's hands. Diem must be given chance to rid himself of Nhu and coterie and replace them with best military and political personalities available. If in spite of all your efforts, Diem remains obdurate a refuses, then we must face the possibility that Diem cannot be preserved.

Lodge was instructed to prepare the coup, and two disaffected and ambitious Vietnamese officers with whom the CIA was in touch were informed.

There was uproar in the White House when this action was discovered. It is not clear how much Kennedy was aware of such plans or what if anything he approved of. Harriman said, "the President himself had approved." Bundy said afterward that "the misunderstanding had been between the president and Forrestal." Kennedy was in any case furious and told Lodge personally to guarantee Diem's security. He told Forrestal that he was "not worth firing." A great effort was made to quiet the rumors spreading in Saigon. Kennedy told his staff that his policy was to seek changes by Diem that would permit America to assume a "posture of strict aloofness and limited cooperation" with a reformed government in Saigon.

However, the process that had been set in motion proved irreversible. On November 1, Diem's own generals gave their president an ultimatum. Diem telephoned Lodge, who denied American involvement, said that it was 4:30 AM in Washington, that the "U.S. government could not possibly have a view" on what was happening, and that if he could do anything "for your physical safety, please call me."

Diem and his brother were taken away and shot, their bodies later found mangled and their hands bound. One of the rebel generals informed the CIA that the two had committed suicide. In Washington, when Kennedy heard of their deaths, Maxwell Taylor said, he "leaped to his feet and rushed from the room with a look of shock and dismay."

The Diem brothers were killed on November 2, 1963. On November 22, President Kennedy was killed in Dallas. With these events, the three men who provided the principal obstacles to the Americanization of the war in Vietnam were removed.

The conclusion Goldstein draws from the evidence of the Bundy papers and notes is that Kennedy's determination at the time of his assassination was to withdraw American advisers from Vietnam. The trainers who had been sent should not be further reinforced, but gradually drawn down in the course of 1964.

Goldstein quotes tapes made of Kennedy's meetings with Bundy, McNamara, and his military adviser, Maxwell Taylor, on October 2, 1963. McNamara and Taylor were just back from Vietnam. They recommended that 1,000 of the 16,000 US military advisers be withdrawn in the following two months, with most of the rest removed by the end of 1965. Bundy asks why. McNamara says, "We need a way to get out of Vietnam. This is a way of doing it." Bundy disagrees. Kennedy agrees and gives the orders.

Forty-seven days later Lyndon Johnson was president. In July 1964 the South Vietnamese began clandestine operations against the North. These led the following month to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Lyndon Johnson authorized bombing North Vietnam. The US had entered the war. Bundy had prevailed.

Among the papers that Goldstein cites in his book is a memo from Bundy to Johnson on May 4, 1967, a year after Bundy left the administration to become head of the Ford Foundation. It said:

The fact that South Vietnam has not been lost and is not going to be lost is a fact of truly massive importance in the history of Asia, the Pacific and the US.

Looking back at this memo, nearly thirty years after he had written it in congratulation (or reassurance) to the President, Bundy had noted on it, for Goldstein to read and quote, "McGB all *wrong*."

Goldstein's decisive clue to why Bundy failed came by accident. He found a note written in 1996, when Bundy was asked what had been most surprising about the war. He answered, "*the endurance of the enemy*." Goldstein writes that he didn't understand the enemy "because, frankly, he didn't think they warranted his attention." He seemed to have no real interest in the Vietnamese and in what their various motivations might have been. His own basic conviction seems to have been that the United States must not be humiliated.

Dwight Eisenhower left another legacy to President Kennedy, which proved of great significance in the 1960s and 1970s, and is a factor in the making of policy today: the domino theory. This occurred at a press conference in 1954, ironically upon the occasion of the Dien Bien Phu defeat—a "domino" that Eisenhower himself had allowed to fall. He said to the reporters: "You have a row of dominos set up. You knock over the first one.... What will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly." The press instantly picked this up; it later became the explanation everyone sought for "Why are we in Vietnam?" The CIA produced studies for a National Intelligence Estimate in 1964 arguing that it was not true. This had no effect. By 1964 it had become doctrine in American government, which no politician or official dared challenge.

Bundy did not believe in the domino theory, and ignored it. In 1995 he commented that it

was an extraordinarily unfitting simile, a preventor of discourse.... States are not little oblongs... lined up next to each other. They do not get pushed around by God-like figures playing a card.... The domino theory is a particular formulation—and a rather rigid one—of a broader proposition that in the Cold War every battle lost diminishes you.

He said that for Lyndon Johnson the theory was just domestic politics. Bundy argued that candidates in US elections could lose because of the domino theory, but governments and armies did not.

He believed in military methods and military escalation: ground troops and bombing. He rejected any idea of withdrawal or neutralization. He ignored studies and war games indicating that American escalation would strengthen support for the North Vietnamese government, prompting it to send still more troops south (as General de Gaulle had warned Washington and as the North Vietnamese did).

It was not of course the domino theory that put the United States into the Vietnam War. It was the domino theory that kept it there. Once President Eisenhower had offered it as a general proposition, it was deemed impossible for a presidential candidate to be elected who opposed it. It still occupies a major place in the American ideological and polemical armories. It was one of the ideological factors responsible for the policies of the George W. Bush administration, and for their continuation in President Obama's decision to escalate the Afghanistan war. As Obama said in his West Point address:

If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan, I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow.... [Afghanistan and Pakistan are] the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al Qaeda. It was from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new plots are being plotted as I speak. This is no idle danger.

The second ideological influence currently at work in President Obama's war is a domestic military and political alliance supporting the war and its escalation, driven by a desire retroactively to validate the military effort in Vietnam and prove that the United States can indeed win an insurrectionary war. The present military determination, clearly endorsed by President Obama's Afghanistan decision, is to apply successfully the classic strategy for opposing insurrection, currently described as "clear and hold." This is being done under the leadership of Generals David Petraeus at Central Command and Stanley A. McChrystal in Afghanistan. It would appear to have replaced the nation- and democracy-building program of the Bush administration, initially endorsed by the new president.

The new doctrine follows the argument of many serving officers, expressed in two recent books by Lewis Sorley and David Kilcullen, that the Vietnam War was actually won—but won too late for the victory to be acknowledged by the press, American public opinion, and Congress, which are accused of having abandoned the war at America's moment of victory, thereby effectively stabbing the military in the back.<sup>3</sup> It is an argument politically convincing to the conservatives who believe that the history of Vietnam must be rewritten.

"Clear and hold" means ejecting guerrillas from an area and then protecting it from their return. It is not new. The modern version was first applied in postwar Malaya (as it was then) in 1948, where an insurrection originating within the minority Chinese population caused much of it to be confined in guarded villages, leaving British troops free to deal with the Chinese insurgents who escaped this treatment. Eventually a political solution was found.

In Vietnam, where the US copied the method, these villages were called Strategic Hamlets and were employed in conjunction with the Phoenix program to "clear" areas of enemy or unreliable elements, and to defend against the return of the Vietcong. Notwithstanding the argument in the books by Sorley and Kilcullen defending the American army's performance in Vietnam, no one is in doubt about who won the war. Following the war, none of the international results predicted by the domino theory occurred.

General McChrystal has suggested that the Afghanistan war, if fought on his terms (with troop reinforcements rising to a total of over 100,000 men at least), could begin producing results within two years; but it could also take between ten and fifty years to fully succeed. Afghanistan consists of 249,999 square miles, many of them more or less vertically inclined and less than simple to clear, populated by an estimated 31,230,000 people. Iraq has an estimated population of 30,290,000 and 167,924 square miles, most of them flat. The estimates of how many civilians have died in Iraq range around the figure of 100,000, with some—including the Johns Hopkins–Lancet study—much higher.

Goldstein's meticulous examination of the record of McGeorge Bundy's activities and decisions concerning the Vietnam War from the moment of his appointment by John Kennedy to his own departure from the administration of Lyndon Johnson is arranged in six chapters, the title of each illustrating what the author describes as a lesson to be learned from the Bundy papers. The last two lessons are of particular relevance today:

1. Counselors Advise but Presidents Decide.
2. Never Trust the Bureaucracy to Get It Right.
3. Politics Is the Enemy of Strategy.
4. Conviction Without Rigor Is a Strategy for Disaster.
5. Never Deploy Military Means in Pursuit of Indeterminate Ends.<sup>2</sup>
6. Intervention Is a Presidential Choice, Not an Inevitability.

1. Truthdig, December 19, 2008. ↵

2. Some parts of this review draw on two of my recent columns for Tribune Media Services. ↵

3. Don Cook, *Forging the Alliance: NATO, 1945–1950* (Arbor House/William Morrow, 1989), p. 12. See also the final volume of Robert Skidelsky's biography of John Maynard Keynes, *John Maynard Keynes, Vol. 3: Fighting for Freedom, 1937–1946* (Viking, 2001), on postwar loan and economic negotiations between Britain and America. ↵

4. Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (Harper and Brothers, 1948), pp. 479–481, and Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Praeger, 1993). ↵
5. "The Dangers of Nostalgia," *The Department of State Bulletin*, April 12, 1965, pp. 535–536. It must be added that George Ball was nonetheless one of the first officials to express doubt about the prudence of armed intervention in Vietnam, and one of the first subsequently to advocate withdrawing at the earliest prudent opportunity—unheeded good advice. ↵
6. All the following quotations from Bundy are from Goldstein's book, and are drawn from Bundy's notes, text fragments, draft memoir passages, and the like, identified by Goldstein, where no other identification is possible, as numbered Bundy items, or as from his dated interviews with Bundy. ↵
7. Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (Viking, 1983), pp. 197–198. ↵
8. Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (Harcourt Brace, 1999), and David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford University Press, 2009). ↵
9. Goldstone writes of a conversation between the journalist David Halberstam and McGeorge Bundy concerning the consequences of policy decisions. Halberstam proposed that "no matter how small the initial step, a policy has a life and a thrust of its own, it is an organic thing. More, its thrust and its drive may not be in any way akin to the desires of the President who initiated it." "Not so," Bundy replied. ↵