

THE VIETNAM WAR DEBATE

Hans J. Morgenthau
and the Attempt
to Halt the
Drift into Disaster

Louis B. Zimmer



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Author's Note

I never met Hans J. Morgenthau personally. I first saw him on television when he was a participant at the May 15, 1965, national teach-in which took place at the Sheraton Hotel in Washington, D.C. The next day, May 16, I watched Morgenthau reply to questions posed by moderator Lawrence Spivak on *Meet the Press*. Here, Morgenthau repeated and provided new arguments against the war. A month later, on June 21, I watched Morgenthau debate national security adviser McGeorge Bundy on CBS television.

In the spring of 1965, I was a young assistant professor of history at Montclair State College, now Montclair State University, while completing my Ph.D. dissertation on the political and moral philosophy of the English utilitarian thinker, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). I first became familiar with Morgenthau's two major works, *Politics among Nations* and *In Defense of the National Interest*, which were on the required reading lists for two diplomatic history courses I had taken as a graduate student at New York University. I also read for my Ph.D., as part of my minor outside the Department of History, studies in International Relations within the Department of Political Science, where the reading lists also included Morgenthau's major works. Moreover, I was also a subscriber to *The New Republic* and thus a close reader of Morgenthau's many articles on the war which proved demonstrably the weaknesses of the government's position, indeed, the futility of the entire American enterprise in Vietnam.

As I read President Johnson's defense of the war and watched Secretary of Defense McNamara's news conferences and his explanations of U.S. policy—the defense of a non-existent freedom in South Vietnam, a theory of falling dominoes, which had no support in history, a failure to acknowledge the conflict between North and South Vietnam as a civil war among indigenous

Vietnamese, a confusion about Communism as a monolithic threat when the monolith had become fragmented into national communist states, repeated references to Munich as analogical justifications for American military action in Vietnam, it became apparent that the United States was engaged in a needless war. Morgenthau's arguments against the war made perfect sense, and I became an opponent of the war based largely on Morgenthau's articles in *The New Republic*. As the American military involvement escalated—on March 31, 1965, two battalions of marines arrived in South Vietnam, and on July 28, another 50,000 troops were dispatched to Vietnam—I became an active participant at several informal meetings among faculty and students in discussions of the war, where I presented the geopolitics of Morgenthau's positions. I also enlisted Morgenthau's textbook commentaries in my European history classes when the subject turned to the major international peace settlements, such as the Congress of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years' War, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when Napoleon was defeated, and the Congress of Versailles in 1920 following the end of World War I.

In 1992, I accepted the early retirement package generously offered to senior faculty after thirty years of teaching and was awarded Emeritus status. My special field of academic studies was European and English intellectual history. The electives I taught to both graduate and undergraduate students included Studies in Enlightenment History and Nineteenth Century Intellectual History. I published articles and reviews in *The Journal of British Studies*, *The Mill News Letter*, *The Historian*, *MetaPhilosophy*, *The American Historical Review*, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, *Victorian Studies*, *Proceedings of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe*. In the immediate years of my retirement, I began the study of literary theory and published in the fall of 1998 a spoof of deconstructionism in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. In that article, I resurrected the great Voltaire to engage in debate with the twentieth-century guru of deconstruction, the late Jacques Derrida, a dialogue based essentially on their published writings. The title of my spoof is "Jacques et Francois"—Voltaire's name is Francois Marie Arouet, to which he added de Voltaire—and is the last of my publications related to my special field of academic studies.

In the years preceding the appearance of "Jacques et Francois," I also began the study which led to this book. Thus, in 1995, Robert S. McNamara, the former Secretary of Defense under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and a chief architect of the war, published *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. Here, McNamara claimed the war was a mistake. "We were wrong, terribly wrong," he wrote. His concluding chapter contained thirteen lessons he believed could avert future Vietnams which bore remarkable similarities to

Morgenthau's strictures against the war written thirty years earlier. Yet, there is no mention of Morgenthau in the McNamara book. There is no mention of the debates and teach-ins several of which took place near his Pentagon office while he was picking bombing targets with President Johnson. In his news conferences back in 1965, there was never any hint that he might be wrong. He appeared frequently with map and pointer, exuding supreme confidence, absolutely certain that his quantitative assessments of infiltrators, captured enemy weapons, and kill ratios would guarantee a military victory.

I was appalled. I regarded *In Retrospect* as a self-serving confessional the conclusions of which were known thirty years earlier. I began rereading old copies of *The New Republic* stored in my basement and clipping the many Morgenthau articles that proclaimed that the war was never a vital national security interest for the United States. I photocopied reports on the war contained in the weekly news magazines at nearby Rutgers and Princeton University libraries. In the spring of 1998, I made the first of several trips to the Library of Congress to read the Morgenthau papers. I obtained photocopies of related materials from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library in Austin, Texas. I made several trips to the John F. Kennedy Library at Dorchester, Massachusetts. I received additional material from historical research collections around the country. As the pattern of my research unfolded, which included the chief critic of the war and those in government and in the press who promoted the war, the organizing title of my book was "The Charade of the Best and Brightest: Hans J. Morgenthau and the National Debate on Vietnam." After ten years of research and writing, I had a double-spaced manuscript that exceeded some 900 pages. After conferring with my first editor at Lexington, I was advised to write two books: one on the critic, the second on the Presidents whose leadership propelled the United States into the tragedy of Vietnam.

After another year of writing and editing, the result is contained in these pages. It is the story of a great man who first established the specialized study of international relations with the publication of his earliest books and who then applied the principles contained in those studies that appeared in hundreds of articles and public forums in the attempt to alter American policy in Vietnam. He did not succeed, but he did leave a rich legacy of instructive foreign policy advice and analysis that may serve well in avoiding future unnecessary wars. It is my hope that this book will contribute to the realization of that goal.

Preface

The war in Vietnam was a moral catastrophe. It produced no victory, no realization of foreign policy objectives. It produced a national trauma. It produced a long, polished black granite wall in Washington, D.C., engraved with the names of over 58,000 Americans who died in the fighting. In addition to those killed, the number of Americans wounded in the fifteen-year war totals over 300,000 while the number of Vietnamese who died in the war is estimated at some three million. As this cruel and humanly costly war came to an end, not one single American foreign policy objective had been achieved.

The long-standing and most basic objective of the United States, as proclaimed by America's national leadership throughout the war, was to preserve the independence of South Vietnam as a sovereign state and thereby halt the spread of Communism. By May 1, 1975, South Vietnam as a state no longer existed. Saigon, the capital city, had collapsed in the face of the advancing North Vietnamese army and had surrendered unconditionally. The world then witnessed what has become the central symbol of America's total humiliating defeat in Vietnam: the picture of evacuees climbing either a shaky staircase or a ladder atop an elevator shaft of a CIA safe house on which is perched a Huey helicopter to ferry the evacuees to carriers in the South China Sea. Twenty-five years later, former President Gerald Ford told *Newsweek*: "It was one of the saddest days in my life. . . . To see the United States literally kicked out, beaten by the North Vietnamese."¹ In a commemorative editorial on April 25, 2000, the *New York Times*, which had vacillated in its appraisal of the war over the years, finally proclaimed the war was a mistake. "No compelling national interest," the *Times* affirmed, "was served by waging war in Vietnam, and the men who directed the war, including Johnson and his Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, knew it at the time." Indeed, if the war

was not in the national interest in 1964 and 1965, it could not have been in the national interest in 1961 through 1963 when McNamara assisted Kennedy in laying the groundwork for the war by dispatching the initial installments of men and material to Vietnam while spraying chemical herbicides as part of a food-depleting strategy and as a defoliant to destroy mangrove trees that served as hiding places for Vietnamese guerrilla fighters. And certainly, it could not have been in the national interest when Nixon, under the stewardship of Henry Kissinger, attempted to bomb the North Vietnamese into oblivion while seeking a complete military surrender of the North.

Writing in *The New Republic* on October 11, 1975, six months after the fall of Saigon, Hans J. Morgenthau, formerly the Albert A. Michelson Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science and Modern History at the University of Chicago and, in 1975, the Leonard Davis Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the City University of New York, and the most relentless critic of the war throughout its duration, summed up America's failure this way:

We failed [in Vietnam] because our conception of foreign policy as a noble crusade on behalf of some transcendent purpose clashed with the reality of things that not only refused to be transformed by our good intentions but in turn corrupted our purpose. The purpose, far from ennobling our actions, became itself the source of unspeakable evil.²

Morgenthau was the founder of the Realist school of international relations in which the principle of national interest is the essential determinant in the making of foreign policy. This is the central thesis of Morgenthau's opus, *Politics Among Nations*, published in 1948 when Morgenthau was forty-four years old. Born in 1904 in Coburg, Germany, Morgenthau arrived in the United States in 1938, a German Jewish exile from Nazi Germany, the owner of a law degree, a Ph.D. and the author of three books and over a dozen articles.³ He began his teaching career in his newly adopted country first at Brooklyn College, then the University of Kansas City until his appointment at the University of Chicago in 1943. From 1946 to 1962, he published prolifically on law and international politics, particularly in law review journals, which totaled well over three dozen articles. He also published seven books in these sixteen years.⁴ *Politics Among Nations*, however, is the book that made Morgenthau's reputation and made him well-known in government circles, which led to his appointment as an active State Department consultant during the Truman Presidency. He remained a regular consultant with the Department of Defense from 1962 to 1965 when he was fired because of his opposition to the war, which, by 1965, made him, in Morgenthau's words,

“famous overnight.”⁵ His opposition to the war was everywhere, in the teach-in movement, in public forums, and in the mainstream journals such as *Commentary*, *The New Republic*, *The New Leader*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Encounter*, newspapers including the *New York Times*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and the *Washington Post*. And the principal basis for his opposition to the war was the absence of any vital American security interest in Southeast Asia, which America’s national leadership failed to grasp.

Thus, in his October 11 article, Morgenthau writes that, “When one pointed to the lack of American national interest in Southeast Asia one was reminded, frequently with pride, that we were there not for narrow selfish reasons but for the sake of the indigenous peoples: to save them from a fate worse than death and to enable them to build a nation of their own, free from foreign interference.”⁶ Indeed, as one of the major findings of this book will demonstrate, America’s national leadership throughout the war supported by the members of the American foreign policy establishment known as the Council on Foreign Relations along with several prominent national columnists simply ignored Morgenthau and his arguments against the war. In his appraisal of America’s failure in Vietnam, Morgenthau, in October 1975, who saw the futility of the war from its inception, is rightfully angry at what the indigenous people of Southeast Asia suffered at the hands of America’s military might. He writes:

What we achieved was the utter destruction of their freedom, the devastation of their countries, death on an enormous scale inflicted with barbaric means, and the corruption of the survivors, ourselves included. Purpose and achievement were almost grotesquely at odds. We achieved what we wanted to prevent, and the evil we wanted to prevent was like nothing compared with the evil we left behind.⁷

Seven years earlier, in 1968, the North Vietnamese, during the Tet holiday truce, launched their two-month offensive assault on over one hundred cities and towns in South Vietnam in which more than 1,700 Americans, some 20,000 South Vietnamese and about 40,000 North Vietnamese troops were killed in the fighting. By the end of 1968, there were 536,000 American military personnel in South Vietnam, and by year’s end, more than 14,500 Americans were killed in combat.⁸ On March 12, 1968, Senator Eugene McCarthy, in a primary challenge to President Johnson, won 42 per cent of the vote in New Hampshire. On March 16, Senator Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination. On March 31, President Johnson told the nation on national television that he would not seek re-election. On April 4, Martin Luther King was assassinated followed by widespread rioting

in America's cities. On June 5, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated. In late August of 1968, the North Vietnamese began another general offensive. A month earlier, in July, 1968, General Westmoreland was replaced by General Creighton Abrams as commander of American forces in Vietnam. In 1968, it is obvious the U. S. could not win the war. It is also obvious the United States was coming apart. In 1969, Morgenthau published his ninth book titled, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, which contains this paragraph about America in Vietnam. He writes:

Here is the most powerful nation on earth trying to force a primitive nation of peasants into submission by the massive use of all the modern means of mass destruction, with the exception of biological and nuclear weapons, and it is unable either to win or liquidate the war. Here is the champion of the 'free world' which protects the people of South Vietnam from Communism by the method of destroying them. Here is the last best hope of the downtrodden and enslaved, to which men of good will throughout the world have looked as a shining example, relieving its frustration in blind ideological fury and aimless destructiveness upon a helpless people.⁹

For Morgenthau, a nation that indulges in such wanton "destructiveness" in which the "killing becomes an end in itself," where the objective is to kill until "there is nobody left to resist," cannot escape the baneful effects on its own society. Hence, Morgenthau writes:

No civilized nation can wage such a war without suffering incalculable moral damage. The damage is particularly grave since the nation can see no plausible military or political benefit that could justify killing for killing's sake. And it is particularly painful for a nation like the United States, which was founded as a novel experiment in government, morally superior to those that went before it, and that has throughout its history thought of itself, and was regarded by the other nations of the world, as performing a uniquely beneficial mission not only for itself, but for all mankind.¹⁰

In 1969, when Morgenthau published these words, the war was already a moral calamity. In January 1969, Richard Nixon acceded to the Presidency and appointed Henry Kissinger his National Security Adviser. The calamity continued for another six years.

Writing in *The New Republic* on February 20, 1971, a year after his inaugural, Morgenthau "thought that Nixon," the "clever politician that he is," would "have made it his first order of business to liquidate the Vietnam War." In Morgenthau's view, Nixon "could easily have done it" by "telling the world that the United States had honored its commitment to the freedom of South Vietnam and that it was up to the South Vietnamese to decide what

to do with that freedom.” Nixon could then tell “the American people that he was putting an end to Johnson’s war as Eisenhower had put an end to Truman’s war in Korea.” Of the two alternatives, to liquidate the war “speedily and without qualification,” or to fight on indefinitely, Nixon chose to continue the war until victory. He would wage this war through air power and the employment of “search and destroy” missions on the ground aimed indiscriminately at enemies, “actual or presumed,” and thus at “the whole population.” In Morgenthau’s words, “The Administration is committed to leaving Indochina only after it has won a victory.”¹¹

In his February 20 article, Morgenthau notes that the Vietnamese insurgents would respond with “booby traps” and “ambush” and a relentless perseverance to survive. In another *New Republic* article on May 23, 1970, after Nixon had invaded Cambodia, Morgenthau describes what U. S. counterinsurgency forces are up against. He writes:

It taxes credulity that at this late date, after an experience of five years of futility, we should engage in yet another search-and-destroy operation, seriously believing that it will change the fortunes of war. Must it be said again that the enemy has an intelligence network that covers every town and every hamlet in South Vietnam? He has such a network because he is not a foreign invader but an organic part of the people. Hence, in contrast to ourselves, he is not easily surprised. He slips through the net we cast for him to reappear elsewhere or, after we have left, at the same spot where we thought he was. How often have we not cleared the Anshau Valley and how many times from how many hills have we not dislodged the enemy and how many brave and good men had to die to do it, and once it was done the enemy was back, and the gruesome, senseless game started all over again.¹²

When Nixon completed his first year in office, the total number of Americans killed in Vietnam was 33,641, which surpassed the total reached in the Korean War. When Nixon left office in 1974, another 25,000 had been killed. “It is an historic fact,” Morgenthau writes, “that Nixon as Vice President” in 1954, “recommended the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam.” It is also an historic fact borne out by the evidence of Nixon’s public remarks from 1961 to the moment he became President, that he was a consistently stalwart proponent of the war.¹³ Thus, whereas Johnson was nudged into the war by the Kennedy advisers in November 1963, Nixon needed no prodding. And while it was Johnson who began the massive bombing strategy, it was Nixon who escalated the bombing culminating in the twelve-day period of 1972 remembered as the Christmas bombing in which Nixon employed 400 U.S. Navy and Air Force fighter-bombers and 100 B-52s of the Strategic Air Command. But it all began with America’s first Vietnam president. In

his last speech delivered to the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce on the morning of November 22, 1963, just before he flew to Dallas en route to the Trade Mart where he was killed, Kennedy proclaimed that “Without the U.S., South Vietnam would collapse overnight.” And that without the U.S., “the Communist advance into the mainland of South America would long ago have taken place.”¹⁴

The war was a mistake, but what had gone wrong? How did the United States become involved in Vietnam? What had compelled three American Presidents to wage a war that produced the greatest foreign policy disaster in American history to that time? What had compelled President John F. Kennedy, Harvard educated, surrounded by Harvard professors as his advisers, to misread the geopolitics of Southeast Asia and begin the war in South Vietnam? And why had Kennedy’s successors, Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon accepted eagerly the mantle of what Kennedy had bequeathed, an ongoing war in which a superpower could not defeat a much lesser power, a country of peasants and farmers?

To peer into the inner councils of government based on archival sources does not give us answers to these questions. What these sources do reveal is the boundless folly of high-ranking advisers, inept and delusional, frivolous and irresponsible, advising or commiserating among themselves or with their president on military strategies, decisions about to be made, how to deceive the public, and always, the underlying assumption, taken for granted and never questioned, that their military involvement, escalating increasingly over the years, is a war that must be fought.

As Morgenthau put it, the war demonstrated the triumph of dogma over reality. And the dogmatic mindset, convinced with absolute finality in the certitude of its beliefs, has therefore no need to go in search of facts. It does not dawn on the dogmatist to even think it possible that he may be mistaken. Hence, the dogmatist is invulnerable to logic and reason. There is no factual corrective as America’s high level officials engage in their strategy discussions, which display blatantly egregious judgments in the prosecution of their war. And because their discussions, to repeat, are devoid of factual analysis, they have nothing to do with American national interest.

Thus, on the question of using chemicals both as a food-depleting strategy and as herbicides to destroy mangrove trees used as hiding places by the South Vietnamese guerrilla forces, the United States would then be engaged in chemical warfare that had to be justified. Secretary of State Rusk told Kennedy on August 23, 1962, that by destroying their crops, the enemy could no longer stockpile food supplies thus “making it difficult for them to concentrate large forces and sustain them in combat.”¹⁵

On August 24, 1962, at a Department of State and Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting, General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said "that it is strange that we can bomb, kill, and burn people but are not permitted to starve them."¹⁶

On May 1, 1962, during a conversation at the White House, General Maxwell Taylor, President Kennedy's military representative, said, "there was a great deal of merit in the idea of using defoliants on crops." Though it was pointed out "that defoliants were open to germ warfare charges," it was Taylor's argument that "there was no difference between napalm and defoliants." At the same meeting, the President approved the recommendation that additional experiments with defoliants "should be conducted in Thailand."¹⁷

On January 2, 1962, Secretary of Defense McNamara, in a memorandum to the President, recommended that the South Vietnamese government "undertake appropriate publicity in the form of press releases, public statements and leaflet drops. The publicity would include statements that the program is under GVN [Government of South Vietnam] direction and control and that U.S. assistance has been requested." McNamara added: "The defensive purpose of the program will be explained and, in addition, efforts will be made to advise the inhabitants of affected areas that the spray will have no harmful effects on humans, livestock, or the soil."¹⁸

On January 24, 1961, two days after his inaugural, McNamara reiterated what Eisenhower told Kennedy on the subject of Laos: that "If Laos is lost to the Free World, in the long run we will lose all of Southeast Asia." In the early months of his presidency, Kennedy and his advisers spent considerable time ruminating about what to do about Laos. On April 29, 1961, at a meeting on the deteriorating situation in Laos when there was indecision about whether to intervene militarily, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy was upset. He asked, "Where would be the best place to stand and fight in Southeast Asia, where to draw the line?" He then asked "whether we would save any of Laos, but the major question was whether we would stand up and fight?"¹⁹

After the dispatch of combat troops to Vietnam in 1965, and perplexed that American military might cannot defeat an army of peasants and farmers, Defense Secretary McNamara, on June 28, 1966, tells President Johnson: "We're taking 6,000 U.S. soldiers with God knows how many airplanes and helicopters and fire power and going after a bunch of half-starved beggars of 2,000 at most, and probably less than that."²⁰

A year earlier, on July 21, 1965, at a major strategy session, McNamara recommends "calling up 235,000 a year from now [to] replace the reserves with regulars." Undersecretary George Ball says "We can't allow the country to wake up one morning and find heavy casualties." Rusk appears to be less concerned about casualties. He tells the President: "We can't worry

about massive casualties when we say we can't find the enemy. I don't see great casualties unless the Chinese come in." The President, after hearing McNamara proclaim that by 1966, "we would have approximately 600,000 additional men," is lost in this maze of confusion. He asks: what "requires this decision" on his part? He asks for "alternatives"; he wants more "discussion"; He asks "Who else can help? Are we the sole defenders of freedom in the world?" He says: "We must make no snap judgments. We must consider carefully all our options."²¹ [My annotated notes on reading the minutes of this meeting: it is hard to believe that U. S. leaders could have had this discussion.]

Throughout its military escalation, the Johnson administration deceived the public by constantly proclaiming that the basic objective of its military operations was to secure a settlement based on negotiations. On March 6, 1965, in a memo to the President, National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy suggests the United States is not interested in negotiations except as a public relations showcase. In Bundy's words: "There remains a real question in our minds as to how much we should open the door to a readiness for 'talks' . . . it is important to show that we are ready to talk about Vietnam [but] always on our own terms. . . ." We do not want to appear "as if we were hunting negotiations. Both the Communists and our friends in Saigon would interpret such a proposal as a sign of weakness and a readiness to withdraw."²²

On June 17, 1966, on the strategy of bombing the oil and petroleum depots deep in North Vietnam, press secretary Bill Moyers advises Johnson: "No statement should be made to the public saying that we wanted to shorten the war. If the air strike does not shorten the war, then later people will say we misled them."²³

On April 15, 1972, Nixon calls Kissinger for an update on the massive bombing of Haiphong, the port city well within North Vietnam, when both believed the war could still be won. Kissinger told Nixon: "They dropped a million pounds of bombs." Nixon replied: "God-damn, that must have been a good strike!" Nixon then recalled that "Johnson bombed them for years and it didn't do any good." Kissinger reassured Nixon: "But, Mr. President, Johnson never had a strategy. He was sort of picking away at them. He would go in with 50 planes, 20 planes. I bet you we will have had more planes over there in one day than Johnson had in a month."²⁴

A week after the January 1973 "peace agreement," *New York Times* columnist William Safire "asked Kissinger what he would have done if we had four years to live over," and he replied: "We should have bombed the hell out of them the minute we got into office." Kissinger then added: "We should have responded strongly. We should have taken on the doves right then—started bombing and mining the harbors. The war would have been over in 1970."²⁵

On March 12, 2006, at a Symposium on the Vietnam War at the JFK Library in Dorchester, Massachusetts, Kissinger “insisted that the Vietnam War was fought for ‘noble motives’ to stop the spread of communism.” When asked if “he wanted to apologize for anything that he had done,” Kissinger, “calling the question ‘highly inappropriate,’” said “he suffered no deep moral qualms about his role in Vietnam.” “I have no regrets,” Kissinger said. He also likened the Vietnam experience to the “broader strategic importance of the invasion of Iraq,” which he said “he also supported.” As noted in his comment to Nixon on November 15, 1972, Kissinger apparently places great importance on “strategy,” which he never specifically defines but which, in practical terms addressed to Vietnam, is simply the use of massive military fire power to win an unconditional military victory regardless of the cost in human life.²⁶

On February 15, 1962, in a lengthy telegram from the American Embassy in Saigon, Carl T. Rowan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs told U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in Washington, that something has to be done about the possibility of “a major domestic furor of the ‘undeclared war’ in South Vietnam” and the restrictions imposed by the U. S. on newsmen “from telling our people the truth about U.S. involvement in that war.” He says we cannot “muffle all criticism” about South Vietnamese President Diem, but “with good relations” with the press, “we can get a wide measure of silence [from them] by astutely invoking the *national interest*. . . . [Emphasis added]”²⁷

Of course, it is national interest that should be the governing criterion for any military involvement. Here, it is invoked as a cover to conceal press criticism. Throughout the archival sources, it is used infrequently, and always rhetorically, without meaning and without any specific geopolitical reference. Thus, on June 22, 1966, at a meeting of the National Security Council when the strategy of bombing the oil and petroleum depots close to Hanoi was first raised, General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was all for the bombing deep in North Vietnam and indifferent to the risks. He told the President and those assembled, “Over the next 60 to 90 days,” the bombing “will cost them more,” will “affect the total infiltration” of North Vietnamese troops and, “In a very real sense, this is a war of attrition.” To which the President replied: “You have no qualification, no doubt that this is in the *national interest*?” [Emphasis added] Wheeler’s answer: “None whatsoever.”²⁸ For Johnson, the matter was closed. He asked for no further explanation.

Four months later, on October 13, 1966, Johnson received a letter from Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, who advised a termination of the bombing of North Vietnam, an immediate “fire only if fired upon” order, followed by a cease-fire if conditions permit, “a token and unilateral withdrawal of 30,000 U.S. forces” while negotiations are in progress. He

also advised “a time-table for joint and total withdrawals . . . as part of a settlement by negotiations.” And why should we do so, Mansfield asked? “Because it is “the best, if not the only way, to serve our interests” and the interests of “the people of South Vietnam.” In his closing paragraph, Mansfield again tells Johnson that “*our national interest* [Emphasis added] requires it.”²⁹

Johnson was impervious to this kind of reasoning, as were Kennedy and Nixon. What then was behind the ongoing war initiated by Kennedy and continued by his successors? In the deliberations in the councils of government, there are references to Communism, or to the forces of Communism, or how the Communists will react, and always, how the Communists must be stopped. Never in these discussions is there an iota of geopolitical substance linking the fight against Communism as a requirement of American national interest. Indeed, the discussions demonstrate a basic contempt for geopolitics, which is evident in their frequent references to a fictitious domino theory that has no basis in history; in their mistaken analogy that failure to save South Vietnam from Communism would repeat Chamberlain’s surrender to Hitler at Munich; that while on occasion they acknowledged the conflict as a civil war, they said they were also fighting monolithic Communism at the same time. Yet, in 1961, when Kennedy acceded to office, the monolith had become fragmented and the weekly news magazines were the first to point this out.³⁰

Thus, by 1961 and even earlier, China had broken with Russia, Albania had drifted into the Chinese orbit, North Korea sided with Albania in its opposition to Russia, Tito of Yugoslavia had established in 1948 a national communist state independent of the Soviet Union, which was the initial impulse for China breaking with Russia; that by 1961, Poland and Bulgaria were also challenging Russian domination, and in Southeast Asia, North Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese patriot and nationalist as well as a communist, was emerging as another independent communist state. The monolith had become polycentric, and polycentrism had become one of the major geopolitical determinants of national interest foreign policy. And while America’s three Vietnam presidents knew this, they could not act on it. Their minds remained fixated on the monolith and the rhetoric by which they defended their war enhanced their own self-delusion while it also nurtured the national hysteria against communism. The rhetoric began with Kennedy, continued with Johnson and Nixon, and the examples from their public statements are legion of which the following are representative.

Thus, in a speech delivered at Great Falls, Montana on September 26, 1963, two months before he was assassinated, Kennedy said: “Every time a country, regardless of how far away it may be from our borders—every time

that country passes behind the Iron Curtain, the security of the United States is thereby endangered.” He adds, in that same speech: “If the United States were to falter, the whole world . . . would inevitably begin to move toward the Communist bloc.” “So when you ask why are we in Laos, or Vietnam,” it is because we believe “our freedom is tied up with theirs.” Two years earlier, on April 20, 1961, in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Kennedy said: “We face a relentless struggle in every corner of the globe” against “the menace of external Communist interventions and domination.” He concluded: “As President of the United States, I am determined upon our system’s survival and success, regardless of the cost and regardless of the peril.” In his first State of the Union Address on January 30, 1961, Kennedy told the country: “we live in an hour of national peril”; “it was by no means certain the nation would endure”; “Each day we draw nearer the hour of maximum danger.”³¹

Lyndon Johnson, on April 17, 1965, repeated Kennedy’s pledge to remain in Vietnam and continue the fight. At the LBJ Ranch at Johnson City, Texas, Johnson told members of the press: “There is no human power capable of forcing us from Vietnam. We will remain as long as necessary, with the might required, whatever the risk, and whatever the cost.”³²

Similarly, Richard Nixon, on December 15, 1969, addressed the nation and said: “The enemy still insists on a unilateral, precipitate withdrawal of American forces and on a political settlement that would mean the imposition of a Communist government on the people of South Vietnam and defeat and humiliation for the United States. This we cannot and will not accept.”³³

At 10:00 p.m., on January 23, 1973, three days after his second inaugural, Nixon appeared on national television and proclaimed the end of America’s military involvement in Vietnam. He had accepted a negotiated settlement and a humiliation for the United States though the final humiliation would come fifteen months later in April 1975, when South Vietnam surrendered to the North.

At bottom, after reading the literature, primary and secondary, the press reports, the editorials and the columnists in the major newspapers, the weekly news magazines, the transcripts of news conferences, and the public statements of our government officials and the lobbying organizations in support of American policy—after studying the history of America’s involvement in Vietnam and the various military turns devised by the high level advisers of America’s Vietnam presidents, the so-called “best and brightest” from America’s best schools, the evidence clearly indicates that the root cause of how the United States became militarily involved and continued its war in Vietnam for fifteen years is what Morgenthau called “the sweeping ideological abstraction” of communism. And here we arrive at the central point of this book. Of all the

critics of the war, no one saw this more clearly and pointed out more emphatically than Morgenthau, that the worst kind of foreign policy endeavor is to be guided by any form of crusading moralism or idealism, and it was this frenzied zealotry to fight communism wherever it appeared on the globe that was behind the disaster in Vietnam.

Just as Kennedy had proclaimed that our freedom is tied up with the “freedom” of Laos and Vietnam, George W. Bush, in his second inaugural address asserted that “the survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands.”³⁴ And thus we have yet another demonstration of the American proclivity for justifying needless war based on “sweeping ideological abstractions” that have no basis in fact. We need to overcome this penchant for ideological blather on the part of our national leadership or we will find ourselves in future disasters such as those we have experienced in Vietnam and in Iraq.

Morgenthau called these ideological abstractions contaminants or “ideological intoxicants” that have no place in the making of foreign policy. For Morgenthau, “a peaceful and successful policy” requires “the ideological decontamination” of crusading abstractions such as fighting communism or making the world safe for democracy or creating a new world order or waging a war to end all wars. For Morgenthau, such abstractions have nothing to do with the first principle of foreign policy, which is the self-preservation or the well-being of the nation, that is, “the security of its territory and institutions” defined as the “one primary national interest in its relations with other nations.” To be sure, the United States has secondary interests such as “peace and security everywhere,” “the relief of poverty and disease,” “the promotion of democratic governments” but these, Morgenthau notes, “are not to be pursued at the expense of the primary interest of national security” and are subject to the “limits of available wisdom and power.”³⁵

And how to decontaminate “ideologically oriented foreign policies?” And how to determine national interest? And secondary interests? And the relation of secondary interests to the primary interest? They are determined only by consulting the facts. In the Morgenthau vocabulary, these are “the facts that are empirically ascertainable”; the facts that comprise “the observable empirical reality”; the facts that meet “the test of empirical verification.” Their application does not automatically guarantee success but it is all we have given the complexities and ambiguities of global politics. “For foreign policy,” Morgenthau writes, “is always at the mercy of accidents,” of “the contingent” and “the unpredictable” and “particularly of the foreign policies of other nations.” But it is always the facts that must govern foreign policy for, as Morgenthau, the consummate empiricist puts it, “the facts are what they are, and they are not to be trifled with.” They are the only alternative to misguided policies and the avoidance of tragedy.³⁶

In an undated interview contained in the augmented edition of *Truth and Tragedy*, an anthology of essays offered as a tribute by former students and colleagues, Morgenthau tells us that his opposition to the war was based on the application of “certain basic principles of foreign policy” that he “had formulated almost twenty years earlier”³⁷ and that are contained in his 1948 book, *Politics Among Nations*. Thus, in his opening paragraph, Morgenthau presents his principles of national interest foreign policy in the form of a theory to be tested by the only means a theory of international politics may be tested: that is, does the theory of international relations as presented by Morgenthau work according to the way the actual world of international politics works? Here, Morgenthau writes:

The test by which such a theory must be judged is not *a priori* and abstract, but empirical and pragmatic. The theory, in other words, must be judged not by some preconceived abstract principle or concept unrelated to reality, but by its purpose: to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomenon that without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible. It must meet a dual test, an empirical and a logical one: Do the facts as they actually are lend themselves to the interpretation the theory has put upon them, and do the conclusions at which the theory arrives follow with logical necessity from its premises? In short, is the theory consistent with the facts and within itself?³⁸

By any objective reading, the theory is consistent with the reality and the evidence in support of this theory is massively extrapolated in the remaining 550 pages of text. The principle that makes the theory work is Morgenthau’s rather common sense claim that it is possible to distinguish “in politics between truth and opinion—between what is true objectively and rationally, supported by evidence and illuminated by reason, and what is only a subjective judgment, divorced from the facts as they are and informed by prejudice and wishful thinking.” Who would want to dispute this claim? This is the first principle of Morgenthau’s theory and the central theme of the entire book. Morgenthau then provides additional support for his theory by noting the historical dichotomy of the abstract and *a priori* conception of the world removed from reality and the empirical and pragmatic view that derives from reality.

He begins by noting that “the issue” his “theory raises concerns the nature of all politics,” which is revealed in “the history of modern political thought.” And that is “the contest between two schools” of thought “that differ fundamentally in their conceptions of the nature of man, society and politics.” One school, Morgenthau writes, “believes that a rational and moral political order, derived from universally valid abstract principles, can be achieved here and now.” The other, which he calls the Realist school, accepts the world as

“imperfect” and is “the result of forces inherent in human nature” and that “to improve the world one must work with those forces, not against them.” It is a world, Morgenthau writes, “of opposing interests and of conflict” in which “moral principles can never be fully realized,” but may be “approximated” by a “balancing” and calculating of competing interests.³⁹ And here we arrive at one of those principles that has direct relevance to Vietnam.

For America’s national leadership and their supporters, professing communism as the major evil on the planet and the United States as the guardian of the “free world” represents their conception of a universal good, their morality, no matter the prospective cost in human life, and no matter the geopolitical limitations that make such a morality unattainable. In empirical and pragmatic terms, how may morality be “approximated” in the anarchic world of 110 independent nations (191 today) ungoverned by any binding law? In Morgenthau’s reasoning, it can only derive from a policy based on the nation’s primary interest, the survival and preservation of its territory and institutions, but with due consideration to the nation or nations affected by that policy. Here, Morgenthau writes

It is exactly the concept of interest defined in terms of power that saves us from both that moral excess and that political folly [“the blindness of crusading frenzy in the name of moral principle”]. For if we look at all nations, our own included, as political entities pursuing their respective interests defined in terms of power, we are able to do justice to all of them. And we are able to do justice to all of them in a dual sense: We are able to judge other nations as we judge our own and, having judged them in this fashion, we are then capable of pursuing policies that respect the interest of other nations, while protecting and promoting those of our own. Moderation in policy cannot fail to reflect the moderation of moral judgment.⁴⁰

In other words, as it applies to Southeast Asia, American national interests (and the interests of the Vietnamese) did not require American military intervention in a civil war among indigenous Vietnamese ten thousand miles away to fight for a morally dubious cause the outcome of which would have no bearing on America’s vital security interests. In the closing pages of *Politics Among Nations* under the rubric of the “fundamental rules of diplomacy,” Morgenthau returns to the principle of national interest in relation to the interests of other nations.

Here Morgenthau quotes Edmund Burke who wrote: “Nothing is so fatal to a nation as an extreme of self-partiality, and the total want of consideration of what others will naturally hope or fear.” To which Morgenthau adds that “the national interests of other nations in terms of national security,” are to be judged as to how “compatible they are with one’s own.” Morgenthau also

remarks that it is “a matter of viewing the national interests of both sides with objectivity [and] to keep in balance interests that touch each other at many points. . . .” It is a matter by which one safeguards “one’s own vital interests without hurting those of the other side.”⁴¹ In a 1952 article in the *American Political Science Review*, Morgenthau repeats this axiom of compatible interests. Here he writes: “Finally, the national interest of a nation that is conscious not only of its own interests but also that of other nations must be defined in terms compatible with the latter. In a multinational world, this is a requirement of political morality; in an age of total war, it is also a condition for survival.”⁴²

In the Preface to the third edition of *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau writes that he is “still being accused” by his critics “of indifference to the moral problems” of international politics to which he replies that there is “abundant evidence, in this book and elsewhere,” that he is very much concerned with morality.⁴³ Indeed, *Politics Among Nations* is suffused with the question of morality but it is morality, as we have just seen, in which power is constrained by interest to produce the only kind of morality that is possible given the anarchic nature of the nation state system. What the critics could not, or did not want to grasp, as will be seen in a later chapter, was Morgenthau’s demonstration of power and power politics throughout the centuries as staples of the international system. For Morgenthau, to deny such a concept of power and its linkage with interest, is to prohibit any understanding of international politics. For Morgenthau, “The distinguishing element of international politics . . . is of necessity power politics,” a point that he emphasizes repeatedly. Thus, for Morgenthau, “The struggle for power is universal in time and space and is an undeniable fact of experience.” For Morgenthau, “throughout historic time,” regardless of “economic and political conditions, states have met each other in contests for power.”⁴⁴ In fact, Morgenthau’s critics had no qualms about the use of power, particularly the military kind in Vietnam; what they could not countenance was Morgenthau’s examination of power as an intrinsic element of international relations and particularly, as it applied to U. S. policy especially to those of whom it might be said believed in the immaculate conception of American foreign policy that could not in any way be associated with the crass notion of power, *per se*.

Over half a century ago, when Morgenthau penned these words, the most influential body of foreign policy experts representing the American foreign policy establishment as members of the Council on Foreign Relations, simply could not accept power as intrinsic to the nation state system. Today, however, fifty years later, it is a supreme irony that Leslie H. Gelb, a former President of the Council, a Defense Department policy planner in the

Johnson Administration, the study director assigned by Robert S. McNamara to oversee what came to be known as the *Pentagon Papers*, has recently published *Power Rules*, which is all about the centrality of power in international affairs. Gelb also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Carter Administration and is also a former Pulitzer Prize winning columnist for *The New York Times*.

As a foreign policy analyst, Gelb's book replicates Morgenthau on power in almost every particular with one important exception: Morgenthau writes of power as a basic concomitant of the nation state system and he does so dispassionately as a clinical observer; Gelb, however, strongly endorses power as a modern-day Machiavelli advising *The Prince*, in this case, the President of the United States,⁴⁵ to use power more aggressively. Because, as Gelb puts it, "Power rules, still, and there are still rules on how best to exercise it." For Gelb, almost as an echo of Morgenthau, "Power is as vital today as ever in securing national interests. It remains the necessary means to all important international ends." It may take the form of "soft power," that is the exercise of diplomacy, persuasion, compromise; or it may be exercised as "hard power," meaning the use of military force. Thus, for Gelb, power "is what it always was," which, and here he differs from Morgenthau, "it is essentially the capacity to get people to do what they don't want to do, by pressure and coercion, using one's resources and position. The idea is to cause others to worry about what you can do for them or to them."⁴⁶ Gelb, writing more than half a century after Morgenthau and in the context of America's failed adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq, wants to repair and restore American foreign policy; there is a practical urgency in his appeal for power. Morgenthau, writing after World War II, when the prestige and power of the U. S. were indisputably at their highest, analyzes power historically and wants to impart learning.

Thus, over sixty years ago, Morgenthau founded the Realist school of national interest foreign policy and defined the concept of power and interest as central as to how the system of international politics works. Today, Gelb has legitimized what his previous Council forbears had rejected. For Gelb tells us that his purpose "is to put power back into American power, to fit it to twenty-first century realities" He wants "to restore common sense to the exercise of that power and the making of American foreign policy."⁴⁷ For Morgenthau, "The objectives of foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest and must be supported with adequate power." And, again like Morgenthau, who inveighed against the ideologues, Gelb is highly critical of those who have "hijacked" power as "an ideological weapon" by the "schemers who ceaselessly demand that America 'must do' certain things regardless of their achievability."⁴⁸

Moreover, Gelb's rules for "soft power" through diplomacy are essentially Morgenthau's yet Morgenthau is conspicuously omitted from Gelb's text though *Politics Among Nations* is included in his "selected bibliography." Thus, it is a curious irony that the most recent book on power by a former practitioner of power is a reaffirmation of its progenitor but without any attribution to the earlier book. *Power Rules* thus is a ringing endorsement of its progenitor without naming the progenitor. It is also a belated but stinging rebuke to Gelb's predecessors, his intellectual forbears on the Council on Foreign Relations.

Today, *Politics Among Nations* is in its seventh edition, thirty years after Morgenthau died in July, 1980. It is a remarkable book, a *tour de force*, a clarification of the history and geopolitical components of the nation state system as we know it today. It is a book of common sense rules and principles, a diplomatic history of the modern world that may be read as a primer of how the world came to be politically structured as it is today. It is replete with a broad range of historical references including the major Peace Congresses—Westphalia (1648), Vienna (1815), Berlin (1878), and Versailles (1920); there are references to the diplomacy of Renaissance Italy, to fourteenth century Asia Minor as noted in Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; there are additional quotations from Tolstoy to John Stuart Mill to Winston Churchill and many others. It is the work of a rare and deep intelligence and if he had done nothing more, though he had in the form of eleven other books and over 400 articles, he would have fulfilled the expectation he set for himself when, as a senior in the Classical Gymnasium at age eighteen, he was assigned to write a composition titled "What I hope for my future and the foundations for that hope." The key passages have not been overlooked by friendly commentators,⁴⁹ but here, in this book that establishes Morgenthau as the hero of the movement to end the war in Vietnam, they are especially cogent. They are so because they tell us not only about the acute sensibility of an exceptionally gifted eighteen-year old boy, but one who envisioned for himself the kind of life he wanted to live: a life that had meaning, which he realized as a teacher, writer and scholar. Here, Morgenthau writes:

I shall soon arrive at a point in my life where I will have to choose between two kinds of activity. One leads to a field where men year in year out, in eternally, repetitive, monotonous rhythm, sow and harvest, save and consume. When one has raked in more than the other, he is happy and declares to have become rich. Thus life is carried on from generation to generation without purpose and higher aim, exclusively oriented towards the satisfaction of physical needs and the requirements of the moment.⁵⁰

The eighteen-year old then continues:

On the other hand, one arrives at a sphere of action where men, too, work indefatigably, not in order to accumulate gains and to be able to lead a comfortable life, but in the service of a higher cause.

Thus to be able to work in the service of a great idea, on behalf of an important goal; to be able to commit every nerve, every muscle and every drop of sweat to a work, to a great task; to grow with the work, to become greater oneself in the struggle with one's betters and then to be able to say at the end: I die, but here remains something that is more important than life and will last longer than my body; my work: that is my hope, worthy of tremendous efforts to realize it, that is my goal worthy to live for and, if need be, to die for.⁵¹

He knows it is "very difficult to say what the ground for this hope really is." Indeed, he cites only one "argument . . . to justify it" and this is the rather tenuous "dreams and hopes of youth [which] are the anticipation and presentiment of what old age provides." Here, in support of his dream, he cites Goethe's autobiography that "Our desires are presentiments of the abilities that lie within ourselves, harbingers of what we shall be able to accomplish."⁵²

In a distinguished career that spanned the last four decades of his life, the "dreams and hopes" of the eighteen-year old became a reality. He left a rich legacy of intellectual accomplishment. His work endures. His life had meaning.

On January 14, 1963, *Newsweek* discovered Morgenthau, pronounced him a "prolific essayist" and counted "241 in the past 25 years,"⁵³ that is, since 1938 when Morgenthau, at age thirty-four, emigrated to the United States from Nazi Germany. In January 1963, Vietnam was only slowly emerging as a major foreign policy issue though the build-up of an American arsenal in Vietnam had begun in the first year of the Kennedy Presidency. Morgenthau took note of this and began the first of his many criticisms in opposition to what he saw as the beginning of a highly flawed foreign policy. At one point during the course of the Vietnam War debate, Morgenthau noted.

There are only three ways in which a government can be induced to change wrong policies: through the brutal language of facts indicating failure, through the erosion of political support, and through the rational demonstration of error. It is that last function that political scholarship is called upon to reform. By speaking truth to power, it serves not only truth but also power. For it provides the powers-that-be as well as the public at large with the intellectual standards with which to distinguish between success and failure. If it is taken seriously, it shortens the interval necessary for the correction of unsound policies.⁵⁴

And this is what Morgenthau did throughout the course of the war. The following is an abridged catalog of Morgenthau's engagement in the Vietnam War debate. He ultimately failed to change the course of America's war in Vietnam, but not by dint of effort.

- 1) February 26, 1956, *The Washington Post*, "Vietnam Chief a Multi-Paradox."
- 2) July, 1961, *Commentary*, "Asia: The American Algeria."
- 3) May, 1962, *Commentary*, "Vietnam—Another Korea."
- 4) March 15, 1964, *The Washington Post*, "Attack Hanoi, Rile China: The Case Against Further U. S. Involvement In Vietnam."
- 5) June 8, 1964, the *New Leader*, "Realities of Containment."
- 6) July 11, 1964, Morgenthau in Washington, D. C. as spokesman for 5,000 college and university professors urging neutrality in Vietnam.
- 7) April 3, 1965, *The Washington Post*, "War with China."
- 8) April 18, 1965, *The New York Times Magazine*, "We Are Deluding Ourselves In Vietnam."
- 9) April 30, 1965, *The Washington Post*, Morgenthau's rebuttal of columnist Joseph Alsop who attacked Morgenthau's credibility as a scholar and critic of the war.
- 10) May 1, 1965, *The New Republic*, "Russia, the U. S. and Vietnam."
- 11) May 15, 1965, Morgenthau's participates in the fifteen hour national teach-in held at the Sheraton Hotel in Washington, D. C.
- 12) May 16, 1965, Morgenthau interviewed on "Meet the Press."
- 13) May 18, 1965, Morgenthau at a Stanford University teach-in.
- 14) May 24, 1965, Morgenthau at a University of Minnesota teach-in.
- 15) June 8, 1965, Morgenthau appears with Senator Wayne Morse and three time Socialist Party candidate for President, Norman Thomas, at an anti-war rally in Madison Square Garden, New York City. Attendance estimated at 17,000.
- 16) June 21, 1965, Morgenthau's debates National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy on national television.
- 17) June 27, 1965, *The Milwaukee Journal*, "The Option Before Us."
- 18) June 30, 1965, Morgenthau participates in a six hour London teach-in held at Central Westminster before 1000 observers.
- 19) July 3, 1965, *The New Republic*, "Globalism: Johnson's Moral Crusade."
- 20) July 26, 1965, Morgenthau at the University of Colorado's Summer Teach-in.
- 21) August 13, 1965, Morgenthau testifies at an unofficial Congressional hearing conducted by Representative William Fitts Ryan in New York.

- 22) September 19, 1965, Morgenthau participates at a symposium on Vietnam at the Johnson Foundation, Racine, Wisconsin.
- 23) September 28, 1965, Morgenthau speaks at a Harvard University teach-in and is recorded in detail on the front page of the *Harvard Crimson*.
- 24) November 30, 1965, Morgenthau debates Brzezinski at a Chicago Council on Foreign Relations sponsored forum on U. S. foreign policy in Asia.
- 25) January 1966, Morgenthau begins his year as Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and on February 16, 1966, presents the first of six working papers before the Council's discussion groups that meet roughly every two months. As will be seen, the minutes of these discussion groups read like another teach-in conducted by Morgenthau before the elder statesmen of the American foreign policy establishment who were largely uninterested in questioning the Vietnam war policy.
- 26) January 31 and February 1, 1966, Morgenthau testifies at the House of Representatives Sub-committee hearings on Asian politics.
- 27) March 30, 1966, Morgenthau testifies at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on Far Eastern affairs, a condensed statement of which was later published in the *Los Angeles Times* on October 23, 1966.
- 28) May 28, 1966, *The New Republic*, "Johnson's Dilemma: The Alternatives Now in Vietnam."
- 29) August 9, 1966, *Look* magazine, "What Should We Do Now."
- 30) January 1967, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, "A New Foreign Policy for the United States: Basic Issues."
- 31) January 2, 1967, *The New Leader*, "Freedom, Freedom House and Vietnam."
- 32) January 4, 1967, *The Washington Post*, Morgenthau interviewed by Nicholas von Hoffman.
- 33) January 30, 1967, *The New Leader*, "The House That Cherne Built."
- 34) April, 1967, *Foreign Affairs*, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene."
- 35) October 18, 1967, *The New Republic*, "What Ails America."
- 36) January, 1968, *Current History*, "U. S. Misadventure in Vietnam."
- 37) August 1, 1968, *The New York Review of Books*, "On Robert Kennedy."
- 38) August 22, 1968, *The New York Review of Books*, "A Talk with Senator McCarthy."
- 39) November 2, 1968, *The New Republic*, "Bundy's Doctrine of War Without End."
- 40) November 7, 1968, *The New York Review of Books*, "The Lesser Evil."
- 41) June 14, 1969, *The New Republic*, "Congress and Foreign Policy."
- 42) September 1969, *Worldview*, "The Present Tragedy of America."
- 43) March 21, 1970, *The New Republic*, "Mr. Nixon's Foreign Policy."

- 44) May 6, 1970, Morgenthau is one of several panelists at a University of Chicago conference on Vietnam.
- 45) May 23, 1970, *The New Republic*, "Mr. Nixon's Gamble."
- 46) September 24, 1970, *The New York Review of Books*, "Reflections on the End of the Republic."
- 47) February 20, 1971, *The New Republic*, "The Nuclear Option: What Price Victory?"
- 48) April 19, 1971, *The New Leader*, "Calley and the American Conscience."
- 49) December 10, 1972, *The New York Review of Books*, Morgenthau's review of former National Security Adviser W. W. Rostow's book, *The Diffusion of Power*.
- 50) August 11, 1973, *The New Republic*, "Watergate and the Future of American Politics: The Aborted Nixon Revolution."
- 51) November 9, 1974, *The New Republic*, "Power and Powerlessness: Decline of Democratic Government."
- 52) May 3, 1975, *The New Republic*, "The Elite Protects Itself."
- 53) October 11, 1975, *The New Republic*, "Explaining the Failures of U. S. Foreign Policy: Three Paradoxes."
- 54) January 22, 1977, *The New Republic*, "Defining the National Interest—Again: Old Superstitions, New Realities."

An editorial in *The New Republic* on May 22, 1971, called for "An Inquiry Into the War" because the American public deserved, the editorial proclaimed, a "thorough and reliable explanation" as to "why the U. S. ever committed its power, prestige and men to so foolish a cause."⁵⁵ In the TRB column of *The New Republic* on February 1, 1975, the writer, Richard Stout, is incredulous that "we once believed" that the domino theory prevailed. That if South Vietnam fell, the Philippines would be "shaky." And then "Indonesia, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and Japan" would be threatened. "Is it possible," Stout continues, "that we once believed that?" And he answers: "Yes, we did. *Time* magazine believed that, Joe Alsop believed that. Great men, famous men, Dulles, Rusk, Bundy, Westmoreland, Goldwater, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon believed that, or said they did."⁵⁶ Others believed it. Leo Cherne of the American Friends of Vietnam believed it. Walt W. Rostow, Bundy's successor as Johnson's National Security Adviser believed it. And for a long time, Bill Moyers, Johnson's press secretary, believed it.

Writing in *The New Republic* on November 9, 1974, Morgenthau included a paragraph about the absence of "shame" as the architects of the Vietnam War policy simply left office and took their places in society as if they had done nothing that warranted any public opprobrium. Here, Morgenthau writes:

Shame, the public acknowledgement of a moral or political failing, is virtually extinct. The members of the intellectual and political elite whose judgments on Vietnam proved to be consistently wrong and whose policies were a disaster for the country remain members of the elite in good standing . . . Thus the line of demarcation between right and wrong, both morally and intellectually, is blurred. It becomes a distinction without lasting moral or political consequences. To be wrong morally or politically is rather like a minor accident, temporarily embarrassing and better forgotten. That vice of moral and intellectual indifference is presented as the virtue of mercy, which, however, as forgiveness and dispensation with the usual reaction to vice, supposes a clear awareness of the difference between vice and virtue.⁵⁷

In his 1970 anthology of essays titled *Truth and Power*, Morgenthau writes:

A future historian, one might hope, will write the story of the far-flung, systematic, and largely successful efforts embarked upon by the government to suppress truth and to bend it to its political interests.⁵⁸

This book attempts to write that history.

NOTES

1. Evan Thomas, "The Last Days of Saigon," *Newsweek*, 1 May 2000, 36.
2. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Explaining the Failures of U.S. Foreign Policy: Three Paradoxes," *The New Republic*, 11 October 1975, 21.
3. Morgenthau, "Curriculum Vitae," submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Chicago, 25 January 1944. Courtesy of the Department of Political Science, the University of Chicago.
4. Morgenthau, "Curriculum Vitae." A list of Morgenthau's books from 1946 to 1977 in Kenneth W. Thompson, *Masters of International Thought* (Baton Rouge & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 90–91.
5. Morgenthau interviewed by Bernard Johnson in Kenneth Thompson & Robert J. Meyers, eds., *Truth and Tragedy: A Tribute to Hans J. Morgenthau*, augmented edition, with a Bernard Johnson interview with Morgenthau (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Books, 1984), 382.
6. Morgenthau, "Explaining the Failures," 21.
7. Morgenthau, "Explaining the Failures," 21.
8. See *Reporting Vietnam, Part Two: American Journalism, 1969–1975* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 792–93.
9. Hans J. Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (New York, Washington & London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 138–39.
10. Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy*, 138.
11. Morgenthau, "What Price Victory," *The New Republic*, 20 February 1971, 21, 23.
12. Morgenthau, "Mr. Nixon's Gamble," *The New Republic*, 23 May 1970, 16.

13. Nixon statements on Vietnam from 1954 to 1968 as recorded in the *New York Times* were compiled by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and made part of the public record. The Committee was apparently motivated to do this because Nixon had commented on April 7 and April 16, 1971 that he had inherited the war whereas Nixon's public statements over the years strongly indicate that he had always favored the war. The catalog of Nixon's statements is on 295–299 when the Fulbright committee explored "Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia." The date when the catalog was included in the record of the hearings appears to have taken place on 21 April 1971. According to the transcript, Hearings before Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States Senate, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., *Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia*, April 20, 21, 22 and 28, May 3, 11, 12, 13, 25, 26 and 27, 1971 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 295–299. Thus, on 17–18 April 1954, Nixon advocates US troops be sent to Vietnam to replace defeated French troops; 18 March 1955, Nixon warns US will meet any new Chinese aggression with atomic weapons; 16 February 1962, Nixon backs Kennedy's aggressive policies in Vietnam; 2 April 1964, Nixon criticizes past compromises in Vietnam and hails McNamara's hawkish stand on Vietnam; 11–12 February 1965, Nixon wants day and night bombing raids against North Vietnam; admits that the "average" American favors disengagement, but Nixon urges continued attacks on North Vietnam; 7 May 1966, Nixon urges Democratic opponents of the war to halt their criticism, and again, Nixon calls for stepped up bombing in North Vietnam; 13 September 1967, Nixon says the U.S. is in Vietnam because America's vital interests are at stake; and 30 June 1968, Nixon says there is no alternative to continuing the war which must end in US victory.

14. Remarks at Chamber of Commerce Breakfast, 22 November 1963, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963*, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), 889 (hereafter, GPO).

15. Memo, Rusk to Kennedy, 23 August 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961–1963*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam 1962* (Washington DC: GPO, 1988–1991, 1994), 609 (hereafter, *FRUS*).

16. Memo, Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff, 24 August 1962, *FRUS 1961–1963*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam 1962*, 610–11.

17. Draft memo of a conversation at the White House, 1 May 1962, *FRUS 1961–1963*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam 1962*, 367.

18. Memo, "Defoliant Operations in Vietnam," 2 January 1962, *FRUS 1961–1963*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam 1962*, 1–2.

19. Memo of Conversation, 29 April 1961, *FRUS 1961–1963*, Vol. 24, *Laos Crisis*, 151. Participants included Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Attorney General Kennedy, National Security Adviser Bundy, Generals Decher, LeMay and Shoup, Admiral Burke and several assistant and deputy secretaries. McNamara quoting Eisenhower, 42.

20. McNamara telephone conversation with President Johnson, 28 June 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 459.

21. Meeting, Cabinet Room of the White House, the President and his top foreign policy advisors, 21 July 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. 3, *Vietnam June-December 1965*, 190–196, two months after the 15 hour National Teach-In held in Washington. Rusk's indifference to "massive casualties" was preceded by his remark: "If the Communist world finds out we will not pursue our commitment to the end, I don't know when they will stay their hand"; he adds, "I don't believe the VC [Vietcong] have made large advances among the VN people." This was followed by Ambassador Lodge's contribution: "There is a greater threat to World War III if we don't go in. Similarity [sic] to our indolence at Munich." Ball warned that we may "get bogged down and don't win." Bundy didn't agree: "I think it is clear", he said, "that we are not going to be thrown out." The unreality of these and other remarks at similar meetings tend to bear out Morgenthau's comment in his debate with Bundy a month earlier on 21 June 1965, that the President and his advisors live in a quasi factual world far different from the world inhabited by the critics of the war.

22. Bundy memo to President Johnson, 6 March 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam Jan-June 1965*, 402–403.

23. National Security Council Meeting, Summary Notes, 17 June 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 443–44.

24. "Indexed Trove of Kissinger Phone Transcript is Completed," *New York Times*, 24 December 2008, A14.

25. William Safire, "What Went Wrong," *New York Times*, 24 April 1975, 30.

26. Scott Allen, "Vietnam-Era Aides Cite the Lessons of a U.S. Defeat," *Boston Globe*, 12 March 2006, B5.

27. Memo, Rowan to Alexis Johnson, 15 February 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam 1962*, 129, 131.

28. Notes from President Johnson's meeting with the National Security Council, 22 June 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 449.

29. Mansfield to President Johnson, 13 October 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 724–725.

30. "The Big Split Among Reds-Its Meaning," *US News and World Report*, 22 January 1962, 43–46. Also noted as early as 4 October 1956, "The Widening Chinks in the Iron Curtain," *The Reporter*, 11; and Morgenthau, a symposium participant commented on the new polycentrism in *The New Leader*, 19 March 1962, 5–6, and again, in "Realities of Containment," *The New Leader*, 8 June 1964, 3–6.

31. Remarks in Montana, 26 September 1963, Kennedy, *Public Papers, 1963*, 727–28; also in Address before American Society of Newspaper Editors, 20 April 1961, Kennedy, *Public Papers 1961*, 305–306.

32. Statement by the President, "Tragedy, Disappointment, and Progress in Vietnam," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon Johnson, 1965*, Vol. 2, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1966), 428.

33. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard M. Nixon, 1969* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971), 1026.

34. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush, 2005*, Vol. 1, *January 1 to June 30, 2005* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2007), 66.
35. Morgenthau, "Seven Principles of Foreign Policy," in *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (New York, Washington, London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 241–44; Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 113–14, 14–15, 33, 38.
36. The key words of the Morgenthau vocabulary on empirical reality, observable facts, *et.al* are found in Morgenthau, *Truth and Power, Essays of a Decade 1960–1970* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 245, 246, 281, 358, 360, 374, 389, 391, 417.
37. Morgenthau, *Truth and Tragedy*, 382. Interview with Bernard Johnson.
38. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (1949; 4th edition, revised and reset, New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1967), 3.
39. Morgenthau, *Politics*, 3–4.
40. Morgenthau, *Politics*, 10–11.
41. Morgenthau, *Politics*, 543n, 543, 545–46.
42. Morgenthau, "Another 'Great Debate': The National Interest of the U.S." in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4, December 1952, 977.
43. Preface to 3rd edition in Morgenthau, *Politics*, is included in the 4th edition, ix–x where Morgenthau points out that his book is indeed all about "moral problems."
44. Morgenthau, *Politics*, 8–9, 25, 29, 30–31.
45. Leslie H Gelb, *Power Rules* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), ix, who addresses his book as a "Letter To Our Elected Prince."
46. Gelb, *Power*, xiii–xvii, 5, 73–77.
47. Gelb, *Power*, xvi, 5–6.
48. Gelb, *Power*, xiii–xiv, 81, 90, 100, 146.
49. See George Eckstein, "Hans Morgenthau: A Personal Memoir," in *Social Research*, Winter 1981, 643–644; Kenneth W. Thompson, "50 Years of *Politics Among Nations*: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau," Proceedings from a Roundtable Discussion, International Studies Association Annual Meeting, 18–22 March 1998, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 63–64.
50. Morgenthau, "Fragment of an Intellectual Autobiography: 1904–1932," in *Truth and Tragedy*, 2–3.
51. Morgenthau, "Fragment," 3.
52. Morgenthau, "Fragment," 3–4.
53. "No? Yes? Maybe!" *Newsweek*, 14 January 1963, 48.
54. Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy*, 155.
55. Editorial, "Wanted: An Inquiry Into the War," *The New Republic*, 22 May, 1971, 5–7.
56. TRB, "Ten Years After," *The New Republic*, unpaginated.
57. Morgenthau, "Power & Powerlessness, Decline of Democratic Government," *The New Republic*, 9 November 1974, 15–16.
58. Morgenthau, "Truth and Power," in *Truth and Power, Essays of a Decade*, 26.

Chapter 1

Background To A Needless War

“I don’t oppose all wars. What I am opposed to is a dumb war.”¹

On May 6, 1970, following Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia on April 30, Hans J. Morgenthau, at a conference on Vietnam at the University of Chicago, poked fun at the plethora of laughable absurdities coming from Washington as explanations for the invasion. As Morgenthau pointed out, he was not trying to be funny and it was not that Nixon or Vice President Agnew or Defense Secretary Laird wanted to be funny either. Yet, Morgenthau asked, is there not “a very close relationship between the tragedy of which we are the victims and the sorry comedy that is played in Washington?” For while Nixon said the entire enterprise of invading Cambodia was to find the Vietcong headquarters and wipe them out, it was Secretary Laird who said the headquarters could not be found because they are ambulatory, which means, Morgenthau noted, that the Vietcong “don’t sleep every night in the same place. They move around.” Morgenthau then quipped that if he “were a member of the headquarters of the Vietcong in Cambodia,” he “also would certainly move around.” Meanwhile, Vice President Agnew on “Face the Nation” said that while United States forces had not found the Vietcong headquarters, they had found “freshly laundered uniforms,” which, Morgenthau caustically noted, had replaced the body count as a new standard to judge the attrition rate. To top it off, Morgenthau cited Bob Hope who said on television the previous Monday that if Cambodia goes to the Communists, India will be next and, in Hope’s words, “before you know it, we are going to fight on Staten Island.” Morgenthau then added, mockingly, “You can see where I get my information; in desperation I turn on the television set.”²

In the closing paragraphs of his opening statement, Morgenthau asks: “why are we suddenly in such a mess? Why is it that we cannot win the war and cannot liquidate it?” The problem, Morgenthau said, “is not in Vietnam

but in Washington.” In his televised speech on April 30 defending his invasion of Cambodia, Nixon said “we will not be humiliated,” “we will not be defeated,” we will not lose the war. So he sends American forces across the border from South Vietnam to Cambodia because, in Nixon’s words, “If when the chips are down, the world’s most powerful nation—the USA—acts like a pitiful helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.”³ This is ideological blather. The invasion cannot prevent the humiliation that Nixon fears. As Morgenthau points out, “We are being humiliated every day as long as this war continues. We are humiliated in the eyes of the world. What is worse and graver is that we humiliate ourselves in our own eyes because we betray the moral principles, the ideals on which this country was founded . . .” As for Nixon’s sanctuaries in Cambodia, Morgenthau called this “demagoguery or at best ideology” that “has nothing to do with the facts.”⁴ This, sadly, is the story of America’s war in Vietnam beginning with Kennedy and the formation of South Vietnam’s chief lobby in the United States.

There is a surreal quality about the American experience in Vietnam beginning with the celebration of South Vietnam as a democracy at the first conference of the newly formed American Friends of Vietnam (AFV) in New York on June 1, 1956. Six months earlier, on January 11, 1956, the government of South Vietnam decreed by Presidential Order No. 6 that “by [the] decision of the President of the Republic upon [the] proposal by the Minister of Interior . . . all persons considered as dangerous to national defense or collective security . . . may be sent to concentration camps” or “obliged to reside under police supervision in a fixed place.” As the AFV gathered in celebration, South Vietnam was already a police state engaged in arbitrary arrests, the daily shooting of dissidents, summary trials in the villages with death sentences executed on the spot and the complete absence of a free press. The national army, the civil guard or the national police and the Sixth Bureau, a secret military police, were formed to enforce Order No. 6. A propaganda and political front called the Movement for National Revolution had “cells in every national ministry and every provincial government” and soon were “to be extended to every town and village.” Pictures, paintings and sketches of President Diem “hang in every public office” and “from the entrances of every public building” and also “adorn” the “walls of peasant huts throughout Vietnam.”⁵ The entire structure of the South Vietnamese government evident to all who were objectively honest could readily acknowledge the totalitarian nature of the dictatorship that discouraged any form of opposition to the Diem regime.

Yet the facts did not deter Freedom House director and AFV founder, Leo Cherne, from proclaiming at the conference, that South Vietnam was “a new nation genuinely meeting its peoples’ needs,” that “happily,” the government is “dedicated to the people,” and is constructing “a free and just society.”⁶ Cherne’s declaration is part of the surrealism of America’s military involvement in Vietnam. For over twenty years, until the war’s end and the AFV closed its offices, Cherne never wavered, never admitted he was wrong in his support for South Vietnam and in America’s war to preserve its independence. Cherne, a lawyer, economist and businessman, was also Chairman of the International Rescue Committee, the largest agency in the world for the relief and settlement of refugees. As director of Freedom House, he headed an agency dedicated to the protection of human rights, which he used also as a base to promote the American military involvement in Vietnam.

As a prominent official of the AFV, Cherne debated and wrote articles and participated in AFV strategy sessions to win public support for South Vietnam. At a Freedom House dinner in February 1966, he was honored by Lyndon Johnson for his vigorous defense of the government’s policies. In 1984, Cherne was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Ronald Reagan, the highest honor awarded to a civilian. In the words of the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, he was “for forty years [one] of the best kept secrets of American foreign policy”⁷ though Moynihan never spelled out what Cherne contributed in the way of foreign policy. But the real secret of Cherne’s activities for two decades revolved around his unconditional and unrelenting support for South Vietnam based only, as he admits, on sentiment and idealism.

Thus, on February 13, 1967, in one of four *New Leader* exchanges with Morgenthau, Cherne writes that he belongs to “the Freedom House school of foreign policy,” which, he says, is based on “more sentimental” and “more idealistic” motives than Morgenthau’s “realism.” The debate began when Morgenthau took issue with a Freedom House advertisement in *The New York Times* on November 30, 1966 covering seven full columns of page that proclaimed in boldface: “Leaders Warn That Extremists Could Delay Vietnam Negotiations,” a refrain used again and again throughout the war particularly by government spokesmen. The advertisement called on the “responsible critics” to refrain from criticism; that it is the criticism that will delay negotiations; that divisions within the nation will weaken resolve to continue the war. Morgenthau demolished the entire charge. He said the advertisement was an attempt “to shift responsibility for the continuation of the war to the critics of the administration” and that “there was nothing for the critics to be ashamed of.” It was the critics, Morgenthau argued, who are more “faithful to the ethos and traditions of America and more likely to promote its interests.”⁸

Cherne's bizarre confession that sentiment and idealism are the guiding principles of his foreign policy is contained in Cherne's *New Leader* rejoinder to Morgenthau. It betrays an ignorance of geopolitics and history that leads Cherne to declare that power, "balance of power," "spheres of influence," "the geography of power," have all played "so important a role in the monumental catastrophes" the world "has suffered" in this century. The charge is hollow. It reflects Cherne's admission in the same article that he has no use for the study of what he calls the "ancient suzerainty" of a nation or the history or geography of a people. For Cherne, the answer is black and white simple: it is a matter of opposing the "aggressors" who seek "the infringement of liberty" in Vietnam or indeed, wherever Cherne sees liberty infringed.⁹

Cherne, the consummate ideologue, never wavered in his vigorous support for the war from 1961 to 1975, which curiously never made it to the three-column obituary in *The New York Times* on January 14, 1999. Indeed, there is nothing in the obituary that even hints at Cherne's support for the war; it reads as if Cherne never had anything to do with the organization that served as the foremost propaganda vehicle for continuing the American war in Vietnam. But while he lived, he and his AFV colleagues and their followers contributed greatly to the national hysteria of mindless anti-Communism that Cherne helped to initiate in a March 4, 1947 *Look* magazine article titled "How to Spot a Communist." Here, Cherne delineates nine "identifying classifications" by which to detect Communists in America, which includes anyone reading Communist publications such as the *Daily Worker* or pronouncing favorable judgments on the Soviet Union while being overly critical of non-Communist governments. The most priceless commentary in the article is Cherne's description of the typical Communist conspirator or simply a sympathizer. Cherne writes:

Because the whole Communist apparatus is geared to secrecy, it is not always easy to determine just who is a Communist. But whether he is a Party card-holder or a fellow-traveler, the American Communist is not like other Americans. To the Communist, everything—his country, his job, his family—takes second place to his Party duty. Even his sex life is synchronized with the obligations of The Cause.¹⁰

Indeed, the paragraph just cited and Cherne's admission that sentiment and idealism are the guiding principles of his and the Freedom House support for the war, achieve a level of absurdity that appears difficult to surpass. Yet, surpassed it is by many of the pronouncements written or uttered by those more directly involved in the war that appear limitless such as the battlefield pronouncement by an American army major following the bombing and

shelling of the village of Ben Tre that it is sometimes “necessary to destroy the town [in order] to save it.”¹¹ Or the declaration by John T. McNaughton, a Defense Department official and former Harvard law professor, who quantified American war objectives in percentages: “70 % to avoid a humiliating American defeat; 20 % to keep South Vietnam independent and free from Chinese hands; and 10% to permit the people of South Vietnam to enjoy a better, freer way of life.” Or another statement of percentages by another Defense Department official, William P. Bundy, brother of McGeorge, who estimated “a 70 % chance of success,” of “arresting things” and “giving Diem a chance to clean up” and “a 30 % chance we would end up like the French.” “On a 70 to 30 basis,” Bundy added, “I would myself favor going in.”¹² Or a 1979 book co-authored by the aforementioned Leslie H. Gelb titled *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*, which concedes the failure of the war though the system of decision-making that produced the failure “worked.” Or that the research task force of “thirty-six writers”¹³ in the Defense Department that labored mightily to produce the forty-seven volume study known as the *Pentagon Papers* is essentially a compendium of official errors and misjudgments that demonstrates the same failure.

For Morgenthau, who chronicled the errors and misjudgments of the government from day one, the *Pentagon Papers* published in 1971 tell us nothing that was not already known. And if one reads Morgenthau on Vietnam over the years, it is not surprising that he ridicules the project that he says reflects “the intellectual emptiness of the policy-makers.” For they are the people who caused the mess in the first place and the vast study that catalogs the mess, Morgenthau calls “an endless bureaucratic repetition of certain clichés, certain stereotypes, which pretend to reflect political reality.” What the *Papers* actually reflect, Morgenthau writes, is a “system of superstitions, of figments of the imagination.”¹⁴

And then there is the example of the Pentagon chief, Robert S. McNamara, who ordered the study, appointed Gelb to direct it and confessed three decades later on C-Span’s “Book Notes,” that he never read the multi-volume study, which, he said, still resides in his basement.¹⁵ There is also McNamara’s peculiar notion expressed in his book, *The Essence of Power—Reflections in Office* published in 1968, the year he left office. On page 109, McNamara writes:

God—the Communist commentators to the contrary—is clearly democratic. He distributes brain power universally, but He quite justifiably expects us to do something efficient and constructive with that priceless gift. That is what management is all about. Its medium is human capacity, and its most fundamental task is to deal with change. It is the gate through which social, political, economic, technological change, indeed change in every dimension is rationally spread through society.¹⁶

Then there is the remark by General Earle Wheeler on a tour of field operations in South Vietnam when about ten officers tell the General that things are going badly while the eleventh says, things “couldn’t be better” and we’re going “to win the war.” Wheeler’s comment was: “I am finally glad to find somebody who knows what he’s talking about.”¹⁷ Or again, Defense Secretary McNamara who, in 1962, said that “Every quantitative measure we have shows we’re winning the war.” Or State Department policy planner, Walt W. Rostow, who, in 1965, said “The Vietcong are going to collapse within weeks. Not months but weeks.” Or Rostow again, in 1967: “It looks very good. The other side is near collapse. In my opinion, victory is very near ... I’ll show you the charts. The charts look very good.” Or General Westmoreland in 1968: “The enemy has been defeated at every turn.”¹⁸ Or how “an entire invasion” was staged for Defense Secretary Laird in March, 1969, by sending him to the South China coast where American forces met no resistance instead of his scheduled visit to Dang Tam that was under serious fire so “the Secretary would have a chance to see how smoothly the war was going.”¹⁹

Several members of the press were also participants in the quasi world of fiction paraded as fact, which contributed to the surreal quality of the war. On the eve of Kennedy’s dispatch of troops and military hardware as recommended by General Maxwell Taylor following his fact-finding mission to South Vietnam, columnist James Reston of *The New York Times* wrote, on October 19, 1961, “Reports ... that the United States is about to plunge into the guerrilla warfare of Southeast Asia ... should be taken with considerable skepticism.... General Taylor is not only a soldier but a philosopher ... he is not likely to favor plunging blithely into a jungle war 7,000 miles from home.” William F. Buckley, Jr., in a *National Review* column of December 20, 1969, wrote, “The enemy ... is reeling from successive disasters The bright side of it ... is that something like an entire generation of North Vietnamese males has been killed during the past seven or eight years We are, in fact ... winning the war.” And *Washington Post* columnist Joseph Alsop, who wrote on February 28, 1968, “As the captured documents continue to pour in, it becomes clearer and clearer that the Tet-period attacks on the cities were a major disaster for Gen. Giap The Hanoi war-planners ... have experienced a grave setback.”²⁰ In fact, the Tet offensive was a calamitous military disaster for the United States and South Vietnam and led to President Johnson’s decision announced to the nation on March 31, 1968, that he would not be a candidate for re-election.

June 1, 1956. Of the twelve speakers at the first conference of the newly formed AFV, there were two who became prominent participants in the unfolding history of America’s military involvement in Southeast Asia. One was a young

Senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy; the other was Hans J. Morgenthau. The speeches of all the participants were later published in a booklet titled *A Symposium on America's Stake in Vietnam*, which was also the title of Senator Kennedy's address. Morgenthau's subject was "The 1954 Geneva Conference: An Assessment." As an early indication of the new organization's wealth and influence, the program listed close to 200 names as sponsors of the conference and a "partial listing" of 94 members that included such notables as: Senator Kennedy, Harvard historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst; several members of Congress including Thomas Dodd, Emanuel Celler, Wayne L. Hays; Governors Christian Herter and J. Bracken Lee; and professors Samuel Eliot Morrison, Stringfellow Barr, and Max Lerner. Though Morgenthau was a principal speaker and "invited to membership," he never became a member. Messages warmly welcoming the inception of the new organization came from President Eisenhower, Secretary of State Dulles, and the President of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem.²¹

The initial proposal for the first AFV conference was approved at an Executive Committee meeting on March 14, 1956 to be held at the National Press Club in Washington to educate "the American public on current Vietnamese situations." The meeting place was later changed and the first official AFV conference was held at the Willard Hotel in Washington. Joseph Buttinger, an Austrian émigré associated with Cherne's International Rescue Committee, and Professor Milton Sacks of Brandeis University, were requested to propose "agendas" for the conference. Current AFV Chairman, Angier Biddle Duke, scion of the tobacco family and former ambassador to Spain and Denmark, was empowered to select a committee to work out the details for the conference.²² Two weeks earlier, on March 1, an ambitious program of activities for the next six months was laid out by the leadership. These included:

the creation of an office in New York charged with the responsibilities of raising funds, increasing membership, developing contacts, informing and advising the press and other public information media, issuing a regular bulletin and special memoranda, maintaining a small library of current literature on the subject of Vietnam, carrying on research, scheduling meetings, and ensuring that the membership of the American Friends of Vietnam is informed and capable of implementing the objectives of the organization.²³

The overarching objective of the organization, repeatedly noted in the newsletters and bulletins mass-mailed to members and prospective members, is the clarion call to halt the spread of Communism, which threatens not only South Vietnam but also the United States. Nowhere is this more ideologically expressed than in the heated letter sent to the AFV membership by Chairman John W. O'Daniel on July 24, 1956 upon his imminent departure

for South Vietnam. This is the classic example of the AFV lobbying mission that the young Senator from Massachusetts endorsed in his speech on June 1, 1956 and that became the foundation for his Vietnam policy almost immediately upon his accession to office on January 20, 1961. For O'Daniel, South Vietnam is "one of the Free World's vital bastions against the spread of Communism" and "a firm ally of the United States." O'Daniel writes:

... I can assure you that the danger Vietnam faces is mortal—not only to Vietnam but to our own country. If we permit Free Vietnam to fall, we will have lost the last dike holding back the flood of Communism from Southeast Asia. We must anticipate that every friend in Asia who today stands firm against Communism will leave us. Their surrender will bring nearer the day when our young men standing alone may have to sacrifice their blood to stem the Red tide.

... I accepted the chairmanship of the American Friends of Vietnam to enlist the help of every American who understands that Communism must be met at the front lines—where the danger is. We must not passively await its coming until, through traditional Communist tactics of subversion and violence, it reaches our own shores.²⁴

O'Daniel's letter ended with an appeal for money, "any gift from \$1 to \$1,000" to assist the Vietnamese "in defense of our common freedoms."²⁵

In June, 1956, Senator John F. Kennedy, age thirty-nine, was campaigning for nomination as the vice presidential candidate on the Democratic ticket. His strategy was to win a majority of the state's forty delegates, turn them over to Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic Presidential nominee in 1952 who was sure to win again his party's nomination and thereby align himself with the winner. Kennedy succeeded. He won endorsements from New England Democrats, made television appearances, paraded himself as a Stevenson liberal and when Kennedy made one of the nominating speeches for Stevenson at the convention, he won instant national recognition. In November 1956, Stevenson again lost to Eisenhower and by early 1957, Kennedy began his campaign to secure his party's nomination for president at the Democratic National Convention in 1960.

From 1957 to 1960, Kennedy spent very little time on the floor of the United States Senate. He traveled the country, made hundreds of speeches, was assisted by his traveling companion and chief strategist, Theodore Sorensen, who also directed a stable of writers and was responsible for Kennedy's name appearing as the author of over three dozen magazine articles and reviews.²⁶ Given the exigencies of travel time and speech making, Kennedy could not have read, prepared or written some thirty-six articles and reviews. In a *New York Times Book Review* interview on July 21, 1957,

Kennedy admitted that his busy schedule “made even most of his reading superficial.”²⁷ It is commonplace for politicians to have their speeches and articles written by members of their staffs, but in Kennedy’s case, three dozen articles and reviews over a three year period is public relations overkill. In November 1960, Kennedy’s three year campaign to win the Presidency succeeded, but not by much. He defeated Vice President Richard Nixon by just 118,000 votes or by less than one per cent of the vote.

On June 1, 1956, as a founding member whose name appeared on the AFV letterhead until his death in 1963, Senator Kennedy took up the cause of South Vietnam. Yet, there is no evidence, that at this time Kennedy was particularly interested in the work of the AFV or its stated objectives, though his speech, titled “America’s Stake in Vietnam,” contained sweeping pronouncements about America’s long range responsibilities to the southern half of a temporarily partitioned Vietnam just two years after that partition had gone into effect based on the Geneva Agreement of 1954. Indeed, here may be found the roots of later Kennedy policy bequeathed almost intact to his successors, Johnson and Nixon.

First, Kennedy alluded to the domino effect. “Vietnam,” Kennedy said, “represents the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone in the arch, the finger in the dike.” Should Vietnam fall, “Burma, Thailand, India, Japan, the Philippines and obviously Laos and Cambodia are among those who would be threatened if the red tide of Communism overflowed into Vietnam.” Moreover, “the independence of Free Vietnam” is “essential to the economy of all Southeast Asia”; “her political liberty is an inspiration to those seeking to obtain or maintain their liberty”; as for the United States, “the fundamental tenets” of American foreign policy “depend in considerable measure upon a strong and free Vietnamese nation.”²⁸

It is noteworthy at this juncture to point out that Kennedy’s reference to the “Free World” in 1956 was not yet the popular cliché it became when Kennedy became President. Thus, the term “Free World” was infrequently used by President Truman but became part of President Eisenhower’s vocabulary who used it ten times in his 1955 State of the Union address and five times in his 1956 address. Kennedy’s speechwriters dressed up the term by using such phrases as “the free peoples of the world,” “the free states of the hemisphere,” “the world of free choice,” and in his 1963 State of the Union speech, Kennedy surpassed Eisenhower by using the term twelve times.²⁹ Johnson and Nixon also referred regularly to the “Free World” and the point of reference for all three of America’s Vietnam Presidents, were to those non-Communist nations many of which were quite unfree, South Vietnam included, because their jails were filled with political dissidents. But as long as they were non-Communists, they came under the rubric of

free nations, which suggests how political clichés derive from the careless use of language and creep into the everyday political vocabulary of America's national leadership and then into the language of the American public. Thus, there is no factual basis for the term, "Free World" used four times in Kennedy's AFV speech, or "Free Vietnam," used three times, plus his reference to Vietnam as "free and independent," a new Republic recognized by over "forty nations of the free world."

Secondly, Kennedy continued, Vietnam is "a proving ground of democracy," which represents "the alternative to Communist dictatorship" and "the rising prestige and influence of Communist China." The United States, Kennedy said, is "directly responsible for this experiment [in democracy]" and "is playing a role in the laboratory where it is being conducted. We cannot afford to permit this experiment to fail."³⁰

Kennedy's third and fourth points are as follows:

... and in somewhat similar fashion, Vietnam represents a test of American responsibilities and determination in Asia. If we are not the parents of little Vietnam, then surely we are the godparents. We presided at its birth, we gave assistance to its life, we have helped to shape its future... . This is our offspring—we cannot abandon it, we cannot ignore its needs. And if it falls victim to any of the perils that threaten its existence—Communism, political anarchy, poverty and the rest—then the United States, with some justification, will be held responsible; and our prestige in Asia will sink to a new low. Fourth and finally, America's stake in Vietnam, in her strength and in her security, is a very selfish one—for it can be measured, in the last analysis, in terms of American lives and American dollars... . And the key position of Vietnam in Southeast Asia, as already discussed, makes inevitable the involvement of this nation's security in any new outbreak of trouble.³¹

Kennedy concluded by noting the assistance that the United States must render if South Vietnam is to survive. "We must supply capital," Kennedy said, and "technicians" and "guidance" as well as "military assistance to rebuild the new Vietnamese Army." The United States must also, he said, "never give its approval to the early nationwide elections called for by the Geneva Agreement of 1954" for that election would be "stacked and subverted in advance."³² Kennedy and probably everyone in attendance must have known that Diem came to power in a rigged election with CIA money and CIA subterfuge directed by CIA operative, Colonel (later General) Edward Lansdale, and that the earliest members of the AFV were those who had befriended Diem when he took up residence in the United States as a political exile and who were greatly responsible for his rise to power.

There are several pieces to the story of Diem's ascendancy as President of the New Republic of Vietnam in 1955 and the tandem ascendancy of the

AFV, which also had its inception the same year. The first detailed accounts of the genesis of these developments are found in two studies: the first is “The ‘Vietnam Lobby’” in *Ramparts* magazine in July, 1965 written by *Ramparts*’ editors, Robert Scheer and Warren Hinckle. *Ramparts*, founded in 1962 as a Roman Catholic lay magazine, soon became an “iconoclastic,” “muck-raking” organ of liberal views and, in 1967, claimed a circulation of some 200,000.³³ By 1974, *Ramparts* was no longer in business. The second detailed account is a pamphlet-size “Report to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions” written by Scheer and titled “How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam.” Published also in July, 1965, the content is virtually the same as that found in the *Ramparts*’ article.

The story begins when Diem, age forty-nine, a devout Roman Catholic, a militant anti-Communist and a former provincial governor in the French civil service—Vietnam had been a French colony since 1802—met political science professor, Wesley Fishel, age thirty-one, in 1950 in a Tokyo tea room. They soon became fast friends. Fishel was a graduate of Northwestern University, held a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago where he studied with Morgenthau, and moved to Michigan State University in 1951. As a specialist in Far Eastern affairs and as a consultant and adviser to governmental organizations, Fishel spent considerable time in Korea, Vietnam, Burma and Japan. When Fishel returned home, he began an extensive correspondence with Diem and, in early 1951, Fishel persuaded Diem to come to the United States and arranged for Michigan State University to sponsor Diem’s stay and participate in MSU’s Southeast Asia Studies Program. Fishel also arranged the appointment of Diem as a consultant to Michigan State’s Governmental Research Bureau.³⁴

Diem eventually left Michigan and took up residence at Maryknoll seminaries in Lakewood, New Jersey and in Ossining, New York, the territory governed spiritually by the Bishop of New York, Francis Cardinal Spellman. Spellman, like Diem, was a militant anti-Communist. It is not known exactly how Diem first came to the Cardinal’s attention though it might have been through the intervention of Diem’s brother, the Bishop of Saigon who accompanied Diem to the United States. While at Lakewood, we are told by Father Albert J. Nevins of Maryknoll, that Diem made several trips to Washington apparently seeking to return to his country in some official capacity but was unsuccessful.³⁵

Eventually, Diem came to the attention of Secretary of State Dulles when Pennsylvania Senator, James H. Duff, told Dulles on October 3, 1953, that one of his constituents, the Reverend Thomas A. O’Melia of the Lakewood seminary in New Jersey, wanted to introduce Diem to Dulles. Diem, Father O’Melia said, had information about the situation in Southeast Asia, which Dulles might find useful.³⁶ After Diem met Spellman, he then met Supreme

Court Justice William O. Douglas, who had just returned from a trip to Vietnam. Douglas then introduced Diem to Senators Mike Mansfield and John F. Kennedy all of whom were favorably impressed and all of whom signed on as early members of the AFV. In May, 1954, after the fall of the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu, Diem took up residence in a Belgian monastery³⁷ just prior to his departure to attend the Geneva Conference.

In July, 1954, Diem became Prime Minister of South Vietnam appointed by the nominal head of state, the Emperor Bao Dai, who ruled under French authority from the time the Japanese were driven out of Southeast Asia in 1945, until 1955. Bao Dai had ascended the throne in 1932, had cooperated with the Japanese during the occupation, had abdicated in 1945, and returned to rule in 1955, sometimes from his palatial residence in Cannes, sometimes in Saigon. As Prime Minister, Diem arranged for the American government to send Fishel to Saigon as an adviser to himself and to the American Ambassador. Fishel arrived in Saigon in August, 1954 and shortly thereafter, Diem asked Michigan State University to assist South Vietnam in the development of his government. Michigan State's Center for International Programs with over 200 faculty members served "educational projects" in thirteen countries including Turkey, Brazil and Taiwan. The "Vietnam Project," as it was later dubbed, would be the largest foreign service project of any university in America.³⁸

By September 1954, four Michigan State officials known as "the inspection team" arrived in Saigon. According to Scheer and Hinckle in their *Ramparts* article, "none of these men had any experience in academic or technical assistance roles overseas, nor did they have any expertise in Far Eastern affairs." The authors tell us the four officials read "newspaper clippings" on the plane ride to become somewhat informed. Their report, however, recommended "a massive technical assistance program" that was eventually approved by Washington and thus, the work of the Michigan State Advisory Group in helping Diem with budgetary and administrative matters as well as training his police force was launched. Fishel's new title was Chief of Mission of the MSU Group while he remained Diem's adviser and lived in the Presidential Palace. As for Diem, on October 23, 1955, as his forces were still fighting armed rebels, he won a rigged election, as noted above, with the help of CIA operative, Colonel Lansdale. On March 4, 1956, he deposed Bao Dai as head of state and proclaimed himself President of the New Republic of Vietnam.³⁹

Meanwhile, back in New York, a short, two paragraph report on p. 3 of *The New York Times* on December 2, 1955 noted that "U.S. Backers Form Group." The AFV had arrived. "The Formation of the American Friends of Vietnam was announced" on June 1, *The Times* noted, and its purpose was "'to enlighten American public opinion' on United States interests in the

survival of South Vietnam as ‘a bulwark of freedom in Southeast Asia.’” The report included only two names: the honorary chairman of the group, William J. Donovan, the former Ambassador to Thailand; and Angier Biddle Duke, the recent Ambassador to San Salvador, the chairman of the executive committee. The *Times* included the location of its headquarters on 420 Lexington Avenue in New York City but nothing more.

As Scheer and Hinckle tell the story, it is a winter afternoon in 1955 when Cardinal Spellman in the Archdiocese office picks up the telephone and says to the Chancery operator, “Get me Joe Kennedy.” This follows Buttinger’s interview with Spellman—Buttinger had just returned from Vietnam—and Buttinger’s personal account of his observations as he tells Spellman that Diem and South Vietnam are in danger and that their survival is doubtful. That Buttinger is the source of the telephone call story is emphasized when the authors tell us that “the report of this extraordinary conversation comes from Joseph Buttinger ... who was sitting in Spellman’s office” when he made the call. Scheer and Hinckle continue: “Buttinger had just returned from Saigon and he brought bad news.” He tells Scheer and Hinckle that “he had several five and six hour conversations with Diem” during his three month stay that convinced him that “Diem was the only hope” for Vietnam and that Diem “could not survive without increased United States support.” Scheer and Hinckle conclude that Buttinger had a “mission,” which was “to settle for nothing less than a total commitment to Diem by the United States.” Thus, Buttinger convinced Spellman that Diem had to be helped. Spellman in turn convinced Joseph P. Kennedy and the public relations campaign began.⁴⁰

The *Ramparts*’ piece then goes on to record that Joe Kennedy arranged for Buttinger to meet with Senators Mansfield and “some key State Department personnel in Washington.” John Kennedy was in California so Buttinger “had a long conversation” with Sorensen. The authors then note that “Spellman (but more likely, Joe Kennedy) took care of the press. He set up meetings for Buttinger with editors of *The New York Times*, the editorial board of *The Herald Tribune*, and key editors of both *Time* and *Life*.” There followed a *New York Times*’ editorial endorsing Buttinger’s endorsement of Diem. *The Reporter* magazine printed a Buttinger article “praising Diem as democracy’s ‘alternative’ in Southeast Asia.” The authors note also that CIA operative Lansdale recommended Diem to CIA Director Allen Dulles, who talked to his brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who then brought Diem to the attention of President Eisenhower.⁴¹ Almost a decade later, just two months after Diem’s assassination in early November 1963 and when it became readily apparent that the United States had chosen its client government unwisely, *Look* magazine, on January 28, 1964, quipped: “John Foster Dulles picked him, Senator Mike Mansfield endorsed him, Cardinal

Spellman praised him, Vice President Nixon liked him, and President Eisenhower OK'd him."

Two years after Scheer and Hinckle published their expose, the nationally syndicated columnist Drew Pearson, in *The Washington Post* on January 5, 1967, confirmed their story. Pearson outlined the "six major stages" by which the United States became involved in Vietnam all of which point to Cardinal Spellman as the person chiefly responsible for Diem and the inception of the AFV. Pearson repeats the story of Diem's exile and friendship with Fishel but emphasizes the relationship between Spellman, Joe Kennedy and John F. Kennedy particularly on the question of Communism. Pearson emphasizes the Cardinal's militant anti-Communism in which Spellman made a speech on Vietnam that called for "total victory" and referred to American troops in Vietnam as "soldiers of Christ." According to Pearson, Senator Kennedy made a speech "warning against a negotiated peace in Vietnam," which, Pearson writes, contained the same warning the Cardinal issued months earlier. And then Pearson goes into the close relationship between Spellman and Joe Kennedy who, Pearson writes, "had worked together in backing the late Senator McCarthy" while Joe Kennedy was also "a heavy contributor to Spellman's charities." In addition, though not included in the Pearson column, Joe Kennedy contributed financially to McCarthy's political campaigns, McCarthy was a friend of the family, a participant in the Kennedy soft ball games at Hyannis, and the god father of Robert F. Kennedy's first child.⁴² Robert F. Kennedy also served as legal counsel to McCarthy's subcommittee investigating Communists in government. The next step was to finance the Harold Oram public relations firm "at a fee of \$3,000 a month to build up Diem as the man who could save Vietnam."⁴³ \$3,000 a month amounts to \$36,000 a year. There is no paper trail and thus no direct linkage, but the circumstances described in both the *Ramparts'* article and the Pearson column strongly suggest that the founding of the AFV is the brainchild of Francis Cardinal Spellman funded initially by the moneyed largess of Joseph P. Kennedy and inspired by the ideological zeal of Joseph Buttinger.

Meanwhile, in Saigon, as Diem is attempting to establish his control, and as the "crisis in Saigon" has exacerbated, Buttinger publishes "Are We Saving South Vietnam?" on June 27, 1955 in *The New Leader* magazine. Here, Buttinger concedes that certain "Catholic circles in America desired Diem's appointment" but he cannot accept the French accusation that "Cardinal Spellman is the architect of American policy in Vietnam." In his syndicated column cited above, Pearson writes: "In cooperation with the Catholic Relief Agency, Spellman helped organize the 'American Friends of Vietnam' to promote Diem and American aid for Vietnam." On January 6, 1955, six months before Buttinger's piece appeared in *The New Leader*, Spellman

arrived in Saigon and produced “a check for \$100,000 to help the refugees who fled from Communist rule in the North.”⁴⁴

It is not surprising that years later, following the *Ramparts*’ article and the Pearson column, no one among the hierarchy of AFV officialdom and three of its prominent members when asked formally, ever admitted that Spellman and Joe Kennedy were involved in the organization’s beginning. Thus, Hugh O’ Neill, AFV Executive Director in 1968 in a series of letters, responds that “Neither Cardinal Spellman nor Ambassador Kennedy has ever been associated with the organization.”⁴⁵ And Cherne, who was there at the beginning, which makes it impossible for him to deny the contributions of Spellman, writes that he never met Spellman and says nothing about Joe Kennedy.⁴⁶ Then, there is Arthur Schlesinger, an AFV member, admittedly “inactive,” who replies that he is not aware of “any particular interest in American Friends of Vietnam on the part of Cardinal Spellman and Ambassador Kennedy.” As to why he joined the AFV, Schlesinger says it was Joseph Buttinger who convinced him to become a member.⁴⁷ Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, who, early on, had resigned his AFV membership, was simply unsure how the organization was formed and knew nothing of Spellman and Kennedy.⁴⁸

And while the names of Cardinal Spellman and Joe Kennedy are not listed among the approximately 100 persons noted as “National Committee” members on AFV letterhead stationary, they are referred to by name in Cherne’s authorized biography as indeed, members of the National Committee. These names represent the early contributors and thus those who signed on when the AFV was originally formed. Ten pages later, Cherne’s biographer writes that “Cherne loved to point out that the national committee had never met,” that “he had little face-to-face contact with several of the members” and that he had “met Cardinal Spellman only once in passing.”⁴⁹ Here, ten pages after Joe Kennedy is named as a member of the National Committee, there is no mention of Kennedy either as a member or as a founder of the organization. The founders, or those who “formed” the organization were, according to the biographer, “Cherne, Buttinger and Oram.” Angier Biddle Duke, not included as a founder, then sent out the “solicitations” to join. Among the most “prominent” to join was Professor Wesley Fishel.⁵⁰

In the fall of 1955, Hans Morgenthau was planning a trip to Japan, Formosa, Korea, Manila and Saigon. In October, he had contacted his former student, Wesley Fishel, then residing in Saigon as adviser to the President of South Vietnam and head of the MSU Advisory group. On October 7, Fishel wrote Morgenthau and provided him with the names of references in Korea, hotel reservations in Saigon, the use of Michigan State offices in Saigon as a

working headquarters, the names and addresses of persons he might find it profitable to see, and suggested that Morgenthau extend his stay since the “first Vietnamese National Assembly” will hold its first session when he will be there. Three days later, on October 10, Morgenthau responded gratefully, noted that he would extend his stay and asked Fishel if “there is a chance to get an interview with Mr. Diem?” President Diem, through Fishel’s auspices, granted the interview and the result was a Morgenthau article in *The Washington Post* on February 26, 1956 and titled “Vietnam Chief a Multi-Paradox.”⁵¹

Thus, in December 1955, as Spellman talked to Kennedy as Buttinger looked on, as the *Times* noted the formation of the AFV on December 2, 1955 and as Fishel joined and became a member of the Executive Committee, Morgenthau, in late December 1955, had a long talk with Diem. His report of the interview and what he saw in his guided tour with a member of the MSU Advisory Group⁵² is the first of Morgenthau’s public observations on Vietnam. The second is his speech six months later on June 1, 1956 at the first conference of the AFV.

Morgenthau began his *Washington Post* article by noting that Diem is “a most unusual statesman” with “extraordinary qualities” though marred by unmistakable “contradictions.” A year ago, Morgenthau points out, he was “hardly more than a name pulled out of a hat by some desperate American officials,” but who “possesses today an independent basis of power.” He is “a practicing Catholic” who, “in a lengthy discussion of his political philosophy mentions Christianity only once in passing” but emphasizes “the Confucian foundation of his political thinking and his regime.” He “is a man of genuine moral fervor” that “is beyond question, yet who acts with a craftiness and ruthlessness worthy of an Oriental despot.” He “lives by his opposition to Communism, but who is building, down to small details, a replica of the totalitarian regime [in North Vietnam] which he opposes.”⁵³

The “contradictions,” Morgenthau writes, “are accentuated by the personal impressions” Diem makes. His “physical appearance” betray “the impact of heroic leadership,” which the pictures and posters of him “try to convey.” He has “expressive” and “penetrating” eyes, but looks at his interviewer only for “short intervals.” When speaking, he looks away from the person and gazes elsewhere. His responses have only a very “tenuous connection” with the question asked. And when the interviewer poses a “concrete practical issue of politics,” Diem will “inevitably launch into a discourse on moral philosophy” in “long, passionate monologues.” Yet, Morgenthau writes, “the lofty impracticality is belied” by his “concrete achievement.” He has established his power, removed Bao Dai, made himself President, defeated much of the “gangster element” and the “independent power of the religious sects and

of the Communists.” “But he has done so,” Morgenthau writes, “entirely by totalitarian means.” There is no freedom of the press, executions of rebels or Communists are carried out summarily and “nobody knows how many people are shot by the armed forces and under what circumstances.” And then there is “the intricate and elaborate system of propaganda and control” that “has just been instituted in the villages.”⁵⁴

This, as noted on the first page of this chapter, is the result of Presidential Order No. 6 decreeing concentration camps for dissidents and “cells” in every town and village and throughout the entire peasant structure of Vietnamese society. Morgenthau reports that he had seen “the organization charts” of “the cell system” in which “the lowest unit is composed of the representatives of five families” and each of “the five houses” is responsible for providing reports on the performance of specific duties from tax collection to education to the next highest unit. “If it works,” Morgenthau writes, “hardly anything a Vietnamese peasant does will remain unobserved, uncontrolled and unreported.”⁵⁵ Indeed, this is the harbinger of what later became a rebellion against Diem by South Vietnamese dissidents who later became the guerrilla forces known as Vietcong against whom both the United States and the South Vietnamese Army fought beginning in the early years of the Kennedy Presidency.

Morgenthau’s second in a series of early observations may be found in his address to the first AFV Conference on June 1, 1956. He spoke in the afternoon session and began by responding to an earlier address by Buttinger who told the assembled that the Geneva Agreement, “as a valid legal document . . . does not exist.” The Agreement, Buttinger said, is “an object of international controversy” because the provision to hold elections to determine who governs Vietnam was never enforced. Moreover, South Vietnam was not a signatory to the Agreement and was not required to agree on the time and terms of the elections. Buttinger does not disclose the fact that it was Diem who decided that he would not sign the Agreement and thus obligate his country to elections two years later. In his address, Morgenthau rejected Buttinger’s contention and said that the document was not only legally valid, but was also “an extraordinary diplomatic event” with “very few parallels in the history of diplomatic negotiations.”⁵⁶

Buttinger, it must be emphasized, was not a disinterested observer. He was, as we have seen, instrumental in persuading Cardinal Spellman to support Diem. Thus, Buttinger, ignoring Diem’s rigged election in March, 1956, could tell the assembled that free elections in the Western sense could not be held given the untrustworthiness of the North Vietnamese. For Buttinger, either the North had to be disarmed or destroyed—in Buttinger’s words, unless “there is the destruction of the Communist regime in the North”—elections would

be meaningless. For Buttinger, it is Ho Chi Minh who cannot be trusted and with whom there can be no compromise or understanding. Diem, however, in Buttinger's words, commands "astonishment, respect, and admiration in the United States." And should Ho Chi Minh decide to invade South Vietnam, Buttinger is convinced that Diem's army "can hold them off." He adds, with a bit of true believer bravado, that Ho Chi Minh "will think twice before he resorts to war." Buttinger is also not embarrassed by his hyperbole when he tells his fellow AFV enthusiasts that he is "not trying to play a game of words or to present an argument that rests on irrelevant technicalities."⁵⁷ But this is what he has done.

Of all the AFV officials in the years following Diem's rise to power when Buttinger in 1956 is Vice Chairman and in 1957 and 1958, Executive Committee Chairman, there is no one in the AFV hierarchy who surpasses Buttinger in his zeal to promote Diem and South Vietnam. Thus, to take one example, on November 3, 1958, Buttinger writes a four-page, single-spaced memo to his executive committee colleagues the details of which dealt with the operational costs and revenues to fund the various activities of the organization. The memo urges an expansion of programs and activities whether the budget exceeds a hypothetical \$200,000 or \$50,000 in order "to attract new people and funds." Having been denied tax-deductibility status by the Treasury Department, the question Buttinger raises was whether to expand the AFV educational program so as to better qualify for tax-deduction or proceed any way it chooses and remain primarily a political organization "in support of the government and people of South Vietnam." Indeed, Buttinger reminds his colleagues at least three times in the memo that whatever its budgetary constraints, the AFV has one central mission: that it "was formed for an essentially political reason—to help save South Vietnam from Communist rule"; that "our motive always was to help in the survival of South Vietnam"; and that it is "to America's interest to support the government and the people of Vietnam in their struggle against Communism."⁵⁸

Then, twenty years later, in 1977, in one of the most remarkably dramatic reversals in the history of the Vietnam War debate, Buttinger had a complete change of mind. In 1977, he published *Vietnam: The Unforgettable Tragedy*. Thus, in the early years, Buttinger is adamant: the war must be fought. In 1977, however, the war is a tragedy and Buttinger wonders why the United States attempted to do in Vietnam what the French were unable to do in their eight year colonial war against the Vietnamese. In 1977, he asks why did the United States "waste billions and kill millions in an attempt to succeed where the French had failed?" In 1977, he wants to know what can be learned from America's "ill-advised involvement in the struggle for Indochina." In 1977, he wants to find out why "many Americans supported" this "inhumane,

politically erroneous and in the last analysis stupid course [which] could be pursued for many years by a country so rich in knowledgeable people, high intelligence and good will.”⁵⁹

Part of the answer, of course, is the propaganda machine known as the American Friends of Vietnam, which, through the work of its educational committee, expended time and money to convince the American public that the war had to be prosecuted. There are just three specific references to the AFV in Buttinger’s thin volume and one, on page 81, is very telling. Here Buttinger criticizes his former comrades he now calls “the long obsolete Friends of Vietnam” as he singles out their “paid advertisement in *The New York Times* on April 21, 1975, which asked for more military aid . . . to enable the South Vietnamese people ‘defend their freedom’” when it is obvious that it is a lost cause. And here, after all these years, Buttinger finally realizes, in his words, that “Perhaps some of these Americans will now learn that even the powerful United States cannot save freedom where it does not exist.”⁶⁰ Thus, after all the AFV talk about preserving the freedom of South Vietnam, Buttinger admits there was never any freedom in South Vietnam to preserve.

And what does Buttinger use as his main source for now disclaiming what he had once stood for and supported as an AFV official? He tells us in the opening pages of his book that it is *The New Republic* of May 3, 1975 from which he has extracted many of the quotes included in his book. In late April, 1975, as the war and the national nightmare of Vietnam came to an end, the edition of *TNR* used by Buttinger is a compendium of explanations by twelve commentators in what *TNR* called an exercise in the “high stakes” of “self-scrutiny” on what went wrong. The edition is titled, as noted on the front cover, “On the Disasters of the Indochina War.” One of the commentators is Morgenthau to whom Buttinger refers as “one of the most effective critics of our Vietnam policy.” Buttinger quotes Morgenthau: “We should never have committed ourselves to Diem or Thieu if we had not first put them into a position as recipients of our commitments.” He quotes him a second time: these regimes, Morgenthau writes, “either owed their very existence or at least their temporary survival to America’s intervention.”⁶¹ Buttinger tells us, however, that Morgenthau wrote these words “after the total failure of our policy had become evident.”⁶² Here, Buttinger errs, either disingenuously or out of ignorance, for Morgenthau made this point about our mistaken commitment to South Vietnam well before, and indeed, throughout the course of the Vietnam War.

In 1977, Buttinger concedes his error. In his address at the June, 1956 conference, Buttinger erred initially by declaring the legal provisions of the Geneva Agreement null and void. It was Morgenthau who rebutted

Buttinger and said the Agreement was not only legally valid, but that Geneva was “an extraordinary diplomatic event” with few parallels in “the history of diplomatic negotiations.” Indeed, what made the Geneva Agreement so extraordinary? And how solid was Morgenthau’s analysis of the Agreement particularly since he was writing about a series of complex geopolitical events that were still in flux two years after the Agreement was signed?

First, the background. The Geneva Conference began on April 26, 1954 to deal both with Korea and the situation in Southeast Asia. An armistice in July, 1953 had ended the fighting in Korea but not the tension between North and South Korea and the probability of future conflict. In Southeast Asia, the French, after eight years of fighting, were unable to defeat the forces of Ho Chi Minh and on May 7, the day before the French surrendered their garrison at Dien Bien Phu, the conference turned to the situation in the three associated states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Two months later, on July 21, 1954, eight of the nine participants included in their final declarations a pledge of further consultation should any of the provisions be violated regarding the cessation of hostilities.

The provisions are contained in four sets of Agreements, two of which involve Laos and Cambodia, and two of which involve the temporary division of North and South Vietnam at the 17th parallel. The Agreement called for an election to be held two years later in July, 1956 to permit the people of North and South to determine whether a reunited Vietnam would be governed by the Communist North of Ho Chi Minh or the non-Communist South under Diem. The elections were to be supervised by an international control commission as set forth in the Agreement that also banned the supply of military equipment of any kind to any part of the country. The elections were never held and thus, what had been the temporary partition of two parts of the same country now became two countries. As for Laos and Cambodia, paragraph three of the Agreement noted the declarations made by their representatives that “in conformity with the constitutions of each of these countries,” elections “shall take place in 1955.” Elections were never held there either. Thus, after three months of negotiations and thirteen paragraphs included in the final declaration plus concluding statements by the participants, the Geneva Conference came to an end. As *The New York Times* reported, “about 800,000 men,” “300,000 in the Communist ranks,” and another 300,000 “Frenchmen,” members of “the Foreign Legion, Vietnamese non-Communists,” another 200,000 “Viet Minh Communists,” all lost their lives in the fighting. And throughout the eight year war, the *Times* noted that “the major struggle was for control of Vietnam, with [its] twenty-three million inhabitants.”⁶³

In his address, Morgenthau first pointed to the several paradoxes greatly complicating the work of the participants, one of which was the relationship of

Communist China and the United States. China had been an active participant in the negotiations; the United States had only observer status. Yet, both Communist China and the United States were the two nations that had been acutely concerned with the fate of Southeast Asia and Vietnam. China looked upon Southeast Asia as territory within its legitimate sphere of influence and had supplied military assistance to the Vietnamese fighting the French. The United States, from 1950 to 1954, had committed some \$800 million a year to the French in the form of military aid that included everything from tanks and aircraft to machine guns and small arms ammunition. For the Vietnamese under Ho Chi Minh, theirs was a war of national liberation. For the French, it was essentially a colonial war. For the United States, the purpose of the war was part of its world-wide strategy of containing Communism pursued since the beginning of the cold war. For the Soviet Union, it was a matter of supporting its fraternal allies, particularly North Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh.⁶⁴

In Morgenthau's analysis, what makes the achievement of Geneva all the more remarkable is the position taken by the victorious party after it won the war. As Morgenthau points out, there was an evident "spirit of compromise" during the political and military maneuvering after the French had been soundly defeated at Dien Bien Phu. Thus, it was the Viet Minh that had sued for peace the next day, which raises these questions posed by Morgenthau: Why had the North Vietnamese stopped short of a complete devastation of the French forces? Why had the Viet Minh not marched south to force the French to evacuate? And why did the Viet Minh agree to a peace conference? As for the influence of the Soviet Union, why had they emphasized the need for a peace conference when the Vietnamese had "complete unconditional victory?" Though unmentioned by Morgenthau, the Soviet Union was also "willing to allow Laos and Cambodia to seek outside military assistance as part of a formal agreement," which did not exclude assistance from the West. And why, asked Morgenthau, did the Communist powers make "important concessions to the Western powers?" The North Vietnamese, for example, went into the Conference proposing the 14th parallel as the line dividing North from South, yet they retreated to the 17th parallel thereby surrendering almost a third of the territory they controlled? They wanted elections held in six months, yet they conceded to two years.⁶⁵

As for the spirit of "compromise," Morgenthau suggests that this was "not [simple] "magnanimity" because it was also designed to keep the United States from establishing itself on the continent of Asia. Why? Because an American presence in Asia would be seen as a challenge to China and if the Vietnamese had continued the war and had humiliated France with a complete military disaster, the United States might have become an active participant in the defense of France thereby creating conditions for a future conflict with China.

Indeed, Morgenthau's summary and review of the interests and probable motives of the contending parties and the resultant uncertainty was, on factual grounds, all that one could say about the Agreement and its probable aftermath. As Morgenthau pointed out, the situation in Southeast Asia is a "stalemate" and thus "a reflection of the overall stalemate existing in the world" that the United States would have to live with. The division of two Vietnams was thus "a replica of the situation" found in the division of Germany in 1945 and Korea in 1953. He also noted there would be no elections since neither side, the United States and China, and their allies, would countenance a victory by the other side.⁶⁶ Indeed, the "stalemate" in Southeast Asia remained until well after President John F. Kennedy, in the first month of his Presidency, decided to intervene militarily in support of South Vietnam.

On July 21, 1954, the Agreement was signed by France, England, China and the Soviet Union. In attendance but not as signatory powers were the delegations of the three smaller states, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Of the five major powers, only the United States did not sign the Agreement. As an observer nation, the American delegation was headed by General Walter Bedell Smith who was instructed by Secretary of State Dulles to ignore the Chinese delegation. Dulles, who stayed in Geneva for just a week, is widely remembered for his publicized refusal to shake hands with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister Chou-En-lai. One observer later reported that Dulles "conducted himself" in Geneva "with the pinched distaste of a Puritan in a house of ill-repute."⁶⁷ He was clearly uncomfortable in the company of so many Communists, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese.

Dulles, a moral absolutist, an elder in the Presbyterian Church, a staunch anti-Communist, was also prone to voice excessively wild declarations of policy. In January 1954, Dulles proclaimed that the United States would respond even in local military engagements with "instant massive [atomic] retaliation." In a *Life* magazine interview on January 16, 1956, Dulles revealed that he had responded to three crisis situations in Korea, Southeast Asia and Formosa by going to the brink of war in order to avoid war and thereby to convince the Communists that America meant business. He also advocated "unleashing Chiang Kai-Shek" to recapture the Chinese mainland, rolling back the Iron Curtain by liberating eastern Europe and proclaiming that he wanted to make Laos, the most backward country in Asia where the majority of Laotians did not know the name of their own country, "a bastion of the free world."⁶⁸

Shortly after Geneva, Dulles left for the Philippines and with several Western and Asian representatives, put together the Southeast Asia Treaty organization or the SEATO pact. Signed by representatives from Australia,

France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Great Britain and the United States, it had one basic objective, which was to fight military aggression directed specifically against the states of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. SEATO was thereby designed to make South Vietnam and Cambodia strong, anti-Communist protectorates of the United States Militarily, however, SEATO was useless. It did not require a member state to aid another member state under military attack. It called only for consultation among the member states that would have taken place even without a legal commitment. Later, particularly during the Johnson Presidency, SEATO was the treaty obligation used by the President and Secretary of State Rusk to justify their commitment to defend South Vietnam. In short, SEATO became a diversion from the essential foreign policy question, which was whether SEATO was compatible with American national interests. Dulles, the great moralizer based on his religious background, left a most unfortunate legacy to President Kennedy who acceded to power two years after Dulles died in 1959.

In 1956, the AFV established its office in New York and began to raise funds, increase its membership, inform and advise the press and other public information media, issue a regular bulletin, maintain a library of literature on Vietnam, schedule meetings, and promote trade and cultural exchanges with South Vietnam. Particularly trade in which American businesses would reap the financial rewards by outsourcing their productions to South Vietnam with low cost labor and little or no corporate taxation. To this latter end, a second conference was held at the Ambassador Hotel in New York on February 28, 1958 that was titled "Investment Opportunities in Vietnam" in which 130 representatives of American industrial, commercial, banking and financial interests attended. From textiles, sugar mills, glassware, pharmaceuticals, and public works, twelve projects in all were approved by the Diem government. A year earlier, in March, 1957, a closed-door conference of forty business leaders sponsored by the AFV met at the Hotel Lombardy in New York in which it was announced that President Diem guaranteed there would be no nationalization of foreign property without compensation and three years of real estate exemption taxes on any new construction or any new agricultural development.⁶⁹

Another conference in October 1959 on "Social Development and Welfare," resulted in a book, *Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence*, which the AFV distributed free of charge to all interested readers. As Kennedy campaigned for the presidency in the fall of 1960, General John W. O'Daniel, the National Chairman, told the members of the Executive Committee on October 6 that he had given "two talks a month throughout Southern California" and had conferred "for two and a half days

in Washington, fact finding with persons at the Pentagon and the Department of State.” An earlier appeal for contributions was sent out by O’Daniel with a one sentence postscript: “We are advised by counsel that this contribution is one which will be considered tax exempt.” The O’Daniel letter was sent to Henry Luce on June 10, 1957, and began with a quote from President Diem, which read: “Communism is not neutral. Therefore, we cannot be neutral.” O’Daniel then repeated the usual litany that “The Free Vietnamese and their leader” demonstrate that their “dedication to national independence demands positive opposition to the spread of Communist tyranny.” O’Daniel said that Diem had established “a republic based on free elections and constitutional guarantees”⁷⁰ that, according to Presidential Order No. 6 noted above, was an outright lie. On the letterhead listing a partial membership of the National Committee were the names John F. Kennedy and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

In May, 1957, Diem came to the United States for a three-day visit where he was greeted as a hero. He arrived at La Guardia airport in New York aboard the Columbine, President Eisenhower’s personal plane. Accompanied by two State Department officials, Diem received the traditional ticker-tape parade up Fifth Avenue in New York and was greeted by New York Mayor Robert Wagner at City Hall. They both stood at attention as the First Army band played the Vietnamese and then the American national anthems and then left for the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel where the Mayor honored Diem with a luncheon. In the speeches that followed, Mayor Wagner “described his guest of honor as a man ‘to whom freedom is the very breath of life itself’” and then presented Diem with the city’s Medal of Freedom. In late afternoon, Diem attended a reception given by the Council on Foreign Relations. In the evening Diem was the guest of honor at a dinner given by the American Friends of Vietnam and the International Rescue Committee at the Ambassador Hotel. Henry R. Luce, owner and publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, presided as Diem received the first Admiral E. Byrd Memorial Award for “inspired leadership.” The Award was presented by Angier Biddle Duke. President Eisenhower sent a telegram of congratulations. The following day, Diem attended a mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral and had breakfast with Cardinal Spellman.⁷¹

On May 14, 1957, National Chairman General O’Daniel made his report to the Executive Committee. The AFV-IRC dinner honoring Diem had been “highly successful.” Some “500 guests” had attended and the contributions by sponsors who could not attend the dinner “totaled \$1380.” O’Daniel continued: “All concerned felt that the visit of President Ngo [Diem] had been excellently handled, especially the publicity given the President and his abilities.” In the minutes of the May 14 meeting, it was also noted that Henry R. Luce had been invited and had accepted membership. Luce’s donation to the organization later came in the form of ten shares of *Time* magazine stock.⁷²

In 1957, Senator John F. Kennedy began his quest for the Presidency. We have it on the authority of Theodore Sorensen that the Kennedy campaign “raised no clear-cut, decisive issue and, except for the Peace Corps, no new proposals.” The theme of the campaign, Sorensen writes, was dissatisfaction with the lack of national purpose and the cultural torpor of a nation adrift. Kennedy, Sorensen tells us, spoke only in generalities about getting the nation to move forward, asking the American people are they satisfied? “Are we doing as much as we can do?” “Are we satisfied as Americans with the progress we are making?” Kennedy never defined what he meant by progress. He repeated again and again that “This is a great country but I think it could be a greater country”; that “America could do better”; that “I think we’re ready to move”; or I think “It is time to get this country moving again.”⁷³ Though he would include brief mention of the nation’s domestic concerns such as unemployment or education, no one knew in which direction he wanted the country to move. His emphasis, however, was always on America’s security in a dangerous world. And in his four nationally televised debates with Richard Nixon, the subject of Vietnam was never mentioned.

Yet, within the first ten days of his Presidency, Kennedy received a lengthy twelve-page report from Edward Lansdale, now Brigadier General, who had made a two-week tour of South Vietnam for the outgoing administration. Lansdale, as we have seen, was the CIA operative who had helped his friend Diem accede to power as President. The report recommended quick action for South Vietnam where conditions were “critical” and required “emergency treatment” to combat the rising power of the Vietcong guerrillas that now numbered about 15,000. The Lansdale report made brief note of Diem’s repressive regime that should have raised some warning signals. But what Lansdale said, Kennedy wanted to hear which was similar to what Kennedy had said in his AFV conference speech. Lansdale warned Kennedy that “if free Vietnam is won by the Communists, the remainder of Southeast Asia will be easy picking for our enemy.” That a “Communist victory” would be a defeat for American “prestige and influence, not only in Asia but throughout the world.”⁷⁴

Eight days after the inaugural, on January 28, Lansdale was invited to a high level meeting with Kennedy and his foreign policy advisers. Kennedy began the meeting by complimenting Lansdale on his report. He said he now understood the key “importance” of Vietnam. Weeks later, Kennedy told one of his advisers that the Lansdale report was very discouraging for the future of South Vietnam, “one of the worst [reports] we’ve got.” Kennedy also remarked that Eisenhower had warned him at a formal meeting on January 19, the day before the inaugural, that Laos had to be defended or else all of Southeast Asia would fall to the Communists. Thus, on January 19,

Eisenhower proclaimed it was Laos that had to be defended. Kennedy then told his adviser that “Ike never said a word about Vietnam.”⁷⁵ On January 28, reviewing the Lansdale report, it was Vietnam that had to be defended and not Laos.

From early November 1960 when Kennedy won the Presidency to January 20, 1961, when he took the oath of office, there is no record that any serious thought had been given to the situation in Southeast Asia or to matters of foreign policy in general. For close to three months, Kennedy’s transition team was busy finding appointees for the various cabinet and agency posts while Kennedy retreated and rested at the family home in Palm Beach, Florida. He made periodic trips to Washington announcing on occasion from the steps of his Georgetown home a major cabinet appointment. As inauguration day approached, Kennedy remained in Palm Beach where he and his chief speechwriter, Theodore Sorensen, worked on the inaugural address.

On January 30, ten days after taking office, Kennedy authorized an increase of \$28.4 million to expand the Vietnam military force by 20,000 men and an expenditure of \$12.7 million to improve the quality of the Vietnam civil guard, that is, the rural police militias. On February 3, Kennedy instructed his Pentagon chief to find ways to expand anti-guerrilla force operations to combat the Vietcong. On February 6, Kennedy authorized General Lyman Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, to find out if a relocation of American forces in Vietnam would increase the effectiveness of anti-guerrilla activities.⁷⁶ In his State of the Union address on January 30, Kennedy told the nation that “we live in an hour of national peril” and that “it was by no means certain the nation would endure.”⁷⁷

The war was on. A five star general and former President and a single star Brigadier General, each untutored in the complexities of foreign policy, had made their recommendations. The Lansdale report had won out. There was no foreign policy review. No one from outside the government was brought in for consultation. The mindset of the new President was fixed. What he received from Lansdale was in substance what the new President had said in his address to the American Friends of Vietnam five years earlier. When Kennedy asked Lansdale on January 28 what he thought about the prospects for success, Lansdale replied “that a maximum American effort could assist the South Vietnamese to take the offensive against the North by 1962.” Shortly thereafter, Kennedy expanded the counterinsurgency strategy. The dispatch of American military personnel accompanied by Huey and Mohawk helicopters followed. The use of napalm and chemical herbicides were authorized by the end of 1961. In 1962, 12,000 American military personnel were sent to Vietnam.⁷⁸ The question of whether Vietnam was vital to America’s national interest was never raised. Kennedy was at war with Communism. And while

Kennedy embarked on his war, the most authoritative voice on foreign policy was offering advice and analysis that neither the President nor anyone else in his administration took notice of.

Thus, on January 20, 1961, the day Kennedy took office, Morgenthau published an article in *The Washington Post* advising the new President, that his “Foreign Policy Must Come to Grips With A Worsened World.” What Kennedy had to overcome, Morgenthau writes, was the deterioration of American foreign policy under Dulles that was “militarily oriented,” an extension of the containment policy in Europe where it worked, to Asia where it could not work. The Dulles’ policy, Morgenthau noted, was “to surround the periphery of the Russian and Chinese empires” with American military personnel and its allies and then make those “grand pronouncements” from “unleashing Chiang Kai-Shek” to retaliating with atomic bombs. Morgenthau then outlined Kennedy’s several “major tasks” that related to China, the Soviet Union, Western Europe, NATO, the uncommitted nations and “the supranational control of atomic power.”⁷⁹ Vietnam was not mentioned in the article.

Less than two weeks later, in *Commentary*, February 1961, Morgenthau expanded his comments, which he titled “Prospect For A New Foreign Policy.” Here Morgenthau provides his readers with an abridged account of “the brilliantly conceived” policy in the spring of 1947, namely the Marshall Plan and the containment of “Stalin’s imperialism.” Five years later, though the policy was “still serviceable,” the weaknesses resulting from “misconceptions” about NATO, Germany and “the awakening of Asia” by 1952 became “clear.” Then, in 1953, enter John Foster Dulles, whom, Morgenthau writes, “became the prisoner of a public opinion,” which, “in good measure,” was “created by his own words and deeds.” He had nurtured an anti-Communist public hysteria from which he could not back down without toning down his own exaggerated and unattainable policy objectives. Again, as pointed out in his previous article, that policy promised a worldwide network of forces around the Russian and Chinese empires “manned” by “American military might.” This, Morgenthau writes, “was the great failing of Dulles” and while the new administration was encumbered by the Dulles legacy of unnecessary military commitments, it had to rethink and refashion American policy in those areas outlined by Morgenthau in his *Washington Post* article of January 20. Again, Vietnam was not mentioned.⁸⁰

Six months later, in July, 1961, after five months in office, after the Bay of Pigs disaster in April and the failed Vienna summit meeting with Khrushchev in June, Morgenthau evaluated the results of Kennedy foreign policy in *The New Leader* magazine. He did not touch on the Vienna summit but called the Cuban disaster and the Laos policy “the two glaring defeats” of the new

administration. He referred to South Vietnam and Laos as overextended commitments, which, if the United States “does not want to risk war in the defense of the indefensible and, at best, nonessential positions,” it must work for “the liquidation” of these commitments. The United States, Morgenthau writes, “must retreat from these positions” in Laos and Vietnam.⁸¹

As for the Cuban disaster, in strict military terms, some 1500 Cuban exiles storming the beaches at the Bay of Pigs were no match for over 200,000 of Castro’s military forces. And while this should have been obvious on its face, for Morgenthau, “the incredible folly” of the event demonstrated the administration’s basic deficiency in understanding the geopolitics of Cuba. Thus, Morgenthau writes, the Cuban invasion “was based on the assumption that military intervention would be welcomed by the Cuban people who were anti-Communist by nature,” and who “would rise against Castro.” In Morgenthau’s reasoning, the administration did not consider the element of “popular consent” present even in totalitarian regimes where the people have become satisfied by “what they consider to be social justice” and are thereby willing “to sacrifice individual freedom and self-government.” Here is a key point applicable later to Vietnam. Castro’s regime and others like it cannot be overthrown by counterrevolutionary invasions, but, in Morgenthau’s words, “only by the vision of a social order superior to the *status quo* and capable of realization.” “Capable of realization” is the operative phrase. Here, Morgenthau writes:

Where guerrilla warfare is the spearhead of popular revolution, as it was in Cuba and is today in South Vietnam, ‘counterinsurgency,’ operating in hostile territory without a popular base, is doomed to failure. The Kennedy Administration, by seeming to look to ‘counterterrorism’ as the main answer to Communist revolution, falls into the trap of assuming that what works for the Communists must work equally well for us, if only we make the effort to initiate it.⁸²

Thus, in July, 1961, as Kennedy is mounting his counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam, Morgenthau is offering the first of his many later warnings about the futility of anti-guerrilla warfare where the guerrillas are supported by the people and where everyone is a potential guerrilla fighter.

How to rectify the drift of the new administration? To whom does Morgenthau address his chief criticisms about Berlin, the disarray of the Atlantic Alliance and particularly, about Asia, where “our positions ... are deteriorating?” The answer, of course, is the President, and here, Morgenthau does not hold back. It is an administration, Morgenthau writes, “whose style in an exceptional degree is determined by intellectuals” and that “speaks a great deal about purpose but appears to lack a sense of direction.” “It calls upon the people for sacrifices without being able to tell them what to do.” This is “the Administration’s

failure of omission. And it is first of all the President's failure." Morgenthau continues:

When the President finally spoke in positive terms about the national purpose, he and his advisers could think of nothing better than being first in sending a man to the moon, a patent publicity device, which an unexcited public took in its stride. It is another instance of that trap of imitating the Russians and playing the game according to their tactics. And whenever the President called for sacrifices, he said hardly anything of substance, but he said it in beautiful prose.⁸³

What the Kennedy Administration must do, Morgenthau writes, is

"to put its brain power to work on a task of constructive statesmanship. It must try to break out of the sterile patterns of past policies and put forward proposals of a boldness commensurate with the novelty of our tasks and the urgency of the dangers that face it. The tasks of greatest urgency are Berlin, the supranational control of nuclear power, and, intertwined with these, the revitalization of the Atlantic Alliance."⁸⁴

Morgenthau then adds that if the administration boldly embarked upon these tasks, the kind of sacrifices the administration "must ask of the American people," are sacrifices not of "money or toil," but those of "long-held, cherished convictions that have turned out to be illusions." Morgenthau does not specify these, but they are all about the previous administration's placid and conformist domestic policies and the baneful consequences of the Dulles' foreign policies. Again, it is "The President," Morgenthau writes, who "must set an example for the American people by offering up popular illusions on the altar of truth." While "politically risky," it is absolutely essential "for both the restoration of the vigor of our national life and the renewal of our foreign policy." Here, Morgenthau concludes:

We have been told, and we know, that there is something fundamentally wrong with our national life and our foreign policy. Yet the Administration seems to think, and certainly acts on the assumption, that traditional remedies will cure our ills. What gives us pause is the discrepancy between the actual foreign policies pursued, with the kind of thinking that apparently goes into them, and what we have been led to believe about our condition or know to be true. History will judge the Kennedy Administration on how well it performs the task of bringing its thought and action up to the level of that truth.⁸⁵

The New Leader article on "Kennedy's Foreign Policy" appeared in July 3, 1961. In the same month, Morgenthau published in *Commentary* his first direct warning against our involvement in Vietnam that is titled "Asia: The American Algeria." Here, Morgenthau likened America's role in Laos and South Vietnam to the French disaster in Algeria where "two great illusions"

corrupted and misdirected French policy: one illusion that “the Algerian rebellion can be stamped out by military means”; the second, that Algeria is “just another French province” and thereby an “integral” part of France. He writes that “It is not only France that suffers from illusions of this kind. America has them, too.” The American illusion is the adoption of the Dulles’ policies by the Kennedy Administration in trying to transform Laos and South Vietnam into “American military strongholds at the borders of China.” For Morgenthau, the policy is sheer “folly” and has dangerous “implications.” China, militarily weak, in all likelihood, will eventually become “the foremost military power in Asia.” It portends a future “catastrophe.”⁸⁶

As Morgenthau’s article went to press, France under de Gaulle had begun the negotiations by which the French would eventually leave Algeria but not before 27,000 French soldiers and over a million Algerians had lost their lives in their war for independence. On July 1, 1962, a year after Morgenthau had published this article, Algeria had become an independent state. In Morgenthau’s view, France owes its departure from Algeria “to the insight and courage of one man”—Charles de Gaulle. And for the United States to escape a similar disaster, it is similarly incumbent on one man, President Kennedy, who, Morgenthau writes, “has a sacred duty to think deeply” and “regardless of risk, to speak with frankness” about the American involvement in Southeast Asia lest “Laos and South Vietnam become America’s Algeria.” Thus, as de Gaulle had awakened France from its illusions—the central illusion that the Algerian rebels could be defeated by military means—so, too must Kennedy awaken America from its illusions.⁸⁷

In May, 1962, when Morgenthau published in *Commentary*, “Vietnam: Another Korea,” *The New York Times*, in the preceding months, confirmed America’s growing military involvement, revealed the government’s attempt to conceal that involvement and noted the prognostications by high ranking administration officials as to the likely duration of the war. Thus, on February 10, *The Times* reported that the actual number of American military personnel in Vietnam numbered “nearly 5,000” though the United States declared there were only “685” American advisers in Vietnam. The same report also noted that “more [American military] are pouring in” faster than they can be accommodated in the military billets. Two days earlier, the *Times* reported the arrival of Army combat helicopters, a company of light observation planes and United States Navy minesweepers patrolling the South China Sea near the borders of North Vietnam. To assist the South Vietnamese in their propaganda war, the United States dispatched “printing presses” and assigned American advisers to guide “Vietnamese officers in propaganda techniques.” The United States also “provided \$1,500,000 for a seven station

radio network.” On January 19, it was reported that the spraying of chemical herbicides had begun “to remove foliage hiding Communist guerrillas” as leaflets were also dropped “assuring farmers that the chemicals were harmless to humans and animals.”⁸⁸

On February 10, it was reported that the United States had established its new headquarters in Saigon called The United States Military Assistance Command under a newly promoted four-star general, Paul D. Harkins. On January 22, the *Times* said that the “world communist movement is in ferment,” and that “the fragmentation of what was once called ‘the bloc’ has been altered by “the increasing demands for independence by Communist parties in all continents.” On May 1, in a speech to the Economic Club in Detroit, Under Secretary of State George Ball, proclaimed that the war in South Vietnam “would be a ‘long, slow, arduous struggle’”; it is “a task,” he said, that “we must stay with until it is concluded.” On July 7, Defense Secretary McNamara confirmed Ball’s view. He said “that a final victory over the communists was years away”; that “we can’t expect [a] termination of a war—and it is a war—in a matter of months. It will be years before it is concluded, and I believe it will be concluded satisfactorily.”⁸⁹

In his “Vietnam: Another Korea” article of May, 1962, Morgenthau expands upon these projections and writes that the United States might be entering the quagmire that it eventually became. Indeed, for Morgenthau, our “military policy is fraught with enormous risks and dangers for the United States.” He adds:

If the present primarily military approach is persisted in, we are likely to be drawn ever more deeply into a Korean-type war, fought under political and military conditions much more unfavorable than those that prevailed in Korea and in the world a decade ago. Such a war cannot be won quickly, if it can be won at all, and may well last, like its Greek and Malayan counterparts, 5 or 10 years, perhaps only to end again in a stalemate, as did the Korean war. Aside from the military risks to which it will give rise in view of the distribution of military power which exists today and is likely to exist 5 to 10 years hence, such a war would certainly have a profound impact upon the political health of the nation. McCarthyism and the change in the political complexion of the nation which the elections of 1952 brought about resulted directly from the frustrations of the Korean war. The American people are bound to be at least as deeply affected by the frustrations of a Vietnamese war.⁹⁰

As to the attitude of the great mass of Vietnamese peasants toward whom the Kennedy counterinsurgency strategy was directed, Morgenthau writes:

They tend to look at Diem as a kind of American puppet, the successor to Bao Dai, the French puppet, and at the Americans as the successors to French colonial rule. Communism means nothing to them one way or the other. What

interests them and determines their attitude are the benefits and disadvantages to be expected from either side. Thus, they will submit to, and cooperate with, whoever happens to exercise authority at a particular time, and prisoners will join the other side almost as a matter of course only to rejoin their former friends if the fortunes of guerrilla war should change.⁹¹

And what does Morgenthau advise?

It is therefore incumbent upon the government of the United States to determine with all possible precision the extent of the American interest in South Vietnam. The extent of our military commitment must depend upon that political determination. Is South Vietnam as important to us, or more or less so, than Korea and Cuba? Or is it as important as Berlin? The answer to political questions such as these must determine the extent of our military commitment.⁹²

On October 16, 1961, President Diem proclaimed that the conflict in Vietnam was no longer a guerrilla war but a war against the North Vietnamese Army. A month later, on November 14, in response to Diem's request, it was announced that United States forces will be increased over the next two years to 16,000 "advisers." In the New York offices of the Friends of Vietnam, there was extended conversation on October 4, 1962 that noted Diem's lack of popular support and his failure to pursue a more "generous policy" to his "people" and to his "political opponents." Yet the Friends confirmed their "continued confidence in the patriotism, integrity and high character of President Diem." They also declared "by unanimous vote" their determination to carry out "vigorously" their usual objectives: to foster the impression "that we are on the offensive in Vietnam to help win"; to re-emphasize that Vietnam is "part of the war of world-wide Communist aggression"; to disclose "the efforts" of the "various enemies" that seek to "undermine the Vietnamese Government"; to continue providing aid to Vietnam "in the support of libraries" and information on Vietnam; and to "Hold a conference in the near future."⁹³ Thus, six years after its founding, nothing has changed among the Friends.

And did President Kennedy, as Morgenthau advised, give up his "popular illusions on the altar of truth?" Did he renew America's foreign policy and its national purpose?

He did not.

The mantra of his foreign policy may be found in his innumerable warnings about the threat of Communism such as in his April 27, 1961 speech to the American Newspaper Publishers Association after the Bay of Pigs disaster. Here, Kennedy declared:

Our way of life is under attack. Those who make themselves our enemy are advancing around the globe. The survival of our friends is in danger. And yet no war has been declared, no borders have been crossed by marching troops, no missiles have been fired.

.... [Yet] no war ever posed a greater threat to our security ... the danger has never been more clear and its presence has never been more imminent... For we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy that relies primarily on covert means for expanding its sphere of influence.⁹⁴

And always, the reference is to freedom or liberty and never, not even rhetorically, to the standard of national interest. Among America's Vietnam presidents, no one misread the geopolitics of the non-existent Communist monolith more than did John F. Kennedy. Indeed, one is led to the conclusion, that without John F. Kennedy, there would be no Vietnam War.

At a news conference on January 24, 1962, Kennedy was asked about "the fragmentation in the Communist bloc" to which he referred in an earlier speech. Here Kennedy replied that he wanted to wait until "the pattern of the future is clearer and relationships are more precise" before he could accept the break-up of the monolith. In his meeting with President de Gaulle in late May, 1961 prior to his meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna a few days later, Kennedy tells de Gaulle that he does not believe there is any serious quarrel between the Soviets and the Chinese and that "we would have enough time to wait for such a change." When de Gaulle warned Kennedy that you will "take our place" in Vietnam, you will rekindle "the war which we brought to an end" and "you will sink step by step into a bottomless quagmire however much you spend in men and money,"⁹⁵ Kennedy listened but was unmoved.

In his Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs on May 25, 1961, Kennedy concluded by noting "that we are determined, as a nation in 1961, that freedom shall survive and succeed—whatever the peril and setbacks ..." He adds that among the "very large advantages" of the American position, "The first is the simple fact that we are on the side of liberty—and since the beginning of history, and particularly since the end of the Second World War, liberty has been winning out all over the globe." Secondly, "we have friends and allies all over the world who share our devotion to freedom."⁹⁶

In his statement to the press on May 2, 1961 about America's future policy toward Cuba, in a six-page draft, there are ten references to: "the larger interests of freedom," "the interests of freedom," that "strong free men should despise the Castro tyranny," the "particular effort to help free men," that assistance cannot be given "to a regime so near our shores and so far from freedom," "the resisters for freedom will not find us their enemies," our people are "the leaders

of freedom,” we are “firm in our readiness to fight for freedom,” nothing must “stand between us and a generous partnership with all free Americans,” that is, in South America, “who are working for progress and freedom.”⁹⁷

At a news conference on October 11, 1961, the same day another air force unit was dispatched to Vietnam, Kennedy was asked about his decision to send General Maxwell Taylor to Vietnam implying confirmation that Kennedy had already made up his mind about sending additional troops to Vietnam. The Taylor mission left Washington on Sunday, October 15, arrived in Honolulu on the evening of the 15th, and was briefed by Admiral Harry D. Felt, Commander in Chief, Pacific, arrived in Saigon on October 16, attended a meeting on October 19 at the ARVN Command Headquarters, and met with Diem on October 25. Among those accompanying Taylor was General Lansdale. Buried in the official Taylor mission report as Appendix G is a memo from Lansdale to Taylor that reads:

It is time that we in the free world got angry about what is happening in South Vietnam and about what is happening elsewhere in Southeast Asia. With our anger, there should come a deep commitment to stop the Communists in their tracks and hit back hard. Frankly, there are a lot of Americans who are angry and are willing to be committed to a victory in this struggle. But, there is no place and no means by which they can join up to strike a blow for liberty. Certainly there are dedicated Americans in Vietnam now who would like nothing better than to give the Communists a licking. They are prevented from doing so by our self-imposed restrictions of a peace time governmental machinery, made clumsy by its complexity which has been jury-rigged to meet a critical situation when it really needed to be revamped to meet a new kind of war.⁹⁸

And in June, 1961, Joe Heller published *Catch-22*.

NOTES

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3. “Transcript of President’s Address to the Nation On Military Action in Cambodia,” *New York Times*, 1 May 1970, 2.

4. Morgenthau, “Vietnam: Which Way to Peace?” 13.

5. John Osborne, "The Tough Miracle Man of South Vietnam," *Life*, May 1957, 161, 163.

6. Leo Cherne, "Vietnam's Economy," in *A Symposium on America's Stake in Vietnam* published by American Friends of Vietnam, 26–27. Transcript in Wesley Fishel Papers, Michigan State University Archives and Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan, Box 1204, Folder 1.

7. Quoted in Helle Bering-Jensen, "A Man Who Would Rescue the World," *The Washington Times*, 15 July 1991, E1.

8. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House and Vietnam," *The New Leader*, 2 January 1967, 17–19; Hans J. Morgenthau, "The House that Cherne Built," *The New Leader*, 30 January 1967, 17.

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16. Robert S. McNamara, *The Essence of Security-Reflections in Office* (New York, Evanston, & London: Harper & Row, 1968), 109.

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18. The McNamara, Rostow, Westmoreland quotes are in Anthony Lewis, "Through a Looking Glass," *New York Times*, 30 January 1975, 34.

19. Kerry, "Where Are the Leaders?" excerpts, *The New Republic*, 18. See endnote 17 for location of Kerry's complete testimony before the committee.

20. Clyde Edwin Pettit, *The Experts* (Secaucus, N. J.: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1975). Reston's quote on General Taylor, 116; Buckley's quote, 388; Alsop, 354.

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73. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 178, 181–82.

74. Memo, Lansdale to Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, 17 January 1961, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, Department of Defense (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1971), Vol. 11, 1–2. There are twelve volumes in this series which later came to be called the *Pentagon Papers*.

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83. Morgenthau, “Kennedy’s Foreign Policy,” *The New Leader*, 3 July 1961, 5.

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89. Harkins' appointment and new Saigon headquarters in Bigart, "United States Is Expanding Role in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 10 February 1962, 3; Max Frankel, "Ferment Grows in Communist World," *New York Times*, 22 January 1962, 1; Russell Baker, "Long Slow Fight in Vietnam Seen," *New York Times*, 1 May 1962, 15; "McNamara Lauds Gains in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 7 July 1962, 2.

90. Morgenthau, "Vietnam—Another Korea?" in *Commentary*, May, 1962, 374.

91. Morgenthau, "Vietnam—Another Korea?" *Commentary*, May, 1962, 371.

92. Morgenthau, "Vietnam—Another Korea?" *Commentary*, May, 1962, 373.

93. "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee," 4 October 1962, Fishel Papers, Box 1203, Folder 40, 5.

94. Kennedy, *Public Papers 1961*, 336.

95. Kennedy, *Public Papers 1962*, 66–67. There are two versions of Kennedy's meeting with de Gaulle: a Memo of Conversation, Kennedy and de Gaulle, Paris, 31 May 1961, *FRUS 1961–1963*, Vol. 24, *Laos Crisis*, 214–20, where de Gaulle is more restrained in his projection of future U.S. involvement. After Kennedy tells de Gaulle that "the people of the area may feel that if we do not intervene they will then have reason to despair" because of their subsequent "weakness," President de Gaulle replies that it is "his feeling that a new war could not lead any where even if waged by the United States" That "If the U.S. feels that its security or its honor compelled it to intervene, the French will not oppose such an intervention" and "will not participate in it." In his memoirs, however, Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor*, translated by Terrence Kilmartin (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1970), 255–59, de Gaulle recalls, *ex-post facto*, that he warned Kennedy that the U.S. would repeat the French disaster, that you will "take over where we left off and revive a war which we brought to an end. I predict that you will sink step by step into a bottomless military and political quagmire however much you spend in men and money."

96. Kennedy, *Public Papers 1961*, 405.

97. Kennedy, Draft of Statement on Cuba to Bundy, 2 May 1961, National Security Files, Bundy Papers, Box 398, 1–5, JFK Library.

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Chapter 2

Morgenthau and Bundy: The Harvard Dean Fails the Vietnam Reality Test

In the “Prologue” of his anthology of essays titled *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade* published in 1970, Morgenthau laments the failure of America’s national leadership to consider the facts of his opposition to the war. He writes of his “efforts undertaken in the naïve assumption that if power were only made to see the truth, it would follow that lead.”¹ And a year earlier, in his *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, Morgenthau comments on his “rereading of the transcripts” of his participation in the May 15, 1965, nationally televised teach-in, of his interview on *Meet the Press* on May 16 and of his televised debate with McGeorge Bundy on June 21, and he is astounded. He is “struck,” he says, “by the almost comic effect of the statements made by eminent scholars in defense of government policy and in disparagement of its critics.” He adds: “Hardly any of those statements were correct then or were proven to be correct by subsequent events.”² What is unusual about Morgenthau’s failure to convince members of the Kennedy and Johnson foreign policy team is that they were predominantly an elite brand of fellow academics who ostensibly spoke the same collegial language of empirical truth-finding to determine the best foreign policy course for the United States. Alas, they were not empiricists; they were dogmatists with fixed, unalterable positions and thus ideologically unable to submit their assumptions to a test in reality.

But there they were in January 1961, by one count, a new administration that comprised sixteen Phi Beta Kappas, four Rhodes Scholars, two Pulitzers, the President’s included, and a Nobel Prize winner.³ An administration of graduates and professors from America’s best schools: the two Kennedy brothers, Harvard educated, President and Attorney General; two major cabinet posts, Robert McNamara, Harvard M.A., and Douglas Dillon,

Harvard B.A.; one minor cabinet appointment, Postmaster General Edward Day, Harvard law. Harvard Professor, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., situated in the East Wing of the White House; McGeorge Bundy, Dean of Harvard's Arts and Sciences faculty, at first located across the street from the White House in the Executive Office Building, but because he is repeatedly in and out of the Oval Office, is shortly relocated to an office in the basement of the White House; and Bundy's national security staff recruited mainly from Harvard: Carl Kaysen, Harvard economics, Francis Bator, Harvard economics, Michael Forrestal, Harvard law, Robert Komer, Harvard MBA; later, in 1963, James C. Thomson, Jr., Harvard Ph.D. Also in Bundy's department, Walt W. Rostow, an MIT economics professor, later a member of the State Department and, in 1966, upon Bundy's departure from government, appointed national security adviser. On February 27, 1961, five weeks after the inaugural, the White House announced the appointment of Harvard professor Henry Kissinger, as a "part-time consultant" in the national security office. Kissinger's appointment lasted for just nine months.

In the State Department, the least flamboyantly educated was Dean Rusk, a graduate of Davidson College in North Carolina, a Rhodes Scholar and former professor at Mills College in California before serving as Undersecretary of State in the Truman Administration. Ironically, because he never grasped the real geopolitical nature of the conflict in Vietnam, it was Rusk who was the most experienced of all the Kennedy foreign policy advisers. Rusk's Department included Abram Chayes, Harvard professor of international law and Roger Hilsman, Yale MA and Ph.D.

McNamara's Pentagon included William P. Bundy, Yale and Harvard law, John T. McNaughton, Harvard law professor, and Adam Yarmolinsky, Harvard law.

In the White House, in addition to the President, Schlesinger and McGeorge Bundy, there were several presidential assistants, either graduates or professors on leave from Harvard. These included Richard Goodwin, Richard Neustadt, Kenneth O'Donnell, roommate and friend of Robert F. Kennedy, Timothy Reardon, and Francis Holborn.

Could anything go wrong?

On February 6, 1961, *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis, himself a graduate of Harvard, lauded the new Kennedy foreign policy team and especially, the one most "significant development," which was "the emergence of McGeorge Bundy as the President's principal staff aide on foreign policy and security matters." A picture of a smiling Bundy adorns the article that noted that he and the President had "quickly developed an intimate working relationship" and that they also "think and work at the same pace."⁴

Who was McGeorge Bundy? What were his qualifications to become Kennedy's national security adviser? And what were the results of his advice to two presidents, Kennedy and Johnson?

Bundy had a glittering resume: top honors at Groton, Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year at Yale where he majored in mathematics and three perfect scores on his college entrance exams at Harvard where he began his graduate studies. His journey from New Haven to Cambridge follows naturally from his pedigreed background. Bundy's mother, whose ancestry was said to go back to Plymouth Rock, was a niece of former Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell. Bundy's father was a highly successful Boston lawyer. Shortly after his arrival, Bundy became a member of Harvard's prestigious Society of Fellows where students write papers without having to take exams or write dissertations. He received his M.A. in 1949 and, after three years as associate professor, he was promoted to full professor of government. In 1953, at age thirty-four, he was appointed Dean of Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the second most powerful position in the hierarchy of Harvard officialdom.⁵

Throughout his Harvard years, from 1948 to 1961, he published very little. He helped former Assistant Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, a friend of Bundy's father, write his memoirs and later edited former Secretary of State Dean Acheson's record of foreign affairs since World War II. He taught a very popular course at Harvard, "The United States in World Affairs." It was not until 1968, two years after he left government, that Bundy published his first sole-authored book, *The Strength of Government*, an expanded version of the Godkin Lectures Bundy delivered at Harvard the same year. Twenty years later, in 1988, Bundy published his second sole-authored book, *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years*. Given the record of his scholarly publications up to the time of his appointment as national security adviser in 1961, it is safe to conclude that Bundy was not a foreign policy expert.

Bundy's appointment was serendipitous. Kennedy knew Bundy's brother, William Putney Bundy, who was in Kennedy's class at the Dexter School in Brookline, Massachusetts. The younger Bundy, McGeorge, was a year behind in the same school. Kennedy also knew McGeorge Bundy from the many debutante parties both men attended on the north shores of Long Island, Chicago, and Massachusetts. In the mid-1950s when Senator Kennedy became a Harvard Trustee and McGeorge Bundy directed the Arts and Sciences School, their meetings at official functions and commencement exercises drew the two men together.⁶ No one knows what they talked about but when Senator Kennedy determined in late 1956 to pursue the Democratic nomination for President, it is likely that politics had entered

their conversations, as both men found a congeniality of interests in matters of foreign affairs. Bundy was a life-long Republican who had twice voted for Eisenhower and Nixon. In 1960, it is very likely that Bundy voted for Kennedy.

What is Bundy's chief character trait? There are three pertinent observations that provide some clue. All recognize Bundy's intelligence, his mastery of quick verbal retort, his knowledge of world events derived apparently from his work editing the manuscripts of two former secretaries of state. There is nothing in the Bundy record, to my knowledge, to suggest that Bundy was a student of history. But there is also his dogmatism, his certainty that what he advocates is beyond question. This is initially captured in a *New York Times Magazine* piece of December 2, 1962 by political historian Sidney Hyman who quotes one anonymous insider—the others are fearful of Bundy's wrath—who tells Hyman: "McGeorge Bundy is the iron priest of an iron faith in the definitiveness of his yes or no" and with an abundance of information "to make everything he says sound plausible..."⁷

In his letter to the professors inviting him to participate in the nationally televised teach-in on May 15, 1965, Bundy replied with typical acerbic arrogance. He was angry for their criticism of the administration's Vietnam policy and wrote: "If your letter came to me for grading as a professor of government, I would not be able to give it high marks." He added that it was "strange" to assume "that a public official is somehow especially accountable to the profession he worked with before coming to government."⁸

And in a review of a recently published book begun by Bundy but completed by journalist and UN adviser, Gordon Goldstein, titled *Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam*, the same dogmatic arrogance is noted by the reviewer. As for the genesis of the book, Bundy had enlisted Goldstein to help him write his study of what went wrong. After two years of close collaboration—Bundy died in 1996 before he could complete the book—it was left to Goldstein to finish what would have been Bundy's confessional of error and misjudgment.⁹ The blurb on the front cover by presidential historian Michael Beschloss calls the book "powerful and brilliant" that "provides crucial lessons for future presidents, members of Congress, and citizens." This assessment, it turns out, is conspicuous for its extravagance. The book essentially falls in the genre of belated and self-serving memoirs and lessons reminiscent of McNamara's 1995 retrospective history subtitled *The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. Both books raise the question of why, in the face of all the evidence available at the time, Bundy—and McNamara—tragically overlooked the advice to liquidate the war. That advice was given repeatedly over the years as the tragedy of Vietnam unfolded and, in September 1969, as

Nixon, in his first year in office began his contribution to the unfolding disaster, Morgenthau, in *Worldview* magazine called “The Present Tragedy of America,” America’s greatest “moral crisis.” In 1969, eight years after Bundy and McNamara began their war and had returned to civilian life—Bundy as president of the Ford Foundation, McNamara as head of the World Bank—they remained silent as the deaths and casualties mounted. Thus, posthumously and forty years after the fact, Bundy, employing Goldstein’s words, acknowledges from the grave that he “made mistakes,” that the war was “a great failure” and a war “we should not have fought.”¹⁰

The author of the review is the late Richard Holbrooke, former Ambassador to the UN and, at the time of his death, President Obama’s special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Holbrooke had also served as a participant in President Johnson’s “White House special Vietnam Task Force.” His criticism of Bundy is based on his experience at a dinner he attended in Saigon at the home of America’s Deputy Ambassador the night before the North Vietnamese attacked the American special forces camp at Pleiku in February 1965. In attendance at the dinner were several Vietnamese invited because they lived in Vietnam and had information that could be useful to Bundy. But because “they could not present their views in quick and clever ways,” Holbrooke writes, “Bundy either cut them off or ignored them.” “There was no question that he was brilliant,” Holbrooke tells us, “but his detachment from the realities of Vietnam disturbed me.”¹¹

Holbrooke in his review does not elaborate. But the nature of that detachment, as will be seen in the pages that follow, is a euphemism for Bundy’s dogmatism. Bundy is the ideologue mentoring Kennedy and Johnson to save the Vietnamese from Communist tyranny. He is uninterested in the facts or the “realities of Vietnam.” He is determined, using the cloak of seeking “peace” to justify the war. Following the attack on Pleiku, the Johnson administration began the sustained bombing of North Vietnam code-named Operation Rolling Thunder. To convince the American public that the war must be fought, Bundy, in a memorial speech at Hyde Park at Franklin Roosevelt’s gravesite on May 31, 1965, spoke these words:

We cannot limit ourselves to one objective at a time. We, like Caesar, have all things to do at once. And this is hard. In Vietnam today, we have to share in the fighting; we have to lead in the search for peace; and we have to respond in all that we do, to the real needs and hopes of the people of Vietnam.¹²

In his commencement address at the University of Notre Dame on June 6, 1965, Bundy defends the war not on the grounds of national interest, but on the basis of “national goodwill,” which is so vague it cannot be rationally defined. As in his Hyde Park address, however, the “national goodwill”

represents “the interests, hopes and purposes”—a phrase he uses three times in his speech—of the Vietnamese people. He adds that these hopes and interests “are not the same as ours,” though we have “met the challenge,” in Vietnam and then he broadens the challenge “by aligning ourselves” everywhere, in his words, with “the hopes of all free men” to thwart “the ambition of the Communist imperialists.”¹³

This is moral abstraction raised to an absurdly grandiose level. It is also a recipe for disaster and it is fitting, though inadvertent, that Goldstein’s book on the posthumous Bundy confessional is titled *Lessons in Disaster*.

To dissect the Bundy agenda into more specific terms, by thwarting the “Communist imperialists,” Bundy means going after them militarily wherever they appear on the globe for, as he said at Hyde Park, “we, like Caesar, have all things to do at once.” And by citing “the hopes of all free men,” he is mindlessly employing standard Kennedy rhetoric and contributing to the national hysteria. Indeed, Bundy is every bit the anti-Communist cold warrior as the President who appointed him, which makes perfect sense—the President and his chief adviser must have the same worldview—but this cannot bode well for American policy that requires a more circumspect identification of American national interests. National interest, however, was never part of Bundy’s vocabulary.

In 1951, Morgenthau was a visiting professor at Harvard. Bundy, in 1951, was an associate professor of government. Though they were in the same department, there is no record, to my knowledge, of any communication between them.

In 1959 and 1960, Morgenthau was again a visiting professor at Harvard and thereby a member of Dean Bundy’s Arts and Sciences faculty. On November 12, 1959, Professor of Government, Rupert Emerson, invited Morgenthau to Harvard for the summer session and the fall term, “from July through January” 1960. He tells Morgenthau he has conferred with Bundy who finds it impossible, in Emerson’s words, “to make money available to the Department which would bring” Morgenthau to Harvard “for more than a half year.”¹⁴ In a letter dated November 23, 1959, Professor W. Y. Eliot tells Morgenthau that the Government Department “has recommended that you be appointed to the teaching staff of this school for 1960,” meaning only the summer of 1960 but that, according to Emerson, “will constitute a full-time teaching program.” The letter from Emerson, however, does indicate that it is Bundy, as chief administrator, who did not want to find the money to employ Morgenthau as a full-time faculty member.¹⁵

Harvard, the epicenter of learning in the United States, greatly attracted Morgenthau, who wanted a permanent appointment. Years later, Morgenthau

tells us that “the Government Department at Harvard was interested in appointing me to their ranks,” but that “this appointment was vetoed by McGeorge Bundy.”¹⁶ Morgenthau writes that he “had never met Mr. Bundy at that time” but that Bundy “has shown a consistent hostility” to him,¹⁷ which, apparently began in these early years and was greatly exacerbated during their public quarrel over the Vietnam War.

In this interview, undated and published four years after his death, it may be presumed that the interview took place when Morgenthau was in declining health and perhaps shortly before his death in July, 1980. Hence, it may be that Morgenthau’s memory fails him for though, as he says, he had never met Bundy, there is correspondence between the two men after Morgenthau left Cambridge in 1951 and returned to Chicago.¹⁸ The correspondence would be unlikely if, in 1951 when Bundy was an associate professor and Morgenthau, a visiting professor, they had never talked. Thus, over the years following his visiting professorship in 1951, Morgenthau sent Bundy reprints of articles to which Bundy always responded, politely, but always with no particular interest in the subject of Morgenthau’s articles.

The subject of those articles was national interest. In *Politics Among Nations*, as we have seen, Morgenthau established national interest as the essential determinant in the making of foreign policy to insure the self-preservation of the nation and the security of its territory and its institutions. Three years later, in 1951, Morgenthau singled out national interest for special treatment in a 283-page history of American foreign policy since the foundation of the American republic. The book is titled *In Defense of the National Interest* and is another *tour de force* of analysis and history. Reviewed in the *New York Times*, America’s premier diplomatic historian, Samuel Flagg Bemis, writes glowingly of Morgenthau’s “masterly understanding” of the “global crisis” where “we must now measure rightly the national interest.” “The President” and “the Secretary of State should read it,” Bemis adds, “And every American citizen interested in surviving as a free man should read it, too.” Bemis, obviously an advocate of national interest foreign policy, pays additional tribute to Morgenthau, who, Bemis notes, as an émigré from Nazi Germany, has “grasped as few native-born students have the historical argument for American foreign policy....”¹⁹

In the three years between *Politics* in 1948 and *In Defense* in 1951, Morgenthau was preoccupied with the subject of national interest. Thus, in April, 1949, Morgenthau participated in a forum sponsored by the journal, *The American Scholar*, on the topic, “National Interest and Moral Principles in Foreign Policy.” The title of Morgenthau’s paper was “The Primacy of the National Interest.” He repeated much of this argument in an article he published in *The Annals*, the journal of the American Academy of Political and Social Science in

July, 1952, which is titled, “What is the National Interest of the United States?” In the same year, Morgenthau published “Another Great Debate: The National Interest of the United States” in *The American Political Science Review*. These were all distillations of Morgenthau’s larger study, the defense of the national interest as the cornerstone and governing principle of American policy as laid down by the Founders at the inception of the American republic. Thus, on the first page of the first chapter of *In Defense*, Morgenthau writes:

The United States offers the singular spectacle of a commonwealth whose political wisdom has not grown slowly through the accumulation and articulation of experiences. On the contrary, the full flowering of its political wisdom was coeval with its birth as an independent nation; indeed, it owed its existence and survival as an independent nation to those extraordinary qualities of political insight, historical perspective, and common sense which the first generation of Americans applied to the affairs of state.

This classic age of American statecraft came to an end with the disappearance of that generation of American statesmen.²⁰

What had happened in the aftermath? For Morgenthau, what the Founders had discovered “was allowed to go to waste.” “That age and its wisdom” which could have been used as “a source of inspiration and a guide to action,” became “a faint remembrance,” “a symbol to be worshipped” but little more. Thus, Morgenthau writes:

What passed for foreign policy was either improvisation or—especially in our century—the invocation of some abstract moral principle in whose image the world was to be made over. Improvisation was largely successful, for in the past the margin of American and allied power has generally exceeded the danger to which American improvidence has failed the demands of the hour. The invocation of abstract moral principles was in part hardly more than an innocuous pastime; embracing everything, it came to grips with nothing.... The intoxication with moral abstractions, which as a mass phenomenon started with the Spanish-American War and which in our time has become the prevailing substitute for political thought, is indeed one of the great sources of weakness and failure in American policy.²¹

We have been here before. Morgenthau’s antipathy for foreign policy based on moral abstractions is well established in *Politics*. But how to account for the denigration of national interest based on power as unworthy a standard for making foreign policy? How to account for the denigration of what Morgenthau calls “the moral dignity of the national interest?”

In his book, *In Defense*, Morgenthau points out that “nowhere in the Western world was there greater conviction and tenacity in support of the belief” that

“nations have a choice between power politics and another kind of foreign policy conforming to moral principles....” And the chief contributor responsible for the choice of policy based on abstract moral principles is a Princeton educated Ph.D., later a professor and President of Princeton who proclaimed at the outset of World War I that “The World must be made safe for democracy.” In Morgenthau’s view, it is not by accident “that this philosophy of foreign policy” based on “moral principles” found “it’s most dedicated and eloquent spokesman in an American President, Woodrow Wilson.” Morgenthau then points to its deficiencies. Wilsonian moralism, Morgenthau writes, “asserts that the American national interest is not somewhere in particular, but everywhere, being identical with the interests of mankind itself.” Thus, Wilsonian moralism does not concern itself “with the concrete issues upon which the national interest must be asserted”; indeed, it “soars beyond” the concrete and “applies the illusory expectations of liberal reform to the whole world.” And we are now well aware of Morgenthau’s basic contention that any “foreign policy guided by moral abstraction, without consideration of the national interest” in terms of specific and concrete detail, “is bound to fail; for it accepts a standard of action alien to the nature of the action itself.” In Morgenthau’s words, the appeal to “moral principles in the international sphere,” which “has no concrete universal meaning,” simply cannot work because it cannot thereby “provide a rational guide for political action.”²²

In July, 1952, Morgenthau sent Bundy his *Annals* article, “What is the National Interest of the United States?” The article is an abridged version of portions of Morgenthau’s *In Defense* book. In *The Annals* piece, Morgenthau quotes Wilson from a speech he gave at Mobile, Alabama in which he declared: “It is a very perilous thing to determine the foreign policy of a nation in the terms of the material interest. It not only is unfair to those with whom you are dealing, but it is degrading as regards your own actions.”²³ What Wilson denigrates, Morgenthau argues, is the concept of national interest “brilliantly conceived and practiced by the Federalists” to be “the interests of the United States conceived in terms of national security and the integrity of the American experiment.” As a firm believer “in the truth of the Federalist conception” of national interest, Morgenthau, in turn, denigrates the Wilsonian view as he paraphrases the earlier quote from Wilson’s speech at Mobile, Alabama, which, he writes, “runs about as follows”:

It is something base, something immoral, for a nation to put its own interests above the interests of other nations or above the interests of humanity. From this assumption, the conclusion is frequently drawn that a natural harmony exists between the interests of the United States and the interests of humanity; that, in other words, whatever the United States proposes to do and actually does in foreign policy is necessarily good not only for the United States but also for mankind.²⁴

Morgenthau continues: "This is not only, it seems to me, an untrue conception which flies in the face of all the experiences of history; it is also a very dangerous one." For it is "dangerously close to the chauvinism of fascism and communism which have advanced exactly the same pretenses for themselves." As for "practical policies," it may lead "of necessity" either to inaction and "national suicide" or to "unlimited interventionism,"²⁵ that, retrospectively, brings to mind Vietnam a decade later.

As for the permanence of the principle as laid down by the Founders, Morgenthau writes:

... despite the profound changes which have occurred in the world, it still remains true, as it has always been true, that a nation confronted with the hostile aspirations of other nations has one prime obligation—to take care of its own interests. The moral justification for this prime duty of all nations—for it is not only a moral right but also a moral obligation—arises from the fact that if this particular nation does not take care of its interests, nobody else will. Hence the counsel that we ought to subordinate our national interest to some other standard is unworthy of a nation great in human civilization. A nation which would take that counsel and act consistently on it would commit suicide and become prey and victim of other nations which know how to take care of their interests.²⁶

Thus, Morgenthau concludes his *Annals*' article by noting that "no nation can have a sure guide as to what it must do and what it need do in foreign policy without accepting the national interest as that guide." He adds that "this inability to steer a clear course in foreign affairs undisturbed by emotional preferences, results from the lack of recognition of the national interest as the only standard for judgment and action available to a great nation if it wants to pursue a successful and rational foreign policy." And for emphasis, he adds as the final sentence of his piece, "So from all points of view I conclude that there is no other standard of action and of judgment, moral and intellectual, to which a great nation can repair, than the national interest."²⁷

Morgenthau sent his *Annals*' article to Bundy in July, 1952. Bundy replied in a short note to Morgenthau on September 20, 1952. He said he read it with "great interest and profit" but could not accept its "general thesis"—the primacy of national interest in foreign policy—which he called "incompletely persuasive."²⁸ "Incompletely persuasive" was the standard Bundy expression for rejecting arguments as a substitute for a counter-argument. Sometimes, as noted by journalist Ward Just in *Newsweek* on September 30, 1996, Bundy used another "favorite expression" such as "intellectually incomplete" by which to cast "doubt on a critic's thought" or simply to ignore the critic.²⁹

Similarly, Bundy replied to another reprint on November 18, 1952, which was Morgenthau's address to the American Society of International Law on

the subject of American policy in Europe. Of course, Morgenthau grounded his arguments on national interest and again, Bundy could not agree on Morgenthau's basic rationale. Thus, Bundy writes, "You will forgive me if I persist in the belief that this attitude can be justified even by those of us who think there may be other sources of illumination, in addition to the national interest."³⁰ He did not point out what those "other sources of illumination" might be.

On Aug. 22, 1957, Morgenthau sent Bundy a copy of the paper that he presented to the meeting of the American Political Science Association. The paper, titled "Alliances," was published in the winter, 1958 edition of the journal, *Confluence*, the editor and founder of which was Henry Kissinger.³¹ Bundy is listed as a member of the editorial board but had little to do with Kissinger's journal. Bundy did not reply to acknowledge receipt of the copy.

Sometime in October 1960, Morgenthau sent Bundy his latest book, the third volume of an anthology of articles published under the overall title, *Politics in the 20th Century*. On November 1, 1960, just days before Kennedy's election victory and Bundy's appointment as national security adviser, Bundy responded with a polite thank you and remarked that one of his students had seen the book on his desk and hastened to borrow it. Bundy also noted that he had "seen and admired parts of it" in the periodical literature, but again, there is no comment on the substantive content of the book,³² that is all about foreign affairs and national security that could only be helpful to Bundy in his new responsibilities as the President's national security adviser. It may also be presumed that Bundy's imminent appointment did not escape Morgenthau's attention and the possibility of a government appointment either as a staff member in Bundy's national security office or as the occupant of the European desk in the State Department. None of these materialized, and again, the veto was supplied by Bundy.

During the election campaign, Morgenthau had served as a consultant to the Kennedy advisory committee on foreign affairs. In November 1960, Morgenthau's name appeared on a list of candidates that was submitted to what came to be called Kennedy's talent search committee for appointment as a foreign policy specialist. Just as Bundy had rejected Morgenthau's appointment as a full-time professor at Harvard in 1959, Bundy, in 1960, rejected him again. Bundy's stated reason: Morgenthau would not be an effective policy planner.³³ Bundy's real reason, presumably? He was uninterested in the details of geopolitical complexities. He was uninterested in the careful and objective examination of facts by which to determine policy. He was uninterested in contesting the truths of his position. Less charitably, one may say that he was greatly overrated. Even less charitably, one may say he was the consummate dogmatist.

June 21, 1965. It was a rare television event. It was billed as a CBS News Special titled “Vietnam Dialogue: Mr. Bundy and the Professors,” a one-hour program on a Monday evening in which President Johnson’s chief foreign policy instructor would defend the government’s war policy against the most authoritative voice in foreign policy and the chief critic of the war. To those familiar with the nationally televised teach-in of May 15 and Bundy’s conspicuous absence in great part due to his reluctance to face Morgenthau,³⁴ it was the encounter between Morgenthau and Bundy that was considered the real debate. The hoopla over Bundy’s appearance in a nationally televised debate was the result of his reputation as a mental phenomenon from Harvard guiding and overseeing American policy in which it was believed that the stewardship of that policy was in the right hands. For those who had kept up with the critics—Morgenthau, in particular, among all his other writings on Vietnam, had provided the definitive argument against the war two months earlier in the *New York Times Magazine* on April 18, 1965, which he titled “We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam.” Indeed, by the summer of 1965, it was clear to any objective observer that the war was a mistake and should never have been fought. It must be noted again that this is Bundy’s verdict from the grave in his collaborative work with Gordon Goldstein titled *Lessons in Disaster*. On June 21, Bundy was marching down that “path” to disaster as he simply put forward the usual litany of the administration’s defense of the war.

To read the transcript of the debate is to gain an intellectual appreciation of the vacuity of Bundy’s mental processes that are instructive in understanding the dogmatic mindset. It enables the reader to see the fallacies and emptiness of Bundy’s position. To watch the entire program—the proceedings are available at the Museum of Radio and Television in New York City—is to observe an obnoxious and arrogant man, inflated with himself and the certainty of his position, deliberately distorting or ignoring the facts put before him.

As the negotiations proceeded for the airing of the CBS News Special, Bundy wanted every advantage as he set out his terms with CBS for the place and format of the debate. The representatives of the Inter-University Committee for a Public Hearing on Vietnam, the group responsible for the May 15 teach-in, arrived in Washington to advance their choice for the place and format of the debate. The professors wanted a two-hour televised program consisting of three people on each side presenting prepared statements followed by “spontaneous cross-arguments” that would allow “adequate formulation” of the Committee’s positions. When they arrived, they found that Bundy had already talked to Fred Friendly of CBS and that the format and rules had already been determined. Bundy had succeeded

in reducing the program to one hour and in a closed setting very different from the Sheraton ballrooms of the previous meetings of May 15 filled with students and professors and broadcast by several networks. Bundy got what he wanted, and thus the program was televised before a small audience at Georgetown University and the Inter-University Committee had to accept what Bundy and CBS had already arranged. CBS, however, knowing that Bundy had failed to confront Morgenthau on May 15, insisted that Bundy had to face Morgenthau, to which Bundy agreed.³⁵

Bundy arrived at the television studio with a large stack of note cards, the work of Bundy's research assistants, James C. Thomson, Jr., a staffer in Bundy's office, and Howard Wriggins, a member of the Policy Planning Council. On May 13, 1965, just before Bundy had withdrawn from the May 15 debate, Thomson sent Bundy this note: "Here are some materials on Hans Morgenthau. They were prepared, on the basis of Library of Congress material by Howard Wriggins. . . . I have marked some items in Howard's notes that seem of particular significance."³⁶ At one point during the debate, as Bundy proceeded to quote from his writings—Morgenthau said sarcastically that he is "honored by these selective quotations" and moments later, that he admired "the efficiency of Mr. Bundy's office"—to which Bundy replied that "*I do my own*" [Emphasis added]. Bundy left out the word research or work, which, based on Thomson's memo, is an outright lie.³⁷

The moderator was Eric Sevareid who opened the program with a carefully prepared statement that noted the seriousness of the evening's discussion. However "one titles or defines it," he said, the United States is at war with the cost so far, of over "a billion and a half dollars" and "several hundred lives" [By the end of 1965, over 1,300 Americans were killed in combat in Vietnam.]. The prospects, he added, are not good as the costs will grow as "the war wears on." The question for the participants, he said, involves "the cost and risk of fighting this war," which "must be measured against the cost and risk of not fighting it." He referred to the national teach-in of the previous month and then called "this hour a kind of condensed reprise" of the earlier teach-in. He then introduced the participants.³⁸

Supporting Bundy and the policy of the administration were Columbia University Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Guy G. Pauker of the Rand Corporation. Allied with Morgenthau, were O. Edmund Clubb, a former foreign service officer currently affiliated with Columbia University's East Asia Institute and John Donoghue, professor of anthropology at Michigan State University and formerly an adviser to the Diem government with the Michigan State Advisory Group in Saigon.

Sevareid then divided the hour's discussion into four "large, encompassing questions" or "aspects" of what he called "the whole Vietnam problem."

Question one: “What are the justifications for the American presence in Vietnam—why are we there?” Question two: “What is the fundamental nature of this war? Is it aggression from North Vietnam or is it basically, a civil war between the peoples of South Vietnam?” Question three: “What are the implications of this Vietnam struggle in terms of the whole rise, and future of Communism in Asia as a whole, particularly in terms of Communist China’s power and aims and future actions?” And question four: what are the “alternatives to our present policy in Vietnam?”³⁹

The two principal participants presented their general position on the war and everything they said throughout the course of the debate conformed to those views. Bundy, as one of the chief architects of the Vietnam policy, expressed the official position of the government. Bundy: “... I believe with all my heart that the policy which the United States is now following is the best policy ... and the one which best serves our interests and the interests of the world, the interest of peace.” Morgenthau:

I am opposed to our present policy in Vietnam on moral, military, political and general intellectual grounds. I am convinced that this policy cannot achieve the desired results and that, quite to the contrary, it will create problems much more serious than those which we have faced in the recent past.⁴⁰

Bundy’s claim that the current policy “serves our interests and the interests of the world,” is, once again, the error of applying a sweeping form of abstract Wilsonian moralism to Vietnam and to equate this with “the interests of the world.” Indeed, in response to “Why are we there?” Bundy quotes the President, also imbued with Wilsonian moralism and grandiose ideas to protect the world against Communism, who said

we are there ‘to strengthen world order. Around the globe, from Berlin to Thailand, are people whose well-being rests, in part, on the belief they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Vietnam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of American commitment. The result would be increased unrest and instability or even war.’⁴¹

Bundy added more from the President’s speech: “we have a promise to keep”; “a national pledge to help South Vietnam defend its independence”; we must not “abandon this small and brave nation to its enemy”; “there are great stakes in the balance”; we must “curb the appetite for aggression”; “to withdraw from one battlefield means only to prepare for the next.”⁴² The reader may well note the similarity of Bundy’s rhetoric with that of Senator John F. Kennedy on June 1, 1956 at the first conference of the AFV.

Morgenthau's response to Severeid's question began with "two political arguments against the official position" of a "commitment" and the pledge "that we cannot let South Vietnam down." First, he said, we "should not overlook the fact that it was we who installed the first government in Saigon, the Diem Government," which means that "the state of South Vietnam is, in a sense, our own creation—for without our support, the regime in Saigon could not have lasted for any length of time." Thus, to "say we must keep a promise," a promise "to our own agents," is to have made a contract with ourselves, which is not "a valid foundation for our presence in South Vietnam." To support his argument that our "promise" is not a valid reason for our engagement in Vietnam, Morgenthau cites the example of Alexander Hamilton in 1793 when the United States was obligated by treaty to aid France should France become engaged in a war in Europe, an obligation if fulfilled, could have baneful consequences for the United States. Thus, it was Hamilton who laid down the enduring principle that no nation is obligated to adhere to a promise or a treaty or to come to the aid of another nation that endangers its own interests or its well-being. As for the second argument, Morgenthau pointed to "the abundance of reports to the effect" that "most of the South Vietnamese" want "to be left alone" and want the United States to leave. Morgenthau then referred to an article in the *Economist* magazine authored by a Vietnamese correspondent who noted that the slogan "making the rounds in Saigon is 'Yanks, fight your wars elsewhere.'"⁴³

Turning to the second question, "What is the fundamental nature of this war?" Morgenthau said it was a revolt of the peasants of South Vietnam against their government in Saigon and thus a civil war in the South "aided and abetted" but not the result of aggression by the North Vietnamese. Professor Donoghue, who had worked in the villages of South Vietnam, also saw the conflict as a "civil war," as a battle in which "most peasants" opposed "the government that we support." Brzezinski, at one point, admitted the conflict was a civil war that had been going on for ten years, yet he also claimed that Vietnam was not just a local issue but would have long-term consequences as "a global issue." Pauker of the Rand Corporation saw the Vietcong rebels of South Vietnam engaged in "a long-ranged plan of conquest on behalf of the Communist government of North Vietnam."⁴⁴

Bundy said Morgenthau is "simply wrong" but instead of proving it, he simply resorted to quotations. First he quoted Secretary of State Rusk: "The determined and ruthless campaign" of the North Vietnamese "to destroy the Republic of South Vietnam" is "a threat to the peace." Bundy then declared in truly sophomoric fashion, that "There couldn't be a clearer statement of a position which has been repeated a number of times." In fact, it was probably

repeated about a hundred times by various government officials but the question was whether the “position,” no matter how clearly stated, was borne out by the facts. The former Harvard dean did not grapple with this question. The next series of Bundy quotes comprise statements from Ho Chi Minh and various North Communist sources affirming that they are the “brain” and “vanguard” of the “working class people” that “decides all victories of the revolution.” Bundy calls these quotes “evidence” that is “overwhelming.”⁴⁵

As to the third question, what does the war mean in the long run as to “Communist China’s power” and “the future of Communism in Asia?” Here, Seavereid turned first to Morgenthau who began by noting that “one cannot look at the Vietnamese situation in isolation from our over-all policy in Asia and in isolation from the overall policy in Asia of our enemies.” He then said, “And here [we] come back to what we have discussed before. We are really in Vietnam not because we must honor a commitment or because we want to help the people of South Vietnam who rely on us. We are there because we want to contain Communism.” And then he said, to the amusement of the audience, “And I have no quotation to read from”—Bundy quoted liberally from his stack of note cards—“but I have a very good memory,” which elicited laughter. Morgenthau then recalled that it was Defense Secretary McNamara who said “we are in South Vietnam in order to stop Communism, and if we don’t stop it there we will have to stop it elsewhere.” He added that “some people have gone so far as to say if we don’t fight in Vietnam we [will] have to fight in Hawaii or, perhaps in California.”⁴⁶

In the clearest possible language, Morgenthau then noted that whereas the military containment policy in Europe was “eminently successful” because in Europe “you could draw a line across a map and tell the Soviet Union, ‘Until here and not farther.’” For behind that line, “on our side, you had viable social, political, economic and military units.” In Asia, “nothing of that kind exists.” In Europe, “the Russian threat was primarily military”; in Asia “the threat of China is primarily a political threat and nothing we can do in South Vietnam or don’t do in South Vietnam is going to make any difference with regard to the potency of such threat in the rest of the world.” He added: “We may hold South Vietnam. We may win a victory in South Vietnam. This means nothing with regard to whether or not Indonesia will go Communist, or an area in Africa will go Communist, or [whether] Colombia will go Communist.”⁴⁷

Bundy had no answer to Morgenthau. When O. Edmund Clubb raised the question of Vietnamese nationalism and, at another point, declared the United States could not win the war in Vietnam without “virtually annihilating” the people of Vietnam, Bundy chose to ignore Clubb and return to Morgenthau. Bundy’s accusation was that “Professor Morgenthau’s real position is that

no particular point [meaning threat] is worth defending.” This is a ridiculous charge for there is nothing in the Morgenthau literature that even hints remotely that the United States should not defend itself militarily if its national security interests were threatened or violated. Bundy then says that Morgenthau “gravely mistakes” U.S. policy “on quite incomplete” [grounds]—again, the usual kind of Bundy reply—and without “citation” though Bundy forgets Morgenthau’s citation of Defense Secretary McNamara’s statement that “we are in South Vietnam to stop Communism and if we don’t stop it there, we will have to stop it elsewhere.”⁴⁸

Almost like an echo of Bundy, Brzezinski jumped into the discussion and said: “I would like to suggest, respectfully, that Professor Morgenthau is wrong in his analysis of Asia and Europe.” It was an embarrassing moment as the audience laughed, Morgenthau smiled and a nervous Brzezinski stumbled momentarily. Brzezinski conceded that containment will be more difficult in Asia, but he quickly added that containment in Asia is the right policy. He insisted that the United States must remain engaged militarily as well as politically in Asia. And curiously, three times in the course of the evening, Brzezinski made reference to the strategy of “the international Communist movement,” which, he said, “will persevere in our age.”⁴⁹ Brzezinski, obviously, had not yet absorbed intellectually the nature of the fragmented Communist world and the polycentrism that was evident as early as the Kennedy years. And for his mistaken judgment on Vietnam and global Communism, Brzezinski was later rewarded with an appointment by President Carter as national security adviser.

At one point in the program, Pauker, a staunch supporter of the government’s policy, complained that Vietnam “had generated so much emotion” on America’s campuses, that “the factual base of the discussion is frequently ignored.” He said he wanted “to bring the facts back into the discussion.” Pauker had earlier spoken of the Vietcong, the South Vietnamese guerrilla fighters, as having a “long-ranged plan of conquest” in concert with the government of North Vietnam. So much for Pauker’s facts. Morgenthau, however, thanked Pauker for his interest in the facts. In turn, Pauker thanked Morgenthau. When it became obvious that the opposing participants were not communicating with each other because they could not agree on what were the facts, Morgenthau commented:

If I may say one sentence about the previous discussion about the facts. It is, of course, obvious, and it has been obvious to me all along, that the government lives in a different factual world from the factual world in which its critics live. It is an open question who is psychotic in this respect—who has created a kind of quasi world in which he lives.⁵⁰

Years later, in another setting, Morgenthau defined what he called the “psychotic” condition in politics when he was asked why the members of a new administration “accept the premises of the previous administration without any fundamental reexamination?” And how is it that they “perceive[d] reality incorrectly?” Morgenthau began by phrasing the question this way: why is it that “a succession of intelligent and knowledgeable people who have come to Washington [and] have partaken in the same kind of error?” “That is simply answered,” Morgenthau said,

for there exists a kind of selectivity through which only those people will be admitted to Washington who approve of and strengthen the misconception of the ruling group. In other words, what the ruling group cannot afford is to have the veil of error lifted which conceals reality from them. We are here in the presence of a truly psychotic situation. You create a world which is a figment of the imagination, and you act on it as if it were the real world. What you cannot afford is to accept an opinion which proves to you and this world which you regard to be the real one is a mere figment of your imagination. You cannot allow this fictitious world to be revealed for the fiction it is; for you cannot afford to face reality as it actually is. You know the joke about the difference between a neurotic and a psychotic: the psychotic believes that two and two make five; the neurotic believes that two and two make four, but he is unhappy about it. We have been governed by psychotics, by people who really believed and still believe that two and two make five. And they cannot afford to face the reality that two and two make four.⁵¹

At the same conference, Morgenthau emphasized: “I happen to believe that there is a possibility by rational political analysis to arrive at certain objective conclusions” that define what is and what is not the national interest, what is and what is not vital to American security.⁵² On the evening of June 21, 1965, Bundy, his allies, Brzezinski and Pauker did not want the “veil of error” lifted from their eyes.

Sevareid’s fourth and final question was, what are the “alternatives to our present policy in Vietnam?” Bundy began by noting “there are a number of alternatives” but in a rambling and disjointed statement, he declared that “the alternative which is more important than the one proposed by these gentlemen,” is the one that the administration is currently following. He opposed “the general proposal moving toward withdrawal ... the position of the gentlemen opposite.” To remain in Vietnam, he said, was “the position of the administration” supported by “a solid and very strong majority of Congress and of the people”; that “we should stay there and do our part as may become necessary” and find a way to get “this dangerous and difficult business to the conference room.”⁵³

Did Bundy want to negotiate? Evidence, some already noted, abounds that he did not. Thus, in one of his first memos to the President shortly after the June 21 broadcast, Bundy briefed Johnson for a meeting with his advisers to discuss the recommendation of Under Secretary of State, George Ball. Ball's detailed memo to the President warned against "a protracted war involving an open-ended commitment of U.S. forces, mounting U.S. casualties, no assurances of a satisfactory solution and a serious danger of escalation at the end of the road." Ball recommended a ten-point program in which the United States would "cut its losses in Vietnam" and would gradually exit the quagmire. Bundy rejected the proposal out of hand and told Johnson to be deceptive about it. "To listen hard to George Ball," he told Johnson, "and then [to] reject his proposal."⁵⁴

A year earlier, on May 26, 1964, in his memo of "talking points" for Johnson's meeting with Senate Republicans, there is no mention of a conference or negotiations. Bundy tells Johnson that he must emphasize that "what is at stake overall is whether the Communists will take over Southeast Asia" and it is in this "framework that I hope we will be thinking as the discussion goes on."⁵⁵ Months earlier, on February 10, in another memo of "talking points," for Johnson's meeting with Senator Mike Mansfield, who agrees with President de Gaulle on America's misadventure in Vietnam while "we don't," Bundy advises Johnson there should be no "finger pointing at de Gaulle." Rather, Bundy instructs Johnson, "you should say to him [Mansfield] that for the present any weakening of our support of the anti-Communist forces in South Vietnam would give the signal for a wholesale collapse of anti-Communism all over Southeast Asia."⁵⁶ Again, there is no mention of getting to the conference table.

On June 21, Severeid tried to pin Bundy down on the subject of negotiations. He asked Bundy if the administration is willing to negotiate with the Vietcong because there cannot be a negotiated settlement if the United States refuses to talk to the political representatives of the South Vietnamese insurgency forces. Bundy hedges and his reply is vague. He tells Severeid "we'll negotiate with governments" but he does not say we will negotiate with the Vietcong. He says the Vietcong must "pass the signal to friends, supporters and, I say, directors and controllers" by which he means the men in Hanoi who, he believes, are the aggressors because the official U.S. position at this moment is that the conflict is not a civil war. Severeid then presses Bundy: "In other words," Severeid continues, "we would ... I want to get clear that we would negotiate with the Vietcong as long as they were legitimately ..." [represented]. Bundy then interrupts Severeid and says: "No, what I think I said was that that is not what stands in the way of a conference. We propose to discuss this matter with governments."

Thus, Bundy avoids the question and the answer is clear: the United States will not talk directly to the Vietcong. That is not until the final settlement following the Paris peace talks in January 1973 when the representatives of the Vietcong sit around a huge round table as symbolic equals of the United States whose representatives are sitting around the same table. But on June 21, Bundy's verbal legerdemain elicits some laughter from the audience that suggests he did not fool everyone.⁵⁷

In response to Severeid's final question, Morgenthau cites five theoretical alternatives. He ruled out further air attacks; he rejected an increase of American ground forces; he said we should not oppose moves by the government in Saigon "to come to an understanding with the Vietcong, which would lead to our departure on their invitation," that is, from both the Vietcong and Saigon. He opposed getting out immediately without some "face-saving device" by which a great power attempts to salvage its reputation after years of mistakes and he points to President de Gaulle of France who did this successfully in Algeria. As for the alternative that Morgenthau says is the "most acceptable," it is Senator Fulbright's recent suggestion that the American forces should "try to hold a few strong points on the coast of Vietnam, proving to the Vietcong that they cannot win a military victory, and on that basis to try to negotiate with them in the fall."⁵⁸

It was at this point in the debate when Morgenthau said his appraisal of the war is "certainly supported by all of those observers from neutral or friendly countries who have been in Vietnam" and "who have lived with the Vietcong," that the discussion turned acrimonious as Bundy interrupted Morgenthau in mid-sentence. It occurred as Morgenthau pointed out that his factual views have been supported by articles in *L'Express*, in *Figaro*, and in the *Economist*, which, he said, demonstrates "the deterioration of the military situation." He could have added that his views were also supported in *I. F. Stone's Weekly*, *The New Republic*, and *The Nation*. Morgenthau then cited, as further evidence of the deteriorating military situation, the "enormous" desertion rate of the South Vietnamese Army: "30 percent" overall and in the war zone, a defection of "40 per cent" among the combatant units "around Da Nang."⁵⁹

What happened then, in the closing minutes of the program, is an unscrupulous Bundy eager to win a cheap debating victory at the expense of truth. "I simply have to break in, if I may," Bundy tells Severeid, "and say that Professor Morgenthau is wrong on his facts," "wrong on the desertion rate," wrong on his reading of the *L'Express* and *Economist* articles, and then, to top it off, Bundy accuses Morgenthau of "giving vent to his congenital pessimism," which has nothing to do with Morgenthau's arguments. Then out come the note cards prepared by Thomson and Wriggins as Bundy tells

Sevareid: "I want to take a moment to give you direct quotations to show what I mean."⁶⁰

Bundy then proceeds to misrepresent. He says that Morgenthau had written in 1956 that President Diem had produced a "miracle" in South Vietnam to show that Morgenthau at one time supported American policy. As we have seen, this was Morgenthau's article in the *Washington Post* in February 1956 following his return from Saigon and his interview with Diem. What Morgenthau actually said is that when Diem took over, "the overwhelming opinion at the time" was "that South Vietnam was doomed." There was chaos and no one believed Diem could survive politically. That he did survive politically was the "miracle." This article and his address to the AFV in June, 1956, contained nothing about Morgenthau's support for the new regime. The "miracle" referred only to the political survival of Diem and South Vietnam against overwhelming odds. It alluded only to Diem's political adroitness, and his ruthlessness, in defeating his enemies.⁶¹

Bundy also charged that Morgenthau had initially opposed the Marshall Plan and nine years later had called the Marshall Plan "eminently successful." Whatever citation Bundy read from, he undoubtedly read it incorrectly or mischievously distorted it. In fact, Morgenthau had never opposed the Marshall Plan but had criticized it for not going far enough. For Morgenthau, the Marshall Plan had succeeded in the economic sense, but had left the political and social "disarray" as it had found it.⁶² This is a far cry from saying he had opposed it.

And then there were Morgenthau's figures on the desertion rate of South Vietnamese soldiers. Bundy had not supplied any numbers but simply said that Morgenthau was wrong. Morgenthau later admitted that his figures had been given to him by "a high ranking government official that very day from whom Mr. Bundy also got his information."⁶³ Indeed, as the national security adviser, every bit of intelligence data that goes to the White House passes through his hands before it reaches the President's desk. Thus, Bundy had the same desertion figures, but this did not prevent Bundy from acting dishonestly.

Months later, Morgenthau's figures were confirmed in an article in the *New York Times* by Neil Sheehan on February 24, 1966, which reported that some "96,000 men deserted from South Vietnam's armed forces" in "1965." Sheehan also noted that "Actually the figure reported by the South Vietnamese government was higher" and that "U.S. military officials consider the desertion rate very high and are deeply concerned about it." Sheehan reports that for 1965, "desertions from the regular armed forces nearly doubled ... reaching about 14 per cent of the forces' total strength" while "desertions from the 270,000-man army ... showed a gradual increase"

that “ran near 18 percent.”⁶⁴ A month later, a corrective was supplied by University of Michigan Professor, Arnold S. Kaufman, in a letter to *the Times* on March 3, 1966, which notes that Sheehan did not include an additional 15 per cent of deserters who returned to their ranks, which makes the total number of deserters “approximately 113,000 men.” Thus, by Kaufman’s calculations, “Morgenthau’s “estimate of a 30 per cent desertion rate among recruits appears, therefore, too conservative.” Kaufman also concludes that Bundy, on June 21, not only attempted to deceive the American public, but also “told a whopping lie.”⁶⁵

With just minutes remaining in the program, Bundy accused Morgenthau, in addition to his other “wrongs,” of being wrong on Laos to which Morgenthau replied that he “might have been dead wrong on Laos,” but that doesn’t prove that he’s “dead wrong on Vietnam.” Before Morgenthau could answer Bundy, Severeid apparently thought it fair to recognize Brzezinski who said, reiterating his strong pro-war position, that we must “make it very clear that we are not going to be thrown out of South Vietnam” and that our enemy will experience not victory but “mounting destruction in the North.”⁶⁶ When Severeid turned to Morgenthau, he replied that he was perhaps “too pessimistic about Laos but not terribly more pessimistic than the situation warranted.” He added that Bundy might well have quoted what he “wrote in ’61 and ’62 or quoted what” he “wrote at the end of 1955 after his interview with Diem about what the future of South Vietnam might be,”⁶⁷ which proved to be accurate. This, of course, was not part of the Bundy agenda, which was to promote the government’s policy by trying to discredit Morgenthau as a scholar.

With about a half a minute to go, Pauker resumed his personal quarrel with Donoghue about the aims and objectives of the Vietcong. Donoghue who had lived in the villages of South Vietnam understood the Vietcong as resistance fighters opposed to the despotism of the Saigon government. Pauker, who had also spent considerable time in Vietnam, believed the Vietcong were mere pawns in the overall scheme of making South Vietnam a Communist state. The evidence, as contained particularly in Morgenthau’s writings on the Vietcong guerrilla insurgency, supports Donoghue’s position. The program ended, as Severeid quipped, somewhat ruefully, “I didn’t know we’d end up somewhere in a village in South Vietnam but here we are.” He then thanked the six participants and the audience for attending the broadcast.

Bundy left the White House six months later in February 1966, spent the next three years as President of the Ford Foundation, and continued to publicly support the Vietnam War policy. He got it all wrong and especially in the most prestigious journal of foreign policy study, *Foreign Affairs*, where

he also served as a member of the editorial advisory board. The editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, was a personal friend and also, unsurprisingly, a firm believer in the government's Vietnam policy.

In January 1967, Bundy's article is titled "The End of Either/Or," which refers to what Bundy believes is the choice facing the United States. He writes that while "Vietnam is our most immediate foreign business," we must also not forget our resolve, our "strength" and our "active effort" to bolster our commitments. Thus, the choice of either/or becomes the doctrine of "both/and" and thereby a combination of attending to the war and being prepared for the next war. As examples of "both/and," he cites John F. Kennedy as "the first American president" to make "the recognition of complexity" a basic "habit." But he does not mean the geopolitical complexities of foreign affairs; he means the employment of opposing policies undertaken at the same time such as "the resistance of tyranny" and the "pursuit of accommodation," "counterinsurgency, and the Peace Corps," "military and economic action," which he calls "the olive branch and the arrows."⁶⁸ This is not complexity. Neither Kennedy nor Bundy were attracted to complexity. This is simply the rhetorical contrast of generalized opposites that tells us nothing about the complexities of Vietnamese geopolitics.

The substance of "Either/Or" is the ideological Bundy propounding dogma by fighting Communism and the threat of Communism around the world. Thus, he writes, that "without the military commitments" made by Kennedy and Johnson, "in late 1961 and early 1965 ... South Vietnam would have been delivered" to Hanoi. And then there is the oblique reference to falling dominoes without mentioning dominoes *per se* as he adds: "The chances for peaceful progress in many Pacific nations would have been heavily reduced" had the United States failed to intervene in Vietnam. He alludes again to the dominoes and monolithic Communism when he writes that Vietnam is "a test of Communist revolutionary doctrine, and what happens there will affect what happens elsewhere." He refers to the "continuing conviction, through twelve years," that "we should be ready to do our full share to help prevent the Communists from taking South Vietnam by force and terror." He has no interest in recounting the chronology of decisions "that has brought us to where we are in Vietnam," but he is clearly an advocate of those decisions. "*My own belief,*" he writes, *is that these great decisions, with all their costs, have been right, and that it is right to persevere—in the interest of the Vietnamese, in our own interest and in the wider interest of peace and progress in the Pacific* [Emphasis added].⁶⁹

As Bundy's article went to press, more than 385,000 American troops were in Vietnam and more than 5,000 Americans died in combat during 1966. Two months before "Either/Or" appeared, in November 1966, heavy fighting

in Tay Ninh province resulted in 155 Americans and some 1,000 Vietcong killed. Earlier, in June, 1966, U.S. aircraft began the bombing of petroleum and oil depot storage sites close to the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong. Two months after the Bundy article appeared, U.S. bombing targets included North Vietnamese industrial centers and electric power plants. The United States had now broadened the war to include targets in the more populated cities of the North.⁷⁰

Close to two years later, on October 12, 1968, Bundy spoke at DePauw University in a "Symposium on Law, Liberty and Progress." His address was part of the memorial service for the late John T. McNaughton who died with his wife and son in a plane crash in July, 1967. McNaughton had served in McNamara's Pentagon as Deputy Assistant for International Security and was a graduate of DePauw in Greencastle, Indiana. Bundy apparently did not want his address to go unnoticed, and he thereby released a text of the speech in New York that received front-page coverage in *The New York Times* on October 13 and was the subject of the *Times*' editorial three days later. It also came under scathing criticism from I. F. Stone, *The New Republic* and—no surprise here—Hans J. Morgenthau.

Months after the Tet Offensive of early January and February 1968 that drove President Johnson from office as he announced on national television on March 31, 1968, that he would not be a candidate for re-election, Bundy reconfirmed his commitment to the war. But there was a basic flaw, among other flaws in his reasoning, by which he wanted to continue the fighting, but he didn't want to pay for it. That while the United States should not continue, Bundy said, its "annual costs of \$30 billion and an annual rate of sacrifice of more than 10,000 American lives" to the war effort, he also said "it was right to fight the war." In Bundy's words: "To say that the burden of this war must now be lifted is not at all to say that it should never have been fought." Here he repeats what he wrote in "Either/Or": "My own view ... remains that the avoidance of defeat in Southeast Asia was an object of such importance to us and to the people of the area that the basic decision of 1965 to stand and fight in South Vietnam, was right." He emphasizes: "... that in this fundamental sense the decisions of 1965 have already been validated by events in the area"; that "Furthermore, I do not believe that we are required now, by our new necessities, to lose what has been gained in the strategic sense." And then the twisted logic: "I do believe we have to change our course. Whatever the rights and wrongs of past decisions, the imperative of the future is to begin to lift this burden from our national life."⁷¹

But, according to Bundy, we must not give up the fight. The war will continue, he says, but without further escalation. He advises a phased withdrawal of American troops, a bombing halt, a force of 100,000 American

troops to remain in South Vietnam if no settlement with the North is reached. He advocates longer tours of duty because "a force that rotates every twelve months is no force for this kind of war." He then asks: "But what of Saigon? What happens there as we cut down?" His answer: "No one knows." He is also unsure as to what the critics will say, but he suggests the critics will claim that Saigon will collapse the moment the United States reduces its military commitment. "Optimists and friends," he says, may believe that such reduction "may stimulate increased self-confidence among those who are determined to survive against all Communist pressure." What does Bundy believe? And to whom is his policy directed? Strangely, Bundy asserts, "So far as it is within our means, we should act within this policy of cutback *to confound the pessimists and reinforce the determined*" [Emphasis added]. But then he returns to Saigon when he says: the United States will not leave, but "since Tet," the emphasis is now "upon the modernization and reinforcement of South Vietnamese forces." "Tet," he says, "has made three things plain at once": the United States would not "win," "Saigon was not about to lose," and "the Communists could do more [damage?] to our public opinion" than they could "on the ground." He adds that the deployment of 100,000 American troops "in place for years" means that no one can accuse the United States of "precipitate or faithless withdrawal." And then his conclusion reflecting his bewildering appraisal: "We should cut back—but we need not and should not give up."⁷²

The editorial in the *Times* on October 15, 1968, titled "Agonizing Reappraisal" was too kind. The editorial called it "a candid recognition . . . of the compelling logic of events, and a challenge to those who still cling to the futile policies of the past." But Bundy's "basic decision to stand and fight" in Vietnam does not challenge but reconfirms the continuation of futile past policy.

The editorial of October 26 in *The New Republic* cites the key omission in Bundy's speech: he "admits no regret or mistake." Citing Bundy's earlier statements on Vietnam in 1965, 1966 and 1967 that the war had to be fought, that it was "the best policy," that "the costs of Vietnam are quite manageable and are likely to continue," *TNR* concluded that if Bundy's advice is followed, even if the bombing of the North is stopped and if negotiations proceed, the tragedy cannot be obviated. For *TNR*, "neither" the bombing halt nor the negotiations "will raise the dead, nor ease the fault, nor restore popular confidence in the trustworthiness of our leaders." The editorial cites the credibility gap of lies, "deceptions," "self-delusions," and "evasions," which is to some large extent the "responsibility" of Bundy's "lack of candor" throughout the period of his White House years.⁷³

I. F. Stone was characteristically blunt and unsparing. On October 21, he titled his piece on the DePauw speech "The Willful Blindness of McGeorge Bundy."

Stone writes that Bundy calls for “a new consensus” that would “neither get us out . . . nor forestall more Vietnams elsewhere.” The essence of Bundy’s speech that is plainly unacceptable because it makes no sense, Stone writes, is where Bundy claims that “we must not go on as we are going” but then he turns around and says “we need not and should not give up.” For Stone, this is “the climax” of Bundy’s “folly,” “a mini-imperialism” that is a prescription for “new disasters.” And Stone recalls the Bundy of the 1965 teach-in days as “arrogant and smug” who rejected the anti-war criticisms of his academic colleagues and who remains, three years later, unwilling “to change our basic course or to admit any mistakes.”⁷⁴

On November 2, 1968, in *The New Republic*, Morgenthau responded to Bundy’s speech and aptly titled his article “Bundy’s Doctrine of War without End.” Here was the complete *coup de grace* administered by the man who must have relished the devastation he inflicted on the dishonest opponent he faced three years earlier. “It has become fashionable,” Morgenthau writes, “among scholars, retired public officials and politicians to admit that our involvement in Vietnam has not been a success.” It has become “fashionable” also to forego admission of failure and turn to the “post-Vietnam future without pausing to ask what accounts for that failure.” It has become more important, “so it is argued, to end the war than to discover what led us into it.” Morgenthau will not let Bundy get away with this. He writes:

To bury the past and get ready for the future is taken as a manifestation of both positive and patriotic thinking. In many cases this attitude is no doubt self-serving; for the Vietnam ship is obviously sinking, and in consequence many members of the crew jump overboard and frantically swim to shore, making it appear that either they were never aboard or were only doubting and unwilling mates. Yet on closer examination this attitude reveals itself as an organic element in the political pathology that is responsible for the disaster in Vietnam.

Morgenthau continues:

When a government composed of intelligent and responsible men embarks upon a course of action which is utterly at variance with what the national interest requires and which is bound to end in failure, it is impossible to attribute such persistence of error to an accident of personality or circumstance. Nor is it possible to make such an attribution when the preponderant weight of public opinion—political, expert and lay—for years supports such a mistaken course of action. When a nation allows itself to be misgoverned in such a flagrant fashion, there must be something essentially wrong in its intellectual, moral and political constitution. To lay bare what is wrong is not an idle exercise in *ex-post facto* fault-finding. Rather it is an act of public purification and rectification.

If it is not performed and accepted by government and people alike, faults undiscovered and uncorrected, are bound to call forth new disasters, likely to be different from the one in Vietnam, but just as detrimental.⁷⁵

Indeed, the purpose of Morgenthau's article is to examine "the roots of the disaster" in the highly "illuminating" context of Bundy's DePauw University address that differs "from other 'revisionist' documents by the characteristic self-assurance" with which Bundy defends "the decisions of 1965 to enter the war in full force while asking for their revisions now." There are "ten basic propositions" in the Bundy speech that Morgenthau quickly summarizes, the first four of which are demonstrably absurd on their face. Thus, Bundy asserts, that the decision in 1965 "to stand and fight in South Vietnam" has assured the avoidance of defeat; that the decision has been "validated" by events in South Vietnam; that we need not lose what we have gained by a new course of action; that the goal now is "to lift the burden of the war as we now know it"; that we must not continue with our "annual costs of \$30 billion and an annual sacrifice of more than 10,000 American lives ... " Propositions 6 through 10, more elaborately outlined by Morgenthau, are as follows:

6. "It is not right for Asia that it [the war] should go on as it is going, and the people of our own country simply will not support the current level of cost and sacrifice for another period of years"; 7. We cannot expect a military solution since the American forces have been able to "prevent defeat" but not to "produce victory"; 8. "We should be ready for a compromise well short of victory ... " In the absence of such a compromise, our government "must decide that it will reduce the number of American casualties, the number of Americans in Vietnam, and the dollar cost of the war." But we will "keep at least 100,000 troops in place for years. . . ." These changes are "possible" and will not jeopardize "the basic purpose of our forces in Vietnam—the purpose of preventing defeat"; 9. The reduced American effort "can stimulate increased self-reliance" among the determined anti-Communists in South Vietnam; 10. "... Now we should cut back—but need not and should not give up."⁷⁶

Foremost among his criticisms, is Morgenthau's argument that "If our waging war in Vietnam serves a vital national interest, as Mr. Bundy maintains, is it permissible to support this interest with less than wholehearted effort, let alone jeopardize it, in order to satisfy the aspirations for reform and mollify popular moods at home?" Thus, if American national interest is truly threatened by the collapse of South Vietnam, then the war must not be scaled down. And certainly, it must not be scaled down because, as Bundy maintains, the American people are no longer willing to bear the cost of the war. It can only be scaled down if Vietnam is not a matter of America's

national interest. And if it is not, then why fight the war in the first place? And the overall effects of Bundy's plan? In Morgenthau's words, it "will not liquidate the war but only draw it out indefinitely..."⁷⁷

Moreover, Morgenthau writes, it is not only "Bundy's logic that is at fault, but also his historic recollection." The crucial question for the administrations Bundy served was "who shall govern South Vietnam?" a question that can be answered in two different ways: "narrow and short-range," meaning "the prevention of a Communist take over"; or "broad and long-range," such as Bundy's frequent quotation of the President to insure "the independence of South Vietnam and its freedom from attack," meaning "the defeat of the Vietcong and of North Vietnam." If one accepts the short-range goal, one may say the "United States has been successful since it has prevented a Communist take-over." As to the long-range goal, the United States has failed "for South Vietnam's 'freedom from attack' has not been achieved" while "its 'independence' can be maintained only through the presence of a half a million American troops." Thus, Morgenthau emphasizes, the military power "that threatened the existence of the Saigon government at the beginning of 1965, still threatens it today"; that "our massive intervention has not decisively affected the overall distribution of military and political power unfavorable to the Saigon government." That while Bundy may claim success for holding off a take-over by the North, he cannot, Morgenthau argues, "justify the kind of war" he chooses to fight while "at the same time advocate the reduction of our armed presence to a minimum of 100,000 men." Here, Morgenthau argues, with impeccable logic:

For if 100,000 men will be sufficient to keep the Saigon government in power in the near future, why weren't they sufficient at the beginning of 1965 when hardly any organized units of the North Vietnamese army were south of the demilitarized zone? Either we have wasted, during the last four years, our human and material resources on a monstrous scale in order to achieve a result that could have been achieved much more cheaply, or the 100,000 men whose presence Mr. Bundy ultimately envisages in South Vietnam will not be sufficient to keep the Saigon government in power. Mr. Bundy's argument either damns the war as we fought it as an appalling extravagance, or it prepares us for defeat.⁷⁸

For Morgenthau, Bundy has a memory lapse. Bundy was the advocate of the broad and long range goal of American policy. Indeed, Morgenthau writes, "the whole conduct of the war—search and destroy, pacification, the massive bombing of Vietnam"—the more ambitious goal was "supported by our policy makers, Mr. Bundy included, who in 1965 spoke of 'victory' and

not the mere prevention of defeat.” “What the administration wanted until recently,” Morgenthau writes,

and for which it sacrificed annually 10,000 American lives (and uncounted Vietnamese lives) and spent \$30 billion was not to keep the Saigon government just barely in power, but to win the civil war for the Saigon government by destroying the Vietcong as an organized political and military force. By now making it appear that what we wanted all along was nothing more than the avoidance of defeat, one can offer the avoidance of defeat as the equivalent of victory.⁷⁹

And it follows, as Morgenthau points out, and from what we have seen in these pages, what Bundy has “never understood and what he cannot now admit without discrediting the policies which he has devised and supported so prominently” is “the untenability of the basic premise on which our Vietnam policy, past and present” and in Bundy’s proposal for the future rest: that “our military intervention was justified in 1965 because a vital national interest was at stake.”⁸⁰ Indeed, there was never a vital American interest at stake in Vietnam.

Thus, Morgenthau can justifiably write that Bundy’s current proposal “partakes of the same defective mode of thought” as when he advocated the defeat of the Vietcong in 1965. That his current proposal, Morgenthau says “bluntly,” is “the road to disaster on the installment plan at home and abroad.” That in January 1967, Bundy wrote: “Retreat in Vietnam is not the road forward at home.” That the men whose counsel, including Bundy’s, were “so false in the past,” are not “worth listening to now.” Morgenthau adds: “The best they can do for the country that they have served so ill is to allow wiser men to try to repair the damage they have caused,” which is also “the best they can do for themselves.” And in a final swipe at Bundy, Morgenthau quotes a Latin proverb that reads: “If you had only kept silent, you might still pass for a statesman.”⁸¹

In 1988, at age seventy-one, Bundy published his only full sized study of a major issue titled *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First 50 Years*. It is an odd work of history, a study of the “choices” when the bomb was not used in the fifty year history of various international crises since World War II. Buried in this 735 page book are just four brief references to Vietnam. At the beginning of the last third of the book, Bundy writes that the war was a “disaster” that “carries lessons that Americans are still struggling to understand.” As to how Vietnam relates to his subject, he writes, incredulously, “I know of no serious retrospective argument that it was a mistake not to use the bomb.”⁸² Did anyone ever argue that the bomb should have been used to quell the civil war in Vietnam?

In a memorial tribute from his former assistant, James C. Thomson, Jr., in *The Times Week in Review* on September 22, 1996, Bundy is quoted in reply to an unnamed questioner who confronted Bundy about his role in the war and said, “Mac, you screwed it up, didn’t you?” After a moment of silence, Bundy replied: “Yes, I did. But I’m not going to waste the rest of my life feeling guilty about it.” Thomson goes on to say that at the time of his death in September 1996, Bundy was working on a book about the war “whose main message,” Thomson writes, “was that the war was a terrible mistake.”⁸³ This, it turns out, was the book authored by Gordon Goldstein cited earlier, which appeared in 2008. In the early pages of his book, Goldstein tells us, that as Bundy began to have second thoughts about Vietnam, he “had delved deeply into the voluminous literature of the war” but only twelve authors are noted by Goldstein and Morgenthau is not among them.⁸⁴ Yet it is in Morgenthau’s corpus of writings on Vietnam that one may find the most comprehensive history of the war from 1961 to 1975.

In 1993, three years before his death, Bundy gave the Henry L. Stimson lectures at Yale, whose subject, according to Professor Gaddis Smith, the director of the Yale Center for International and Area Studies who issued the invitation, was “Vietnam in personal and historical perspective.” Gaddis later informed me that Vietnam was “hardly discussed” and that Bundy revealed none of the doubts Thomson noted in his *Times*’ piece.⁸⁵

In the Goldstein book, Bundy’s acknowledgements that the war was a mistake and should never have been fought are revealed as piecemeal statements from fragments of Bundy’s annotations of his memos as national security adviser.⁸⁶ They are never set forth as a sustained and well thought out confessional of error and misjudgment. As Bundy replied to the questioner noted in the Thomson memorial tribute, Bundy admits that he did “screw it up” but then he says, “I am not going to waste the rest of my life feeling guilty about it.” This appears to be the Bundy we have come to know through his written and oral participation during the Vietnam War debate. He remained, apparently, a true believer in the war he helped to design, and his arrogance, in refusing to be remorseful or contrite, is vintage Bundy.

Bundy left government in February 1966, took up residence in New York, and for the next thirteen years was president of the Ford Foundation. In 1979, Bundy became a professor of history at New York University and retired in 1989.

Morgenthau, in February 1966, moved to New York where he accepted a one-year appointment as Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, an appointment, as will be explored in a later chapter, that was designed to curb Morgenthau’s activities as an opponent of the war. As will also be seen, Morgenthau continued to publish and engage in public debate while

presenting his papers to the Council's discussion groups, which were later published in his 1969 book, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*. Morgenthau's move to New York became permanent when he accepted in 1968 an appointment at the City College of New York. From New York, he made a reverse commute to teach his classes at Chicago until 1971 when he retired.

In New York, Morgenthau resided in an apartment at 19 East 80th Street at the corner of Madison Avenue. In 1966, Bundy bought a large apartment on Fifth Avenue facing Central Park where a limousine arrived every morning to deliver him to his office at the Ford Foundation. In June, 1980, just weeks before Morgenthau died in July, 1980, both he and Bundy were participants at a round table discussion at the Miller Center of Public Affairs in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Director of the Miller Center was Morgenthau's former student Kenneth W. Thompson. Neither Bundy nor Morgenthau were attendees at each other's presentations. Morgenthau, in declining health, was assisted by another former student, Robert Myers, who took him to the plane and pushed his wheelchair. Both Thompson and Myers tell me that Bundy also pushed the chair for a brief time, but that neither said a word to the other. And during the informal gathering at the conclusion of the meeting, again, no words passed between the two men.⁸⁷

The bad blood emanating from the June 21 debate never abated. The war continued to rage as Bundy kept silent and Morgenthau continued his attempt to halt the drift into disaster. In the final analysis, Bundy won out and Morgenthau failed. Dogma had triumphed over reality.

NOTES

1. Hans J Morgenthau, "Prologue," in *Truth and Power*, 5.
2. Hans J. Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy*, 154.
3. Thomas C. Reeves, *A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy* (New York, Oxford, Singapore, Sydney: The Free Press, 1991), 227–28.
4. Anthony Lewis, "Kennedy Staff Forms Own Style," *New York Times*, 6 February 1961, 14.
5. "JFK's McGeorge Bundy, 'Cool Head for the Cold War,'" *Newsweek*, 4 March 1963, 20–24; also in "The Use of Power With a Passion for Peace," *Time*, 25 June 1965, 26–29.
6. "Use of Power," *Time*, 28.
7. Sidney Hyman, "When Bundy Says, 'The President Wants__'," *New York Times Magazine*, 2 December 1962, 132.
8. Louis Menashe and Ronald Radosh, eds, *Teach-Ins: U.S.A., Reports, Opinions, Documents* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 142–43; also in "Architect of U.S. Policy," *New York Times*, 18 May 1965, 18.

9. Gordon M. Goldstein, *Lessons in Disaster, McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, Henry Holt & Company, 2008), 2.

10. Goldstein, *Lessons*, 227. Goldstein omits pertinent Bundy hyperbole about Roosevelt. Thus, Bundy refers to FDR as “a master of the arts of righteous war”; that “American power must be harnessed” to “the real interests of other peoples”; that those interests are “consistent with and even contributory to the interests of Americans”; that this “is a proposition new in the annals of the world’s great powers” which is “challenged by Communist hostility”; and challenged also “by timid and limited conceptions of what American effort can achieve.” From the full text, McGeorge Bundy, Memorial Day Remarks, 2–4, Hyde Park, New York, 30 May 1965, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Morgenthau’s *Worldview* article on “The Present Tragedy of America,” appeared in September 1969, 14–15.

11. Richard Holbrooke, “The Doves Were Right,” *New York Times Book Review*, 30 November 2008, 12–13.

12. Goldstein, *Lessons*, 16.

13. Bundy at Notre Dame is in Austin C. Wehrwein, “Academic Critics Chided by Bundy,” *New York Times*, 7 June 1965, 42. Bundy’s arrogance is limitless. In alluding to the anti-Administration demonstrations and teach-ins, Bundy remarks: “I observe that, as is true in other academic exercises of this spring, those who are the least learned make the most noise.”

14. Emerson to Morgenthau, 12 November 1959, Morgenthau Papers, Box 66.

15. Elliot to Morgenthau, 23 November 1959, Morgenthau Papers, Box 66.

16. Thompson and Myers, eds., *Truth and Tragedy*, 375–76.

17. Thompson and Myers, eds., *Truth and Tragedy*, 376.

18. There are three letters from Bundy to Morgenthau and two short notes from Morgenthau to Bundy separate from any notes which might have accompanied Morgenthau’s reprints sent to Bundy, Morgenthau Papers, Box 7.

19. Samuel Flagg Bemis, “Within Our Own Power,” *New York Times*, 10 June 1951, BR4.

20. Morgenthau, *In Defense*, 3.

21. Morgenthau, *In Defense*, 7.

22. Morgenthau, *In Defense*, 29, 33, 35.

23. Hans J. Morgenthau, “What is the National Interest of the United States?” *The Annals*, Vol. 282, July, 1952, 1.

24. Morgenthau, “National Interest,” 3.

25. Morgenthau, “National Interest,” 3.

26. Morgenthau, “National Interest,” 4.

27. Morgenthau, “National Interest,” 6–7.

28. Bundy to Morgenthau, 20 September 1952, Morgenthau Papers, Box 7.

29. Ward Just, “A Man of the Establishment,” *Newsweek*, 30 September 1996, 47.

30. Bundy to Morgenthau, 18 November 1952, Morgenthau Papers, Box 7.

31. Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger, A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 72–74. Isaacson points out that *Confluence* was a Kissinger creation forged to build “a network of influential contacts,” to build “a personal power base” and to help

him to become "an ascending star in the galaxy of international affairs," "a method of mutual self-aggrandizement by Kissinger and his contributors than a true edition to the literature of foreign affairs." In their discussion of *Confluence*, Kissinger tells Isaacson that "I just dreamed it up. I got a book listing the addresses of foundations and began to write them seeking money." \$26,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation "allowed him to print five thousand or so copies of each issue and send them free to anyone he wanted to impress."

32. Bundy to Morgenthau, 1 November 1960, Morgenthau Papers, Box 7.

33. Memo, Bundy to Sargent Shriver, 16 November 1960, 3, John Kenneth Galbraith, White House File, JFK Library, Dorchester, Mass., Box 77. In Bundy's words, "I think that Walt Rostow and Robert Tufts, but not Hans Morgenthau, would be excellent members of the Policy Planning Board. Morgenthau has a commentator's, not a policy-planner's mind."

34. Morgenthau, in his opening remarks at the May 15 Teach-In, said that he had "been categorically vetoed" by Bundy as his debating opponent. Andrew Kopkind, "The Teach-In on Vietnam" in *The New Republic* on 29 May 1965, 15, repeats Morgenthau's statement. See also Meg Greenfield, "After the Washington Teach-In," *The Reporter*, 3 June 1965, 6, who writes: "For what the [Inter-University] Committee understood to be 'personal reasons' Bundy was not disposed to debate with Professor Hans Morgenthau ... and he was also cool to Senator Wayne Morse. He accepted the political and Asian specialist George Kahin of Cornell."

35. Menashe and Radosh, eds., *Teach-Ins*, 207–08.

36. "Note for Mr. Bundy," Thomson to Bundy, 13 May 1965, James C. Thomson Papers, JFK Library, Dorchester, Massachusetts, Box 11.

37. *CBS News Special Report*, "Vietnam Dialogue: Bundy and the Professors," 21 June 1965, transcript in Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 30–31.

38. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 2.

39. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 4, 10, 16, 23.

40. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 3.

41. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 5.

42. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 5.

43. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 8–10.

44. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 11–12, 14.

45. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 15–16.

46. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 16–17.

47. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 17.

48. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 3.

49. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 27.

50. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 27–28.

51. Morgenthau, "Convention and Confrontation," *Partisan Review*, 364.

52. Morgenthau, "Convention and Confrontation," 362.

53. Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 23.

54. Bundy's memo to President Johnson, 1 July 1965, *FRUS 1964*, Vol. 3, *Vietnam June-December 1965*, 117.

55. Bundy's memo to President Johnson, 26 May 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 390.

56. Bundy's memo to President Johnson, 10 February 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 67.

57. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 24, 25, 27. The laughter is clearly audible in the video recording, The Museum of Television and Radio, New York, N. Y.

58. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 28.

59. "Bundy and the Professors," Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 28.

60. Morgenthau, *Truth and Tragedy*, 383.

61. Morgenthau, *Truth and Tragedy*, 383.

62. Morgenthau, *Truth and Tragedy*, 384.

63. Morgenthau, *Truth and Tragedy*, 384.

64. Neil Sheehan, "1965 Desertions Up in Saigon's Forces," *New York Times*, 24 February 1966, 1.

65. Letter, Arnold S. Kaufman, 3 March 1966, *New York Times*, 32.

66. "Bundy and the Professors," 30.

67. "Bundy and the Professors," 31.

68. McGeorge Bundy, "The End of Either/Or," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 45, no.2 (January 1967), 192.

69. Bundy, "The End of Either/Or," 195.

70. *Reporting Vietnam, Part 1: American Journalism, 1959–1969*, 787.

71. Remarks of Bundy at DePauw University, 12 October 1968, Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 4. Also *New York Times*, 13 October 1968, 1, excerpts, 25.

72. Remarks, Bundy, Morgenthau Papers, Box 105, 14–16.

73. Editorial, *The New Republic*, 26 October 1968. Also in Morgenthau Papers, Box 105.

74. I. F. Stone, "The Willful Blindness of Mc George Bundy," 21 October 1968 in I. F. Stone, *Polemics and Prophecies, 1967–1970* (Boston, Toronto, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 350, 351.

75. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Bundy's Doctrine of War Without End," *The New Republic*, 2 November 1968, 18; also in Morgenthau Papers, Box 105.

76. Morgenthau, "Bundy's Doctrine," 18.

77. Morgenthau, "Bundy's Doctrine," 20.

78. Morgenthau, "Bundy's Doctrine," 19.

79. Morgenthau, "Bundy's Doctrine," 19.

80. Morgenthau, "Bundy's Doctrine," 20.

81. Morgenthau, "Bundy's Doctrine," The Latin proverb: *Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses*," 20.

82. McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), 541.

83. James C. Thomson, "A Memory of McGeorge Bundy," *New York Times*, 22 September 1996, E3.

84. Gordon M. Goldstein, *Lessons in Disaster*, 5.

85. Gaddis Smith to author, 15 January 1998.
86. Goldstein, *Lessons in Disaster*, 24, 221.
87. Robert J. Myers telephone interview by author, 15 March 2005; Kenneth W. Thompson telephone interview by author, 13 August 2003 and 21 August 2003. Thompson and Myers are former students and friends of Morgenthau.

Chapter 3

Media Neglect of the National Interest

On May 22, 1971, the editorial in *The New Republic* wanted a formal inquiry to determine why “the U.S. ever committed its power, prestige and men to so foolish a cause” based on “convictions” that “turned out to be illusions.” A decade earlier, in his May 1962 article in *Commentary*, Morgenthau warned that “Vietnam” could become “another Korea,” that is, a long, drawn-out struggle, a war without end, at a horrific cost in human life. What was Morgenthau’s answer to this eventuality? Here he writes: “It is therefore incumbent upon the government of the United States to determine with all possible precision the extent of the American interest in South Vietnam and the extent of our military commitment.”¹ In retrospect, one might also reasonably assume that a similar responsibility applies to the nation’s journalists and molders of public opinion to determine with some degree of accuracy the reasons for America’s involvement in South Vietnam. Yet they, like the government, did not do this. And especially is this notable in the editorial and opinion pages of the nation’s most formidable venue of information, the *New York Times*, whose editors and columnists were particularly remiss. Since Morgenthau’s opposition was nearly everywhere in print and in public debate, his reasoned arguments against the war could hardly be missed. Yet he was simply ignored though the *Times* found his commentary on other foreign policy matters intellectually worthy of publication.

Indeed, Morgenthau, as author, was no stranger to the *New York Times*. From June 7, 1959 to April 18, 1965, 11 Morgenthau articles appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*. From May 6, 1962, to November 9, 1975, Morgenthau published nine book reviews in the daily *New York Times*. From November 13, 1956, to the time of his death in July 1980, no less than twenty-five Morgenthau letters were published in the national paper of record. And

after the introduction of the Op-Ed feature in September 1970, Morgenthau published three Op-Ed articles in the *Times* on March 28, 1974, on November 22, 1974, and on July 25, 1978.² Yet, throughout the course of the war and Morgenthau's prominence as the most prolific critic of the Vietnam policy, including his many articles in *Commentary*, until 1965, and in *The New Republic*, which remained his main outlet for his opposition throughout the war, and in his later contributions to *The New York Review of Books*, Morgenthau on the subject of Vietnam never made it to the editorial pages of the *Times* and was completely overlooked by those columnists whose special field of interest was foreign affairs. Thus, when Morgenthau in May, 1962 said it was incumbent to determine with "all possible precision the extent of the American interest in South Vietnam," he was, in effect, summoning America's political leadership and, implicitly, the nation's media specialists on foreign policy, to evaluate America's growing military involvement in Vietnam based on whether that involvement could be justified on the grounds of national interest. What this part of the Vietnam story reveals is that many of those media specialists were unschooled in the rudiments of national interest foreign policy, and while they used the terms repeatedly, they did so without comprehending its meaning and importance.

To recapitulate for a moment, how the national interest works as the bedrock principle by which the nation's security and its institutions are not made vulnerable by foolish policy decisions, it is necessary to return to Morgenthau's specialized primer and historical treatment of American foreign policy, his 1951 book, *In Defense of the National Interest* derived from Morgenthau's 1948 Opus, *Politics Among Nations*. I return to *In Defense* particularly to re-emphasize that while the national interest is determined by a careful evaluation of facts objective and verifiable, there is no easy formula, no algorithm of precise calculation, by which the national interest is determined. What must be ruled out immediately, however, as we have seen, are the far-fetched grandiose schemes of saving the world for democracy or indulging in any form of abstract speculation to promote liberty around the world, or to any such universal platitudes as a "common dedication to liberty," or to "manifest destiny," or to "the Christian duty to civilize our Philippine brothers,"³ or, to paraphrase Bundy, the hopes and desires of free men everywhere.

Yet, as a general principle, there are certain foreign policy "objectives that must be pursued at all costs" because, as Morgenthau argues, their "attainment is indispensable" to the survival of the nation. These kinds of objectives when put into action may also be termed "wars of necessity."⁴ Thus, where there is clear aggression against the United States and especially where the nation's security has been breached such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in

December 1941 or the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center towers in September 2001, the necessary recourse is war and the objective is to defeat the aggressor militarily. In April, 1917, America's declaration of war against Germany in World War I may also be considered a war of necessity when it became clear that the United States was endangered by an altered balance of power in Europe should France and England fall to Germany. The American war in Korea, far more complicated, began in June, 1950, when the North Korean Communists invaded the non-Communist South at a time when any form of aggression was considered to be the work of the Soviet Union. Seen in the light of 1950 when the disintegration of the Communist bloc had not yet occurred, the United States, believing that its interests were threatened, began its war in Korea though it is now widely doubted that the Korean War was the result of a world-wide Communist conspiracy.⁵ Yet, America's intervention in Korea, given the circumstances of clear aggression and an altered balance of power in Asia when the Chinese entered the war against the South, may also be considered a war of necessity. Vietnam, however, essentially a civil war among indigenous Vietnamese ten thousand miles away, was never a war of necessity and should never have been fought.

And while there are no rules and no formula, there is what Morgenthau calls a "hierarchical order" of priorities "among all the possible choices" that should be established [by any incoming administration] as "the first step in framing" an overall and "rational foreign policy." These include the tacit recognition in the geopolitical sense, that what happens in Canada or Panama is of greater concern to American foreign policy than what happens in Poland or Albania. That what happens in Guatemala and Cuba is more relevant to American power than what happens in Yugoslavia or China. That while there are certain objectives American foreign policy might choose to pursue "under favorable circumstances," there are those that "can never be pursued because they are beyond the reach of available strength." Above all, Morgenthau writes, what is required of the policy-maker is "a differentiating and discriminate mode of thought."⁶ In other words, what is required not only of the policy-maker but also, the responsible journalist, is the careful study and reflection of America's geopolitical position devoid of any recourse to all-embracing moral abstractions or any universal moral principles bearing on the well-being of all mankind.

We have been here before, particularly in the last chapter in which national security adviser McGeorge Bundy advanced the cause of American involvement in Vietnam as part of the hopes and desires of free men everywhere. In another setting, at a Faculty Roundtable discussion at the University of Chicago in November 1965 and later included as an article in *The University of Chicago Magazine*, Morgenthau put the problem of our

misunderstanding of what has happened in the contemporary Communist world as the key element in our mistaken policy in Vietnam. Again, it is the recourse to sweeping moralistic abstractions, in this case, the ideological intoxication of a nonexistent worldwide Communist movement. Thus, Morgenthau writes, “it is so much easier for us to continue a policy based upon an assumption” that monolithic Communism endures, “than it is for us to consider how we are to deal with revolutionary movements throughout the world” in which there is “a Communist component” though there is no monolith directing those movements. The assumption that the monolith endures “requires,” Morgenthau writes, “only a minimum of thought and the policy it leads to requires” only one kind of action, which is usually military.⁷ Here, Morgenthau sketches out for a different audience and a different readership what he has repeatedly pointed out in different words and in different formats: The obsession of monolithic Communism requires that

You oppose every Communist regime, every Communist threat, by the same means, whether it is the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Cuba, Poland, China, or the Soviet Union. To send the Marines is easy; it is simply a matter of military logistics. But to cope with these different Communisms on their own merit, to weigh their character, to determine their influence upon our interests, to calculate how our action might influence this particular Communism in one way or the other, requires an enormous subtlety of intelligence—which seems to be in short supply in Washington.⁸

To engage in such an analysis is, in great part, to determine with some degree of objective accuracy what the national interest requires. The government under three American Presidents did not do this. Neither did the national paper of record, so-called because it is so highly regarded as a reliable source of information used by scholars and writers to ascertain the facts, dates and circumstances of events as reported by its correspondents stationed all over the world. On the subject of Vietnam, however, while their reporters situated in Saigon reported their warning signals of an American military involvement gone astray,⁹ the official position of the *Times* and their celebrated columnists missed the all-important standard of national interest and herein is their great failing as responsible journalists throughout the Vietnam War debate.

As noted earlier, on April 25, 2000, the editorial in the *New York Times* commemorated the 25th anniversary of the fall of Saigon in April, 1975 by declaring that “No compelling national interest was served by waging war in Vietnam.” The declaration is startling only in the context of previous proclamations in support of the war by an earlier generation of *Times*’s editorial writers who either ignored the question of national interest or who used the

term without understanding its significance. Indeed, the earlier generation of editorial writers simply followed the lead provided by government officials and reflexively assumed the war had to be fought. In fact, for the most part, the *Times's* editors, from 1964 to 1975, made virtually no mention of national interest as they supported the war, in one form or another, sometimes obliquely with policy advice, sometimes with qualifications, but almost always with largely uncritical acceptance of the government's policy.

Thus, to cite a few examples: on February 27, 1964, the *Times* advocated "an increased military effort" by which the United States and South Vietnam will "fight and negotiate at the same time"; on July 15, 1964, the editorial advised a "carefully considered" answer to the stepped up aid to the Vietcong provided by China and North Vietnam; on December 13, 1964, the *Times* warned against excessive American air strikes that could escalate into a war with China but it did not oppose "increasing American military aid" to "enlarge" South Vietnamese "security forces"; on January 7, 1965, noting the "current deterioration," the editors advised that "we should not break the pledge given by three Presidents to assist the South Vietnamese people in resisting aggression."; on April 1, 1965, the editorial explored ways President Johnson could escalate the air attacks "to persuade Hanoi to halt its aggressions"; on April 6, 1965, the *Times* proclaimed that "Virtually all Americans understand that we must stay in South Vietnam at least for the near future"; on May 20, 1965, just after the fifteen hour nationally televised teach-in, the *Times* noted that while Washington was "flexible and reasonable," it was North Vietnam and China that have rejected "all American proposals" to begin "unconditional negotiations"; on August 8, 1965, the editorial proclaimed "the United States has the men and the means to hold all vital positions in South Vietnam as long as necessary"; on December 18, 1966, the *Times* quoted McGeorge Bundy and agreed that the bombing of North Vietnam has been "'the most restrained' bombing of modern war" "justified" and "legitimate" in response to North Vietnamese aggression. The editorial also advised caution and careful "selection of future targets" to insure that "a reputation for restraint is to be safeguarded and preserved." On January 2, 1967, the *Times* congratulated itself: "the *New York Times*," the editorial proclaimed, has long been critical of Administration policies in and toward Vietnam"; it has "urged cessation of the bombing of the North for political as well as humanitarian reasons."¹⁰ Really. Two months earlier, as noted above, the national paper of record advised not a categorical cessation, but only a more careful selection of bombing targets.

In the course of examining these and later editorials, the question of national interest does not become part of the *Times's* conversation on

Vietnam except in one or two instances that appear merely as rhetorical fill-ins. Thus, on August 27, 1972, the *Times* proclaimed: "Despite the self-righteousness with which President Nixon insists on clothing his positions on the war and the peace, does it really serve the interests of the United States to prop up the present Saigon government at all costs?" But again, there is no analysis of why it may not be in the interests of the United States to continue supporting the South Vietnamese government. And then finally, on January 20, 1973, the *Times* comes closest to making the key discovery that the United States in Vietnam has nothing to do with U.S. interests but the editors still do not know why. "There is deep disagreement," the editorial proclaims, "as to whether the Vietnam war was a necessary and honorable enterprise or a moral catastrophe."¹¹ By this time, the facts are in, and the war is a moral catastrophe. Indeed, there is no victory; there is only defeat, and the cost, particularly the human cost, is extraordinarily high.

Thus, by January 1973, the Pentagon records 45,933 Americans killed in combat, 10,303 deaths from non-combat incidents, 303,616 wounded, 687 captured, more than 1,335 missing and upwards of two million Vietnamese who died in the fighting. The cost of the war is estimated at \$ 109.5 billion.¹² In January 1973, the *Times* remained unsure. On May 4, 1975, the *Times* was no longer unsure. Just five days after the North Vietnamese stormed into Saigon, the *Times* conceded the war was a mistake in which U.S. involvement "ended as it had begun," as "a muddle of misconceptions" in which "past errors" led to "this country's failure," as it disengaged "from a civil war in which the United States should never have become engaged." In the same editorial, the *Times* noted that the regime in South Vietnam "never took root" and in "the intervening fifteen years, an anti-colonial nationalism had evolved into an anti-American tide." The editors who noted in 1975 that the war ended and began as "a muddle of misconceptions" forgot what the preceding editors had noted on March 1, 1962, as the war got underway. Here, the *Times's* editors endorsed the "misconceptions" as they proclaimed:

The fact of the matter is, of course, that recent stepped-up American military assistance to South Vietnam is merely a response to aggression by North Vietnam against the South. The United States is in Vietnam at the invitation of the Saigon Government, which has sought American help in the exercise of a legitimate right of self-defense.¹³

The *Times* had apparently forgotten that the Diem regime had been installed by the CIA and that the American commitment to defend its client government was essentially a contract the United States had made with itself. Here was one of the earliest of misconceptions by which the United States

became mired in the jungles of Vietnam but in March, 1962, the *Times* mistakenly saw it as an American response to aggression.

As noted above, the *Times* on April 6, 1965, had warned “all Americans” that “we must stay in South Vietnam at least for the near future” and called on President Johnson “to explain to the American people and to the world” the basic American position “that Vietnam is crucial to American security, to the freedom of all Southeast Asia, to small nations everywhere, and to the hopes of containing Communism in Asia and the Far East.” In another editorial dated August 8, 1965, the *Times* referred to the President’s advisers who warned of “a long struggle that could stretch out into years.” And in its concluding paragraph, the editorial endorsed Defense Secretary McNamara’s claim that “the security of the United States is at stake” in its war in Vietnam.¹⁴

Three days earlier, on August 5, 1965, the *Times* carried the story of McNamara’s appearance and testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Department of Defense Appropriations. His remarks included the usual forecasts by the usual government officials of what would happen if the United States did not continue its military involvement in Vietnam. Thus, McNamara told the Subcommittee that the war in Vietnam is “a testing place between a free form of government and dictatorship” with “enormous implications for the security of the United States.” He added that “a Communist success in South Vietnam would be taken as positive proof . . . that they will have made a giant step forward . . . in their efforts to seize control of the world Communist movement.”¹⁵

None of this was questioned by the editors or the columnists. Yet, as was well known at the time, the new term to describe the disintegration of the Communist bloc was polycentrism, noted previously in these pages. Moreover, according to a front page story by *Times*’s columnist Max Frankel three years earlier on January 22, 1962, the monolith was broken. Frankel writes: “The World Communist movement is in ferment. It is witnessing a bitter rivalry for leadership between Moscow and Peiping” and there is “the fragmentation of what was once called ‘the [Communist] bloc’” with “increasing demands for independence by Communist parties in all continents.” But it was not only Frankel who reported the break-up of the “bloc.”¹⁶

On May 5, 1965, C. L. Sulzberger, the *Times* foreign correspondent posted in Paris who wrote the column titled “Foreign Affairs,” ascertained unequivocally, not only the break-up, but the danger of adhering to the myth that a united Communism still exists. Thus, Sulzberger writes:

Today there are many kinds of Communism, some of which, such as Marshal Tito’s, certainly do not seem to threaten us. Russia, China, Albania, Yugoslavia,

Rumania are all at odds in one or another respect. In Vietnam it is not at all clear just what the relationships are between Peking, Hanoi, Moscow, and the Vietcong partisans. During his first years as Secretary of State, Foster Dulles made the mistake of condemning all Communism, some Socialism and even neutralism. If we keep insisting that any variety of Communism is automatically our enemy, we risk two consequences. Support for our policies will diminish among our allies who have less interest than ourselves in 'Holy Wars.' And, still more important, such an inflexible outlook will push centrifugal Communism back upon itself. It is not sensible policy to encourage quarreling opponents to reunite.¹⁷

Sulzberger wrote this on May 5, 1965. There is no attribution. Yet, a month earlier, on April 18, 1965, in *The New York Times Magazine*, Morgenthau wrote about our delusion in Vietnam from which Sulzberger, as quoted above, might have been instructed. Here, Morgenthau writes:

It is ironic that this simple juxtaposition of "Communism" and "free world" was erected by John Foster Dulles' crusading moralism into the guiding principle of American foreign policy at a time when the national Communism of Yugoslavia, the neutralism of the third world and the incipient split between the Soviet Union and China were rendering that juxtaposition invalid. Today, it is belaboring the obvious to say that we are faced not with one monolithic Communism whose uniform hostility must be countered with equally uniform hostility, but with a number of different Communisms whose hostility, determined by different national interests, varies. In fact, the United States encounters today less hostility from Tito, who is a Communist, than from de Gaulle, who is not. We can today distinguish four different types of Communism ... a Communism identified with the Soviet Union—e.g., Poland; a Communism identified with China—e.g., Albania; a Communism that straddles the fence between the Soviet Union and China—e.g., Rumania, and independent Communism—e.g., Yugoslavia. Each of these Communisms must be dealt with in terms of the bearing its foreign policy has upon the interests of the United States in a concrete instance.¹⁸

Two weeks before his April 18, "We Are Deluding Ourselves About Vietnam" article, and a month before Sulzberger's May 5 column on the variety of individual Communist nations, Morgenthau, on April 3, 1965, wrote this in *The New Republic*:

For it is an obvious fact of experience that in the conduct of our foreign policy we are faced not with one monolithic Communism, but with a number of different Communisms whose character is determined by the character and the interests of the particular nation embracing it. Thus we find in Asia, as elsewhere, different kinds of Communism whose relations to China and the

Soviet Union range all the way from complete independence to complete subservience. To treat all these Communisms alike on the assumption that they are equally subservient to either China or the Soviet Union or to both is the height of doctrinaire folly.¹⁹

Yet, while Sulzberger rightly abandoned the “doctrinaire folly” of viewing all Communism as one monolith, he retained, inconsistently, in the same May 5 column, the doctrinaire necessity, in his words, “To safeguard global peace.” Thus, Sulzberger laments the circumscribed doctrines outlined by Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Johnson, which limits American intervention. Instead, Sulzberger advocates greater American intervention and he supports his advocacy in ideological terms though he uses the words “national interest” and “vital interests” four times in the same column. Thus, he writes: “The United States essentially wants to protect its own vital interests ... by limiting or preventing any kind of aggression”; “Our business,” he writes, “is to protect our own national interests from any threat ... and to try and see the changes in an ever-changing world are sufficiently controlled to avoid excessively dangerous explosions.” He then emphasizes: “We must get this fact straight” and he adds: “Obviously it is not in our national interest to publish blanket condemnations and to advertise blanket ideological commitments.” Yet this is what he does. One moment he tells us we must avoid “blanket ideological commitments,” but then he says we must control “excessively dangerous explosions” “to safeguard world peace,” which places him back on an ideological track offering to save the world through American intervention. And nowhere does he explain or define how his advocacy is based on national interest.²⁰

In an earlier column on March 24, 1965, Sulzberger reveals that he is a stalwart supporter of the government’s Vietnam policy. He also shows he is completely muddled on what the national interest requires. Thus, he applauds what he calls President Johnson’s “modest goal” to support South Vietnam and insure its survival against “outside interference.” Sulzberger writes that while “our war aims are limited,” “we are prepared to support them by unlimited means; that is the crucial point.” Then he tells us that this policy is “plainly founded on the assumption that such vital American interests ... are tied to our success ... [and] even without the support of our allies, the time has come to make a definitive stand.” In this column, Sulzberger is adamant about America’s purpose. Here is blanket ideological commitment at its worst. The United States must be determined, Sulzberger writes, “to warn the major Communist powers against materially supporting” the North Vietnamese. The United States must concentrate on using the “methods suited to our capacities, on damming the sources of aggression instead of only

trying to mop up after it has trickled through.” This, he says, is in our “vital American interests” but again, he is falsely equating ideological commitment with national interest, the geopolitical rudiments of which he displays not a clue.²¹

In subsequent columns, one on June 11, 1965, almost a month after the national teach-in of May 15, Sulzberger does not mention national interest but asserts that “The United States must somehow manage to hold firm in Vietnam.” Why? Because, he writes, “a collapse there would endanger not only Southeast and South Asia but also those other regions on which China has its eye—Africa and Latin America.” This is a reversion to the domino theory, which, in his column of February 27, 1966, he writes that the United States seeks “to prevent a hostile dynamic tide running across Thailand and Malaya to Singapore” and Indonesia. Then he writes that “It is wrong to simplify the issue by such phrases as ‘domino theory’” but this is what he does as he adds: if “we crawl out of Vietnam now it is obvious that Southeast Asia right down to Australia will join our adversaries and that India will be outflanked.” Again, as part of his acceptance of “blanket ideological commitment,” he repeats, “by taking a stand” in South Vietnam, “*we can reverse the thrust of the tide which proclaims its enmity toward all we stand for*” [Emphasis added].²²

This is Sulzberger’s contribution to the Vietnam War debate. And his repeated use of the terms national interest and vital interest appear as no more than a reflexive response to justify the American war in Vietnam similar to the official pronouncements of America’s national leadership. Thus, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, in a March 1962 interview, proclaimed that “Southeast Asia is vital to the security of the Pacific and the Pacific is vital to the security of the United States.”²³ Secretary of State Dean Rusk, speaking before the American Society of International Law in May 1965, said: “Let us be clear about what is involved today in Southeast Asia. We are not involved with empty phrases or conceptions which ride upon the clouds,” an apparent allusion to Morgenthau and Rusk’s attempt to counter Morgenthau’s repeated derision of the government’s ideological defense of its war as abstract moralizing or as pernicious dogmatism or as doctrinaire folly. For Rusk, another consummate ideologue, there was never any doubt, never a question in his belief that the enemy was Communism and that South Vietnam had to be defended and that the war had to be fought. And thereby, he was egregiously wrong as he proclaimed in April 1965, that, “We are talking about the vital national interest of the United States and the peace of the Pacific”; “We are talking about the appetite for aggression.... We are talking about the safety of nations with whom we are allied—and the integrity of the American commitment.”²⁴ Similarly, as the President noted, in the text

of his message to Congress asking for \$700 million more to pay for additional military needs, "South Vietnam has been attacked by North Vietnam" and has asked for "our help." "We are giving that help," he said, "because our commitments, our principles and our national interest demand it." In July 1965, President Johnson told reporters that "Our national honor is at stake."²⁵ On October 18, 1965, Bill Moyers, the President's press secretary, speaking for the President in connection with the recent demonstrations against the war, exclaimed that Mr. Johnson was surprised "that any one citizen would feel toward his country in a way that is not consistent with the national interest."²⁶ Indeed, Moyers, Johnson, Rusk, Bundy, Rostow, all claiming to base their war policy on national interest, in fact, had not at all attempted an evaluation of what the national interest required and were thus enveloped in their own self-delusion.

In April, 1965, after Morgenthau published his article, "We Are Deluding Ourselves About Vietnam" in the *New York Times Magazine*, the White House complained and the editors of the *Times Magazine* acquiesced and commissioned, with White House approval, Columbia University history professor, Henry Graff, to write an article on how Johnson made Vietnam policy. In effect, this was to be a rebuff of the Morgenthau article. Graff was then permitted to sit in on several of the President's meetings and to engage in a series of individual conversations with the President, with Bundy, McNamara, Rusk and press secretary Moyers. The article appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* on July 4, 1965, and was titled "Decision in Vietnam: How Johnson Makes Foreign Policy."²⁷

The article turned out to be a public relations ploy in which Graff became a willing accomplice. The narrative was simply a record of Graff's questions and the responses by the President and the president's men. Several of these replies were simply arrant nonsense, and it is surprising that several found their way into Graff's report. Thus, in reply to a question about a negotiated settlement, Rusk "ticked off" the administration's attempts to negotiate and then told Graff "Dictatorship underestimates democracy's willingness to do what it has to do."²⁸ "To do what it has to do?" And this from the secretary of state!

Graff then recorded Bundy's response to a question about the objectives of U.S. Vietnam policy in which Bundy offered the bewildering analogy that "the United States is the engine of mankind and the rest of the world is the train." The United States as "the engine of mankind" pulling "the world" as on a "train?"²⁹ And this from the national security adviser! If nothing more, Bundy's response demonstrates an imaginative metaphorical side to the former Harvard Dean's ideological stupor over Communism and America's

role in the world. Bundy also told Graff, in connection with the “engine” metaphor, that this was not “chauvinism” but was “simply” a way of “passing judgment on the usefulness to the world of American energies.”³⁰

Later, Graff talked to the President who then gave the professor the full Johnson treatment while sipping root beer and relating stories of his past and his political heroes such as FDR. At one point, Johnson took Graff into his small auxiliary office adjacent to the Oval Office where Johnson said “he works late at night.” “I had the feeling,” Graff writes gratuitously, “that he wanted to show me where he makes some of his decisions.” The President then spoke of “decision-making,” then about his family, and especially his mother with whom, Johnson said, “he always checked his decisions.” If there is a theme in the article, it is about the President who listens, asks questions, and always seeks the counsel of others before he makes up his mind. “He is his own man,” he is “his own ‘decider,’” Graff writes, who then offers a convenient example of how the President is personally involved. The day before, in the middle of their conversation, Graff and Johnson were momentarily interrupted. McNamara enters and tells Johnson a report from General Wheeler on the Westmoreland report was available though Wheeler was at the moment out of town. But Johnson, Graff writes, will wait to hear the report from Wheeler personally, “at firsthand.” All this is highly commendable to the Columbia history professor. The President, Graff concludes approvingly, has learned “to look at a proposal from the other person’s point of view, even when he must eventually say no.” The President, Graff concludes, is also “a man of peace.”³¹ And Graff, a respected historian, has permitted himself to be duped by the power of the White House.

The critics of the war, particularly Morgenthau, portray a President indifferent to the facts of his own policy. Not Graff who writes about an attentive President forever seeking advice from everyone. Graff describes the President sitting “with one ear cocked for whatever counsel he can reach, for whatever increase in the available options he can produce.” For Graff, this is confirmed by press secretary Moyers, who tells Graff that Johnson excels in “forcing his subordinates to look for optional solutions.” The President, Moyers continues, is “constantly probing.” Just the other day, Moyers recalls, at a meeting on Vietnam, “the President had asked forty-one questions.”³² Exactly, “forty-one questions,” according to Moyers’ count.

Graff has only high praise for the men who advise the President. Like Johnson, Graff writes, they are honest men, and they are men of peace. They do not “speak of conquest on the battlefield of Vietnam” but “they do not mean to get licked either.”³³

The Graff article does not contain any critical commentary. Graff asked no hard questions. Graff wrote a public relations piece replete with a cover picture of Johnson, Rusk, and Bundy facing the camera and listening with

staged and serious attentiveness to McNamara, with back to the camera, who was apparently doing the talking. This is a picture of the much publicized Tuesday luncheon meetings where Johnson met regularly with his four top foreign policy advisers and where the informal agenda included such subjects as the bombing “targets of the week” or “expected U.S. casualties” or changes in tactical, military strategy.³⁴

Newsweek, on May 17, two days after the National Teach-In, also carried a piece about the Tuesday luncheon meetings and the President’s mode of foreign policy-making, but was not taken in. The *Newsweek* report is titled “Foreign Policy: Drift or Design?” and the conclusion is that of drift. For *Newsweek*, “the four most powerful men in America” sit at “a long mahogany table” in an atmosphere that is “relaxed and informal” as they discuss military strategy. Similar to the photo in the *Times*, there is also a picture of the principals, McNamara, Rusk, and Bundy, that covers the top third of the page, but there is one addition, that of Under Secretary of State George Ball. In the immediate foreground is the President glaring at the camera, looking, all at once, stern, serious, and committed. But, as *Newsweek* points out, the President’s mode of foreign policy making is deficient; he is impulsive, he improvises, he does not plan, he has little sense of history or of foreign policy protocol.³⁵ As for the President’s foreign policy advisers, dubbed by White House staffers as the “awesome foursome,” they are simply not up to the task. *Newsweek* then quotes Morgenthau on the President’s advisers: Secretary of State Rusk is “too weak to make his knowledge and experience count”; Secretary McNamara and McGeorge Bundy “are devoid of sound judgment and understanding of foreign policy.” As for Johnson, Morgenthau is again quoted: “the President is very badly served by his advisers, and the worst part of it is that he seems to be satisfied with the advice he gets.”³⁶

Indeed, this just about sums up the conclusion that later history will confirm. Above all, what was lacking was an “understanding of foreign policy” and without this, there would be no careful review of Vietnam policy and thus no respect for the national interest. They were fighting Communism, and that was it.

There is perhaps no better example of the false picture of Johnson making foreign policy as portrayed in the Graff article than a Johnson statement at a meeting of the National Security Council Executive Committee attended by almost all of the President’s high-level advisers and recorded by CIA Director, John McCone. The meeting took place on April 22, 1965. Here is McCone’s record of the Johnson statement:

He complained that no supporting speeches were being made and he felt that our congressional support was very uncertain and wobbly and we could lose it rapidly. He felt that speeches by Morse, Gruening, Clark and the statement

by Fulbright would have their effect and he exhorted everyone to carry out an intense personal campaign with sympathetic senators and get them to their feet. He also thought that McNamara and Rusk should take every opportunity to make speeches, go on television, etc., and point out the reasonableness of U.S. policy and the ridiculousness of the suggestion that we stop bombing.... The President in his remarks, which were extended and quite bitter and directed toward McNamara and Rusk, to me represented a feeling on the President's part that his chief lieutenants had failed to carry congressional opinion and public opinion with us. He said his mail was running about 50 to 1 against our policy. All in all, he seemed very dissatisfied with the public relations effort."³⁷

This is how Johnson did not probe or ask questions about foreign policy. The next day, on April 23, Bundy wrote this memo to the President:

... after clearance with Saigon, we should slow down our bombing. We should do this without announcing it simply by suspending raids for two or three days a week in some sort of pattern. We should also let Hanoi know that we are doing this in order to improve the atmosphere for talks.

By slowing down the bombing, you are allowing them to talk without looking as if they are being bombed into submission. By not making a public announcement of the bombing let up, you do not get into the position of having to admit the failure of a peace effort if you resume raids. Hanoi will get the message anyway. If it fails we can always leak stories that we tried it and it didn't work.

After all, our political message—that we are going to stay—is pretty well understood. Therefore, the real purpose of a continuing buildup would be to smash North Vietnam into submission."³⁸

Three weeks later, on Saturday, May 15, 1965, hundreds of scholars, foreign affairs specialists and some 5,000 students and interested observers attended a fifteen hour teach-in at the Sheraton Hotel in Washington that was broadcast to over 100 college campuses around the country.³⁹ The program, divided into a morning, afternoon and evening session, began with three morning speeches, Arthur Schlesinger on the "government position," Morgenthau's "Critique of the American position," and historian Isaac Deutscher on "the policy context of the cold war." The afternoon session, from 2:00 to 5:00, was called "Policy Confrontation" in which Bundy was to deliver a thirty-minute speech followed by responses from a "supporting panel" that included Brzezinski, AFV official Wesley Fishel, and UCLA political science Professor, Robert Scalapino. The respondents who formed "the critical panel" included Morgenthau, Yale Professor Mary Wright, University of Wisconsin Professor William A. Williams, and Briarcliff College Professor, Stanley Millet. The evening program from 7:30 to 10:30 consisted of eight seminars including a moderator who set forth both the

government's and the opposition's positions and a panel of four, two in support, two critical. Morgenthau, again, was a participant in seminar No. 8 and his opponents included Brzezinski and Rostow.⁴⁰

During the "Policy Confrontations" meeting in which each respondent was allotted six minutes, it was agreed well beforehand by the opposition panelists "that Morgenthau may use all the panel's time"⁴¹ in response to Bundy who was to provide a thirty-minute statement. This was to be the long awaited give-and-take encounter between the national security adviser and the chief critic of the war. As noted earlier, Bundy cancelled at the last moment and was sent to the Dominican Republic. Bundy's last-minute replacement to deliver a thirty-minute address was Robert Scalapino. Neither Scalapino nor his fellow panelists wanted the assignment. They drew lots and Scalapino won by default.⁴² Scalapino delivered his address as the television cameras made him an instant, though temporary celebrity, in his encounter with Morgenthau as respondent.

Scalapino's defense of the war rested on what he had gleaned from his reading of a recent editorial in the *Peking Review* by which he concludes that Communism is the root cause of the problem. Here, he is the perfect substitute for Bundy, who, as we have seen, is under the same illusion. Thus, for Scalapino and the *Peking Review*, the war is a "struggle" of the Vietnamese people "against [American] aggression" derived from what the *Review* calls "the wise leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Workers Party of Vietnam" engaged in what Scalapino calls the usual Communist "five-stage development" for revolutionary movements. This, Scalapino asserts, is what is going on in Vietnam. The struggle is Communist inspired and Communist led, and there is no doubt, as Scalapino professes, that the [Communist] Vietcong do not represent the South Vietnamese people. They do not, in Scalapino's words, "command the support and allegiance of the people of South Vietnam."⁴³ Yet, contrary to Scalapino's claim, the Vietcong are South Vietnamese rebels who oppose the government in Saigon and they do have popular support or else they could not survive as a guerrilla force amidst their fellow South Vietnamese brethren.

Scalapino does not explore geopolitical considerations. He makes a passing remark about the civil war that has been going on for ten years but he says no more about this. He mentions in passing the problems of the former Diem regime but leaves it at that. And he does not raise any question about how American involvement is a requirement of the national interest.

After Scalapino concludes his address, the moderator turns to Morgenthau. It is an unforgettable moment captured by the television cameras. With his pronounced German accent, and in a light-hearted tone amidst the seriousness of the occasion, Morgenthau begins: "Let me suppose that

professor Scalapino's analysis of the facts in Southeast Asia is correct in every particular,"—and then after a brief pause, Morgenthau adds, "a mere hypothetical assumption on my part." What follows is instant laughter. The camera then turns to Scalapino who leans back in his chair and laughs uproariously. It is the Morgenthau wit at its best. Scalapino is right in every respect, but his analysis is "hypothetical." His speech is pure delusion, part of the quasi-fictional world, a replication of the Bundy mentality, but Scalapino does not get hammered. His position is exposed with the one word, "hypothetical."⁴⁴

Morgenthau then proceeded with his response. He spoke of the "uneasiness in the country." He noted the "distinctive recognition that there is something basically wrong in the modes of thought and actions of our government." He said there are too many "contradictions in our policies." He emphasized that if we "really want to achieve in Asia what the spokesmen for our government say they want to achieve," we risk war with China. He turned to the subject of negotiations about which he said, he was "getting nervous" about the several government spokesmen who talk much about our willingness to negotiate. Here, he refers to Bundy, who should not need to emphasize "that our government wants a peaceful solution." Because, as Morgenthau puts it, "No decent government which isn't out of its mind would want anything else." He did not doubt that there are men in our government who want a negotiated settlement, but the point, he said, is not what you want or intend, but what you do regardless of your intentions. "The history of the world," he said, "is full of intentions where well-meaning people have wrought unspeakable misery upon their own nation, in spite of their good intentions, because they used the wrong policies."⁴⁵

On the subject of negotiations, Morgenthau noted, that while we wait for the other side to make the first move, the other side knows it has the advantage. Thus, "we make it an implicit condition" for negotiations that "we remain in South Vietnam" until a "stable government is established," which will take a "very long time." So the other side knows it can wait it out because it knows the United States is "waging a war in Vietnam," which "it cannot win and which it cannot afford to lose." The United States cannot retreat and it dare not advance. Under these conditions, and in our refusal to negotiate with the Vietcong, a "negotiated settlement" is "at the moment impossible."⁴⁶ Moreover, and unbeknownst to anyone outside the government, but clearly understood as reflected in the April 23 Bundy memo to the President cited above, the United States, as we have also seen in the previous chapter, is in no hurry to pursue negotiations.

Four days after Bundy's "smash North Vietnam into submission" memo to the President, Defense Secretary McNamara holds a press conference on

April 27, 1965, and alludes to the possibility of Chinese intervention based on the demonstration of a single Chinese weapon as proof that China is the chief villain aiding the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese. But the press did not pick up the flaws in McNamara's presentation. Indeed, what the press, including the *Times*, found impressive was McNamara's way with numbers that conveyed competence and certitude and, on April 27, McNamara was in top form. Thus, with pointer in hand and map astride the lectern, McNamara rattled off the numbers: 5,000 and 8,000 infiltrators to South Vietnam; in 1964, more than 10,000 from the North to the South; total number of infiltrators to date, 30,000; Vietcong weapons lost to the South Vietnamese troops, 23,000; South Vietnamese weapons lost to the Vietcong, 39,000; the net gain for the Vietcong, about 14,000. The weapons used by the North Vietnamese regular troops, McNamara noted, have been supplied by the Chinese and then McNamara dramatically held up a weapon: "I have here," he said, "one of the new family of Communist Chinese weapons ... a light machine gun of their 7.62 class ... which bears the Chinese arsenal mark ... manufactured in that country ... supplied by China to North Vietnam, infiltrated by North Vietnam into the South."⁴⁷

On May 15, 1965, it was Morgenthau who quipped sarcastically that China has not "lost a single man" in the Vietnam conflict but has "only lost, as far as we can tell, one gun which Mr. McNamara showed us the other day at a press conference."⁴⁸ And at his news conference, McNamara claimed that American bombing raids have struck a "total of twenty-seven rail and highway bridges" in North Vietnam, of which "twenty-four of the bridges have been destroyed or very badly damaged." In his morning address at the teach-in, Morgenthau again, sarcastically, took note of McNamara's claims about the success of the raids and remarked that Vietnam must have more bridges than any other country in the world.⁴⁹ As Morgenthau pointed out, "there is something basically wrong in the modes of thought and action of our government," a criticism that may also be applied to the national media for its somnambulism in the face of absurd exaggeration.

Of the various participants at the May 15 teach-in, Morgenthau was the most active. He opened the morning session with a lengthy attack on the government's position. He was a panelist in the afternoon session. He argued with Rostow in the evening session. Close to midnight at the plenary session following the conclusion of the eight evening seminars in the discussion of alternate policies in Vietnam, Morgenthau proposed the unification of Vietnam, "probably under Ho Chi Minh," with supervision by the United Nations, and some form of a "face-saving device" to facilitate American withdrawal.⁵⁰

Here, on May 15, 1965, were the essential arguments for the disengagement of the United States from Vietnam. And though one might disagree and accept the government's case, what could not be disputed is that the fifteen-hour National Teach-In broadcast to over 100 schools across the nation was a remarkable event that tested the government's position by raising important questions about its Vietnam policy. The Teach-In was thereby instrumental in giving the university community and the general public a sense, that at the very least, something was amiss in U.S. Vietnam policy. Yet, it is astonishing that the fifteen-hour event had little or no affect particularly on the celebrated journalists of the nation's most renowned newspaper, the *New York Times*, other than as an object of denigration for getting in the way of the government's more important business, which was to prosecute the war.

Thus, there is Max Frankel, the *Times*' editorials editor, executive editor, columnist, and foreign correspondent, who won a Pulitzer for international coverage in 1973. Writing on May 16, the day after the teach-in, Frankel had nothing good to say about the event. He denigrates the scholars and critics when he writes that they continued "the academic road-show" that began at the University of Michigan two months earlier. He also calls it a "breakfast-to-midnight talkfest." And by questioning whether it "generated more heat than light" and by expressing doubt "that any significant number of participants or listeners altered their points of view," he betrays his advocacy for the government's policy. This becomes more obvious as he goes along. He writes, incredulously, that "it was only with the blessing of the administration they condemn for secrecy that the teachers and scholars were suddenly thrust before a national audience and given the decade's greatest propaganda bargain..." This sentence, of course, suggests that the critics are simply propagandists with an agenda who falsely accuse the government of secrecy. Moreover, it is a bloated exaggeration for Frankel to attribute the success of the event to the government and, particularly to Bundy, who was not even there, and to "Walt W. Rostow and a few other intellectuals in Government" who, Frankel repeats, "were chiefly responsible for its success and public notice."⁵¹

He also uses Khrushchev's hostile encounter with Soviet artists to contrast what he implies is the fairness of the U.S. government's encouragement of the critics to organize and continue their teach-ins. He then questions whether future teach-ins would be "sober sessions of scholarly inquiry or long and loud protest rallies" as if the May 15 event was simply a loud protest rally. He congratulates, again, the government, which, he says, conferred respectability to the teach-in and asked in return only "responsibility" in their opposition to the war, as if the critics on May 15 criticized irresponsibly. And then there is Frankel's parting shot, particularly at the younger critics who, Frankel writes,

“could not or would not remember” the “dangers of American inaction before World War II and the successful resistance to Soviet expansion.”⁵² Here, Frankel has deceptively invoked the Munich analogy and the containment policy in Europe, which has nothing to do with Vietnam. He has thus misread the significance of the May 15 National Teach-In and it is thereby no wonder that there is no mention of Morgenthau in his report.

And then there is Frankel’s colleague, James Reston, the *Times*’ senior columnist, twice a Pulitzer Prize winner, the Washington bureau chief appointed in 1944 when he was forty-three years old. One of the most respected and influential journalists of his time, Reston wrote three columns a week for over three decades, many of those on Vietnam, which reveal, in his stubborn support for the government, a lazy refusal to question the pronouncements of those government officials he uses as the basis of his reports.⁵³ For at bottom, Reston, like Scalapino, like Bundy, like the President, believes that the root cause of the problem is Communism.

Thus, on April 25, 1965, Reston writes that “The Communist objectives have not changed. They are determined to extend their influence and control as far as they can.” “There is no evidence that anything but power will deter the Chinese Communists from seeking their objectives.” The United States “must not abandon the people who have committed themselves to the battle in South Vietnam and who will be at the mercy of the Vietcong if we pull out.” On May 5, 1965, paraphrasing the President, Reston writes that “the pace of Communist activity is increasing. They have the power to create disorder not only in Vietnam, but in many other places.” Defending Vietnam has now become “a vital national interest to be defended at any cost.” As early as February 14, 1965, “the cause of the war is plain enough,” Reston writes. It is “the North Vietnamese Communists, with the aid of Red China ... [who] have sent their guerrillas into South Vietnam ... for the express purpose of taking over the government and territory of South Vietnam.” There is no mention of the conflict as a civil war. There is no hint that the Vietcong are South Vietnamese. There is nothing about the political instability of South Vietnam though Reston, on February 21, 1965, notes that “there have been eight governments in Vietnam in the last eighteen months.”⁵⁴

On May 2, 1965, Reston says “the Communists” are “cunning” because their strategy “forces Washington to yield or fight on Communist terms.” On September 12, 1965, Reston concludes that without American military intervention, “Vietnam and probably the rest of Southeast Asia would probably have been taken over by China already...” On October 2, 1966, Reston defends Johnson who, despite the public pressure from former President Eisenhower to win a “military ‘victory,’” still seeks “an honorable settlement.” Five months later, on March 26, 1967, Reston writes: the United

States must remain in Vietnam because, “for America and the world, the best way may very well be . . . to hold the line to keep South Vietnam from being overrun, which was our stated objective in the first place. . . .”⁵⁵

In his support of the government’s policy, Reston writes admiringly of the Secretary of State who has emerged as the chief spokesman for the White House. Thus, on October 13, 1967, Reston describes Rusk in glowing personal terms: He is “the most eloquent” voice in the cabinet, he has “convictions,” he speaks with “eloquence,” he has “attractive personal qualities.” The words “eloquent” and “eloquence” are used interchangeably and repeated a third time in his last paragraph. As for policy and the war, Reston approvingly quotes Rusk that while there is disagreement about what should be done, “all agree we should ‘defend our vital national interests.’” For Rusk, there is no doubt, and by quoting Rusk favorably, for Reston there is also no doubt. Reston again quotes Rusk: it is “in our national interest” to spend \$30 billion a year” at a “cost of “over 100,000 casualties” to “defend ‘our vital interests’ in Vietnam.”⁵⁶

Some six months later, on March 13, 1968, as the Tet offensive is in full swing, and as the *Wall Street Journal* and America’s most popular television journalist, Walter Cronkite, are having second thoughts about the war,⁵⁷ Rusk is again the subject of a Reston column. Here, Reston describes Rusk as “a brilliant advocate of the Administration’s propaganda line.” Reston quotes Rusk: “we must face up to the problem of Communist aggression regardless of the cost.” But Reston is not curious about Rusk, the propagandist, or about the nature of propaganda as a means to pursue public acceptance of a worthless policy. For if the administration had a sound policy, it would not need to resort to lies and fabrications under the guise of propaganda, which the *Times’* senior columnist could have pointed out. And it is not enough to merely say, as Reston does, that there are others in the White House who are “wondering tonight for the first time, whether the goal is worth the cost.”⁵⁸ And this is March, 1968 when it is abundantly clear that the war, as McNamara concluded three decades later, was a terrible mistake.

Reading Reston on Vietnam is simply exasperating. He sees the error of the government’s war policy but he cannot get himself to explore, let alone argue, the case against the war that may be the price Reston pays for easy access to government officials. But this does not say much for Reston’s journalistic integrity. Thus, on October 2, 1966, Reston hints that the war may be a tragedy in the making. On April 6, 1975, however, three weeks before the North Vietnamese stormed into Saigon and Reston, worried about the divisions in the country due to the collapse of South Vietnam, then tells his readers, “There is enough blame in this tragedy to cover all of us.” In the same column, Reston calls Vietnam “the worst gamble of American history.”

Yet nine years earlier, on February 13, 1966, as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings are aired on national television, Reston is both aghast at “the big show” in the Senate Caucus Room and “the growls of protest about ‘the little band of willful men’ from the White House.” Still, on February 13, Reston admits that “There is something to protest about,” but he doesn’t know what it is, nor does he make any attempt to ask the relevant questions. Then he writes that “it has been years since there has been a serious open debate here on the basic problems of American foreign policy which the public could watch on television.” But then he forgets the column he wrote on May 16, 1965, about the preceding day’s nationally televised teach-in which Reston calls “An Enterprising Debate.” And here, for the first and only time, Reston writes approvingly, almost ecstatically, about the National Teach-In. He writes: It was “a serious and responsible debate,” an “exchange of ideas ... [that] was useful and may have set a precedent for the future,” “an inquiry [and] an honest search for answers to the moral, political and military dilemmas that confront the country in Southeast Asia”; that what started at the University of Michigan “should be continued and supported financially,” as a “national debate which could be of fundamental importance to the nation.”⁵⁹ But no further favorable commentaries on the critics and the teach-in professors appeared in future Reston columns.

Indeed, on May 6, 1966, a year after his May 16, 1965, column, Reston wrote about “Johnson and the Universities.” Here, Reston impugns, pejoratively, “many of those well-informed professors” by writing that not only do they “feel out of touch and out of sympathy with what their government is doing,” but he also suggests, with sweeping condemnation, that “these creative but isolated teachers are passing on their own frustrations and protests to their students.”⁶⁰ This is outrageous not only because it cannot be substantiated, but also because it is foolish and mean-spirited.

But of all the Reston columns, the most preposterous appeared on October 17, 1965, and is titled “The Stupidity of Intelligence.” It is the most preposterous because Reston does not direct the stupidity charge at those in Washington causing the tragedy, but to those among the critics and protesters who were questioning the policies of their government. So here, Reston takes his anger out at the “unconscious objectors [a play on the words “conscientious objectors”], hangers-on, intellectual graduate school draft-dodgers and rent-a-crown boobs who will demonstrate for or against anything.” Reston throws a mild sop to the “student demonstrators against the war” when he writes “A case can be made for their objections.” But alas, they know not what they do, for as Reston points out, they are “not promoting peace, but postponing it”; “they are not persuading the President or Congress to end the war, but deceiving Ho Chi Minh and General Giap into prolonging

it”; “they are not proving the superior wisdom of the university community but unfortunately bringing it into serious question.” For Reston, they “are protesting not against the nation that is continuing the war, but against their own country that is offering to make peace.”

And who does Reston cite as the most knowledgeable man on the war? It is not Morgenthau. It is one Blair Seaborn, the Canadian representative on the Vietnam International Control Commission who, Reston writes, “is a cultivated man and a professional diplomat” who, in Reston’s words, “knows all the mistakes we have made, probably in more detail than all the professors in all the universities of this country.” Clearly, Reston has not been paying attention. And today, how many students reading about the Vietnam War recall the name, Blair Seaborn? For Reston, it is Seaborn who is the source of his October 17 “Stupidity of Intelligence” column in which Seaborn warns of a “powerful conviction among Communist officials” in Hanoi who believe that “the anti-war demonstrators and editorials in the United States will force the American Government to give up the fight.” Reston, in his concluding paragraph, wants an “intelligent, objective analysis of the [Vietnam] problem,” which, he says, “the university community of the nation is supposed to represent.” That intelligent and objective analysis is to be found in the Morgenthau literature on Vietnam. Yet, there are only two instances in the whole of the Reston columns where Morgenthau is mentioned, one on May 2, 1965, and the second on August 26, 1973, but in both cases, he is noted only in passing.⁶¹

That Reston is totally opposed to virtually any form of criticism coming out of America’s campuses is reflected in his April 21, 1965, column titled “The Decline of Serious Debate.” Here, he disguises his antipathy for debate by noting those schools where the administration is well represented. Thus, at a Harvard teach-in where 2,000 students participated, Reston is pleased that Harvard professors John Kenneth Galbraith and Samuel Huntington and MIT professor Harold Isaacs “argued” the government’s side. But Reston is displeased by a leaflet circulated at the University of California, which reads: “The war in Vietnam is a hideously immoral war. It is a losing war. It is a self-defeating war. It is a terrifyingly dangerous war. And it is a civil war in which the only outside forces are those of the United States...”⁶² The leaflet, however, is quite accurate. The Chinese and the Soviets aided the North Vietnamese by sending military hardware but they did not send their soldiers. And the conflict was, in fact, a civil war in which the intruders were the American forces. But it was not until February 28, 1971, that Reston accepted this judgment.

This column, in the closing years of the war, is titled “The Enduring Illusions.” “Deep down,” Reston writes, “underneath all the surface arguments

about what we are doing in Indochina, there is something that keeps the nation from facing the facts in that tragic peninsula.” Indeed, it is Reston over the years and from the beginning, who avoided the facts by writing about the “surface arguments” and the government’s propaganda that has been part of the problem. And now, in 1971, Reston sees the futility of the war and is ready for setting a timetable for withdrawal of American troops. He writes: “To set a date certain for withdrawing all the way would not in my view, threaten our honor—or our security, or the strategic balance in the world—though this is clearly in dispute. But it would threaten our illusions, our slogans and our myths.”⁶³ Thus, Reston has all-too-belatedly discovered that facts are the proper antidote to myths and illusions, but alas, ten years after the war started, he found out too late to do much good about it.

Reston died on December 6, 1996, at age eighty-six. In 1991, he published *Deadline, A Memoir*. Buried on page 282 of his 488-page memoir, is this excuse for his dishonesty on Vietnam:

I was confused and divided in my own mind most of the time during the sixties, but at least I learned how easy it was for a great nation to stumble into war and how difficult to admit the mistake and get out. In the process, I not only learned how important but also how hard it was for the press to be aware of the debates going on inside the government *before* decisions were taken to risk a war. The slide into Vietnam was so deceptively slow, and explained with such heroic purposes, that we scarcely noticed it until the body bags came home and the antiwar and racial riots erupted in the universities and in the streets.⁶⁴

The facts are otherwise and tell a different story. The purposes, as revealed in the Reston columns, were explained, not heroically, but ideologically, as a war against Communism. On July 2, 1967, Reston wrote glowingly about Harvard economist, John Kenneth Galbraith, “as the most articulate spokesman of the scattered Vietnam peace forces in America.”⁶⁵ Even here, Reston got it wrong. Galbraith had opposed the war but quietly and inconspicuously. The most articulate and most prolific spokesman giving voice to those various “peace forces in America” by the sheer content of his opposition, had to be, by any objective evaluation, Hans J. Morgenthau.

On October 2, 1964, Reston titled his column “What Are Our War Aims in South Vietnam?” On February 12, 1965, Reston again titled his column “What Are Our Aims in Vietnam?” On May 22, 1964, Reston titled his column “The Underlying Principle in Vietnam.” On January 19, 1966, Reston titled his column “The Two Concepts of China.”

Strangely, on May 22, 1964, Reston questions whether Vietnam is worth the military effort, based on “on purely selfish national grounds,” he writes,

accidentally stumbling on the right reason. He adds: “a good case can be made against any U.S. intervention in Vietnam,” which is “over 7,000 miles from our shores,” fighting guerrilla forces on “rough” terrain close to its “arms source,” which is China. But he does not make that case. Instead, he agrees with the government that we must save “the whole of Southeast Asia” from the Communists. On October 2, 1964, he warns his readers that saving Southeast Asia means “risking a war with China.” This, he says, quoting one of the Bundy brothers, is “vital” to our “national interest and to world peace....” On February 12, 1965, he is still unsure about our war aims, but he writes that only “the President and his intimate advisers” know what to do. On January 19, 1966, what bothers Reston are the bellicose Chinese threats to embark on “a worldwide revolutionary movement.” He fears the threat of Chinese “Communist wars of national liberation.”⁶⁶ He fears China.

On May 16, the day after the marathon teach-in, Morgenthau made his second appearance in two days on national television. Here, he offered an explanation for what Reston called the case against American intervention in Vietnam “on purely selfish national grounds.” Morgenthau did this in the context of the related question, which was why it was imperative for the United States to avoid a war with China. The program was NBC’s *Meet the Press* where Morgenthau was joined by Brzezinski who, as expected, took the counter position. The long-time producer and moderator was Lawrence K. Spivak, a slight figure of a man, always competently prepared and congenial, and always capable of producing a forced smile at the conclusion of the program. On July 16, Spivak was in a fighting mood.

He began his interview with Morgenthau by invoking the Munich analogy. He asked Morgenthau, that if it was important “for the free world to stop Hitler’s aggression by force, why isn’t it just as important not to stop the Chinese aggression?” Morgenthau began his reply by noting that the historic analogy did not apply. “Mao Tse-tung,” he said, “is not Hitler. China’s position in Asia is not similar to the position of Germany in Europe. And furthermore,” he added, “and most importantly, you could stop Hitler with military force, but how are you going to stop 700 million Chinese?” Spivak countered: “Because we may not be able to stop them, is that a good reason for not trying if they are dangerous and if they want to get the whole world under their thumb?” Morgenthau answered: “This is the best reason in the world.... There are certain things that you would like to do but you can’t because you haven’t got the means to do them.” Spivak then asked, “How can you be so sure?” Spivak cited Winston Churchill “who didn’t give up because he didn’t think he could win. He went on fighting.” Morgenthau then cited two generals, well thought of in military matters, MacArthur and Eisenhower, both of whom “warned against a land war on the Asian mainland.” He cited

Eisenhower who Morgenthau said “would regard as the greatest tragedy if an American land army would get involved in what was then Indochina.”⁶⁷

Brzezinski, asked the same question, unsurprisingly did not see complications. And he used the occasion to put forward again his defense of the government’s policies. “I believe we can stop China,” he said. He added, gratuitously, that “the situation in Vietnam has improved since what we have begun to do what we are now doing,” which, in the spring of 1965, was to increase American troops now designated as combat forces. He also said, “I think there is evidence in support of President Johnson’s policy.” He also said, “I would not escalate” but “I would [also] increase our military presence in South Vietnam,” which, if it is not escalation, what is it? He also said “I don’t believe we are doomed to get out of Asia, and I do not believe the Asians want us to get out, and that is a very fundamental difference between me and Professor Morgenthau.”⁶⁸ Morgenthau disagreed about what the Asians might want. “Put yourself for a moment in the position of Peking,” he said, “and look at the world from the vantage point of Peking.” “I would guess,” Morgenthau noted, “that a patriotic Chinese, regardless of whether he is Communist or something else, would look with disfavor upon the military presence of the United States and would try to do something about it.”⁶⁹

Morgenthau thus wanted to avoid confrontation and he repeatedly pointed out that while the Chinese were given to rhetorical bluster, their actual behavior was prudent and circumspect. For Morgenthau, the hallmark of foreign policy analysis is patience and a careful dissection of a problem that is unlikely to have a quick solution. And because the military containment of China was out of the question, the containment of China’s influence among the nations in Asia had to be cultural and economic that required thought and imagination. For Brzezinski, foreign policy analysis stopped just short of ideological rigidity that did not exclude military force. As Brzezinski said, “I believe we can stop China,”⁷⁰ but he didn’t say how; yet he was willing to increase American ground forces in Vietnam, which could invite a military response from China.

Brzezinski, like so many ordinary Americans, had been nurtured by the doctrinal proclamations proffered by American officials for well over a decade. Since the Dulles era and throughout the Kennedy and Johnson years, American policymakers created the public phobia that Communist China sought Asian and worldwide domination. Thus, on January 30, 1961, Kennedy said “the relentless pressures of the Chinese Communists menace the security of the entire area—from the borders of India and South Vietnam to the jungles of Laos.” On September 9, 1963, Kennedy said that if South Vietnam fell, “the wave of the future in Southeast Asia was China and the Communists.”⁷¹ On April 7, 1965, Johnson spoke of “the deepening shadow

of Communist China.”⁷² On October 2, 1965, McNamara spoke about a speech by Chinese Defense Minister Lin Piao, which McNamara called “a guide to Communist intentions and future actions ... a program of aggression ... a speech that ranks with Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*.”⁷³ Three days later, on October 5, Rusk commented on the Lin Piao speech and said that “Peking has announced a policy of world militancy.”⁷⁴ On October 15, 1967, Vice President Humphrey said, “The threat to world peace is militant aggressive Asian Communism.” On October 17, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach said that Asians were “deeply concerned about their long-term security in the face of a militant, hostile, rigidly ideological Communist China.”⁷⁵ On May 16, 1965, in the column in which he addressed favorably the May 15 teach-in, Reston also pointed to the “cunning techniques of Communism” and to “China [which] is now the central problem.” For China, Reston added, “has a grievance, an atomic bomb, a religious ideology, and a staggering surplus of people. In Asia, it is the arsenal of rebellion. ...”⁷⁶ What to do about the problem of China?

Six years later, Reston’s fear of China, and the administration’s fear of China, and Brzezinski’s and Spivak’s fear of China, all came to an end. For on November 15, 1971, the six-member delegation of the People’s Republic of China made its formal entry into the United Nations. Two months later, in February 1972, during a week-long stay in China, President Nixon had a surprise meeting with Chairman Mao Tse-tung. In the evening of his first day in Peking, Nixon exchanged toasts with Chou En-lai as they later listened to a Chinese band playing “America the Beautiful” and “Home on the Range” while enjoying an eight-course dinner.⁷⁷ Hanging conspicuously on the rear wall just behind the dining table where Nixon and Chou sat were the two flags of both countries. Formal diplomatic relations were still in the future, but the decades-long phobia of China as an implacably hostile nation was at an end.

Up to this moment, U.S. policy makers operating on the domino theory marked China as the chief menace to Southeast Asia. And with this one event leading to the establishment of normal diplomatic relations, the domino theory was shattered, and the menace of Communist China to the United States just evaporated. Indeed, the futility of the entire American military enterprise in Southeast Asia in which Vietnam acted as the proxy of China became tragically obvious. And three years later, in 1974, when the Chinese defeated a South Vietnamese military force in a dispute over the uninhabited Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, the United States rejected an appeal by South Vietnam for help in rescuing the survivors. Shortly thereafter, the State Department expressed its official regret to Peking because an American civilian observer was among those captured with the South Vietnamese.⁷⁸

It was a very busy summer for Morgenthau. Two days after his appearance on "Meet the Press," he was in California on May 18 where he spoke at a Stanford University teach-in, which was reported in *The San Francisco Chronicle*. A week later, on May 24, he was one of four speakers at the University of Minnesota, which was covered in a front page story in the *Minneapolis Star* and also reported in the *Minneapolis Daily* and *Minneapolis Tribune*. On June 8, he appeared with Norman Thomas and Wayne Morse at New York's Madison Square Garden.⁷⁹ The *New York Times* reported that the gathering drew "17,000" and selected for inclusion in its news article Morgenthau's description of America's Asian containment policy. The *Times* chose to quote Morgenthau's comment that "the United States could no more contain Communism in Asia by arming South Vietnam and Thailand than Communist China could contain United States power in North America by arming Nicaragua and Costa Rica."⁸⁰

On June 30 Morgenthau spoke at a six-hour London teach-in in Central Hall, Westminster, which drew more than 1,000 people. As reported in the *Guardian*, the "most devastatingly reasoned analysis of U.S. policy" was provided by Morgenthau whom the *Guardian* referred to as "the dean of American foreign policy teachers." The *Guardian* also noted that Morgenthau accused the administration of lacking the moral courage and wisdom of French President Charles de Gaulle, who admitted that the foundation of his country's policy in Algeria was wrong, which led eventually to the withdrawal of France from Algeria. And again, Morgenthau ridiculed the domino theory and said the United States "was suffering from the heritage" of its former Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, who "collected alliances" in response to the domino theory, which he frequently invoked.⁸¹

On July 17, Morgenthau was the subject of a full page article in the *Chicago Daily News*. On July 26, he spoke at the University of Colorado's Summer Teach-In, which an estimated 25,000 students attended. As quoted in *The Rocky Mountain News* on July 28, Morgenthau said the "war cannot be won," that "if it continues, it must lead to catastrophe."⁸² On August 13, Morgenthau participated in an ad hoc, unofficial Congressional hearing on Vietnam conducted by Representative William Fitts Ryan who represented New York City's upper West Side. The torrent of controversy over Vietnam never subsided after the May 15 National Teach-In and, instead of officially called Congressional hearings in Washington, a number of such unofficial hearings had already convened in Wisconsin and Michigan and others were planned for in California, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Maine.

Thus, on August 12 and 13 in New York City, Ryan was joined by two additional colleagues, Representatives Leonard Farbstein of New York's

lower East Side and Robert W. Kastenmeier of Wisconsin. The hearings were held at the Carnegie Endowment International Center to accommodate a large public attendance. The experts would address the representatives and respond to questions as they would at a regular Congressional hearing. Morgenthau appeared on the second day, on August 13. Once again, he ripped into the administration's "myths" about Vietnam: the myth of falling dominoes, the myth of a commitment to ourselves by way of our client government in Saigon, the myth that the war is the result of foreign aggression.⁸³

At the morning session in which Morgenthau spoke, Harvard professor of government, Morton Halperin, told the Congressmen he did not believe there could be "conciliation" or even "negotiation" with the enemy. Freedom House and AFV leader, Leo Cherne, invoked the dominoes: soon it will be Thailand, eventually, India that will fall. Vietnam, Cherne said, must not be sacrificed. Marcus Raskin of the Institute for Policy Studies stood with Morgenthau and told Halperin that he suffered "from the Munich syndrome." When Halperin said the answer is "unilaterally to stay or go," Morgenthau then replied "Then I say let's liquidate this enterprise of war and go." Representative Farbstein then took the microphone and told the gathering that what the country should do is "get behind our President once and for all."⁸⁴

A month after the Ryan hearings, in September 1965, a Morgenthau interview was published in New York's *Horace Mann Forum* in which Morgenthau suggested the "unification of all Vietnam" under a "Titoist regime,"⁸⁵ the same point Morgenthau had made during the third and final session of the May 15 teach-in. The paradigm was the Communist nation in Yugoslavia under Marshall Tito, which had firmly established its independence from the Soviet Union. It was an idea not at all removed from reality since it had always been known that China was the traditional enemy of the Vietnamese and the Vietnamese embodiment of this enmity was Ho Chi Minh. And Ho's personal history strongly suggested that he would rule Vietnam independently of both China and the Soviet Union.

On September 19, Morgenthau was the subject of a front page article in the *Racine Journal Times* following a three-day symposium at the Johnson Foundation in Racine, Wisconsin. The event was also prominently reported in the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Chicago Daily News*. On September 28, Morgenthau was one of three lecturers on Vietnam at Harvard University whose position was recorded on the front page of the *Harvard Crimson* in which seven of the eleven paragraphs were devoted to Morgenthau's arguments against the war. On November 20, the *Daily Sun* in San Bernardino, California reported that Morgenthau received a standing ovation when he spoke at the University of California at Riverdale. Morgenthau's teach-in exploits and debates were also reported in such regional newspapers

as the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Denver Post* and the *Chicago Tribune*.⁸⁶

Months earlier, on January 18, 1965, a *Newsweek* article titled "Significant Rumbblings" summarized the dissenting editorials in several regional newspapers. Thus, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* advised the President "to seek a conference" to find a political solution in Indochina and "hopefully, permit this country to withdraw from Asia." The *Indianapolis Times* warned that "We had better stop our losses and make our plans to leave." The *Chicago Tribune* similarly warned "the United States may be pushed out of Vietnam if it does not withdraw." Also cited in the *Newsweek* article is an advertisement in the *Boston Globe* paid for by several prominent citizens calling for "an immediate cease-fire in Vietnam..." *Newsweek* also noted that Americans "in ever increasing numbers, are questioning the wisdom of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Citing a recent Gallup Poll that indicated that those who expressed dissatisfaction with the war policy increased from an earlier 16 percent to 50 percent and, more recently, to 56 percent. *Newsweek* concluded that "those Americans who lead and shape public opinion are beginning to feel the first serious stirrings of doubt" as to the Administration's "handling" of the war, "if not about the futility of the war itself."⁸⁷ Even the nation's premier newspaper, on January 7, 1965, called attention to "the growing uneasiness in the country" while at the same time the *Times* endorsed Johnson's claim that the United States "should not now break the pledge given by three presidents to assist the South Vietnamese people in resisting Communist aggression."⁸⁸

And so did the *Washington Post*, which ranks second in the hierarchy of America's premier newspapers. Thus, on February 8, 1965, the *Post* declared that "withdrawal from South Vietnam would not gain peace, but only lead to another war.... The United States Government has taken the only course available to it, if it does not wish to surrender." On April 8, 1965, the editorial emphasized that "North Vietnam, the Viet Cong and China simply must be persuaded that the President was in dead earnest when he said: 'We will not be defeated. We will not grow tired. We will not withdraw.'" On October 1, 1965, the *Post*, while lamenting the killing of civilians, endorsed the bombing campaign that, the editorial noted, "would cease the moment North Vietnam ceased attempting a Communist takeover." Four weeks later, on October 28, the *Post* asserted "We have been drawn into a war to protect" the right of South Vietnam "and the right of other Asian countries ... to resist Chinese aggression." The editorial continued: "It has not been possible to withdraw from that war without fatal injury to South Vietnam and grievous damage to every small country with like interests in independent existence." And the United States, the *Post* declared, will "let the world know that the United States is prepared for a prolonged commitment ... if that is necessary to

achieve our purposes.” At year’s end, on December 24, on the eve of the Christmas truce, the *Post* proclaimed: “Conceivably, it might be possible to whet Communist appetites by appearing too eager for peace.”⁸⁹

The *Washington Post* is the major newspaper in the nation’s capitol. It is what many of the commuters read as they travel from Virginia and the suburbs of Maryland to their jobs in Washington. It has an enormous influence, and throughout 1965 and 1966, the editorials were written by J. Russell Wiggins, the executive editorial page editor, a friend and crony of Lyndon Johnson’s. According to the late Katherine Graham, the owner and publisher of the *Post*, it was Wiggins, without any formal training in foreign affairs, who “wrote most of the Vietnam editorials, at least through 1966.” Graham tells us in her autobiography that she received complaints from her readers and was eventually persuaded by Senator Fulbright to change her editorial policy. With Wiggins due to retire, Graham hired *Wall Street Journal* foreign correspondent, Philip L. Geyelin, to succeed Wiggins as chief editorial page editor, and with that appointment, the *Post* began its dramatic reversal of policy, first expressing skepticism, and then its opposition to the war. Curiously, though Senator Fulbright convinced Graham that Wiggins was wrong on Vietnam, Graham writes that she was still “pretty convinced that Russ [Wiggins] was right about the war.”⁹⁰

On March 5, 1965, presidential assistant, Harry McPherson, told Johnson he had attended a meeting hosted by Senator Church and attended by a few journalists and Senators who listened to “Dr. Hans Morgenthau, the distinguished political scientist,” who spoke on the subject of Vietnam. This was the closest Morgenthau ever came to the center of power, excluding his debate with Bundy three months later. McPherson summarized Morgenthau’s lecture and noted the key points: we should foster a Hanoi-Saigon regime modeled on Tito’s Yugoslavia; we should not treat the Asian situation as similar to Europe; that containment worked in Europe where there were strong, industrialized states, which served as anchors for containment; Asia has no such states that could serve as similar anchors. McPherson then emphasized Morgenthau’s central point: “*We have no vital interests in Asia*” [McPherson’s emphasis].⁹¹

On July 16, a month after the National Teach-In, presidential assistant, Douglas Cater, sent Johnson a copy of a letter signed by sixty-seven professors supporting the administration’s position on Vietnam. Cater told Johnson the letter “reveals that the academic community does not stand behind Hans Morgenthau.” What is surreal about this letter from the professors is their description of the first six months of 1965 as “an unusually creative period in American foreign policy.”⁹²

On November 1, 1965, *Newsweek* quoted *New York Times* correspondent, Jack Langguth, who had spent the year in Vietnam. In great contrast to the professors who deemed American foreign policy creative, Langguth said it was not just wholly uncreative, it was vastly destructive. Langguth speculated that even if the United States achieved a military victory, it would come at the cost of “nearly obliterating the country.” Langguth asked, that if the United States engages in an “ugly and inhuman war, does national honor require resisting even more brutally?” “Will the American desperation over South Vietnam seem justified fifteen years from now?” “Is the United States now helping the people of South Vietnam more than it is hurting them?” Langguth admitted that he had no answers to these questions.⁹³ Morgenthau had already answered these questions, when, three months earlier, on January 18, 1965, *Newsweek* asked eight persons of “special competence” two questions: “How well or badly is the struggle for South Vietnam really going?” and “What should the United States do about it now?”

Morgenthau was unequivocal. “For a year,” he said, “I have seen only one alternative: to get out without losing too much face.” [Losing face is a diplomatic term by which nations attempt to preserve their reputation by extricating themselves from a political and military debacle that has already damaged their reputation.] Morgenthau then listed “three possible ways this could happen”: South Vietnam tells us to leave, which, he says, is a “distinct possibility”; another is to call another Geneva conference that “would neutralize all of Southeast Asia”; and thirdly, to work out “a bilateral deal with North Vietnam” by which Ho Chi Minh would establish, as noted above, a Titoist form of Communist regime. Of the eight respondents to the *Newsweek* questions, only Morgenthau advocated getting out of Vietnam.⁹⁴

But as *Newsweek* responsibly raised doubts about the war, *Time* magazine, irresponsibly, elevated certainty: certainty that the war was being won and that U.S. forces were in control. Here is *Time*’s appraisal of the war on October 22, 1965: “Today South Vietnam throbs with a pride and power, above all an *esprit*”; “government desertion rates have plummeted and recruitment is up”; the Vietcong plan “to move into their mass-attack ‘third phase’ is now no more than a bedraggled dream”; “the remarkable turnabout . . . is the result of one of the swiftest, biggest military buildups in the history of warfare”; “everywhere today South Vietnam bustles with the U.S. presence. Bulldozers by the hundreds.... Howitzers and trucks..... Wave upon wave of combat-booted Americans—lean, laconic and looking for a fight—pour ashore from armadas of troop ships”; “day and night, screaming jets and prowling helicopters seek out the enemy from southernmost Camau all the way north to the mountain gates of China.”⁹⁵

Time magazine, with a circulation in the millions, the weekly news classroom for the reading public, exulted in its strange exuberance for the war

and the war mentality. On May 14, 1965, *Time* called Vietnam “The Right War at the Right Time.” Why? Because, according to *Time*, “Communism remains an international aggressive movement.” Because, in *Time*’s view, if the United States pulls out of Vietnam, the United States would only have to fight “Asian Communism later, under worse conditions and in less tenable locations.”⁹⁶

On August 6, 1965, *Time* wrote approvingly of President Johnson who “is totally preoccupied with the war—and with his pursuit of peace.” “He sits in his office,” according to *Time*, “fists clenched in front of him to illustrate his aims to aides.” He “frets over the details, picks the targets, knows the tonnage and timing of the raids, wants to be informed on every U.S. troop movement. He wakes early and goes to the White House situation room to check cables about rescue operations and casualty lists.” And he is always asking questions. *Time* quotes Johnson: “I want to ask more questions. I want more discussion and debate.”⁹⁷

On April 14, 1975, two weeks before the North Vietnamese stormed into Saigon, *Time* admitted, not that it had deceived its readership, not that it had been too overly exuberant about the war mentality it had promoted, but that there was now near total agreement that the war “was a mistake.” In the *Time* essay titled “How Should Americans Feel?” the editors proclaimed that it was “the wrong war for the wrong reasons”; that the United States should never have followed the French into Vietnam; that the war could not be won; that America’s national leadership “failed to heed the evidence”; that a particular fault was America’s reluctance to accept defeat based on an idealistic preoccupation with America’s previous wars. *Time* then asserts that there was no “guidebook” no formula; no exit strategy. But alas, there was an enclave strategy, as we have seen, and there were arguments, sound geopolitical arguments, to end the conflict but that *Time*, like America’s top officials, did not heed.

In a closing paragraph, *Time* finally laments:

This dilemma [which] produced not only tragedy for the Vietnamese but a series of mistakes, half-truths, lies and euphemisms that damaged the fabric of American society. Leaders first deceived themselves and then deceived the public. The American people misled from the top and from the sides, underwrote an opaque conflict that neither generals nor Presidents quite comprehended. The tragedy was only heightened by the fact that the United States entered the war not for any base reasons, but out of an understandable desire—although many saw the conflict as merely a civil war—to thwart Communist aggression.”⁹⁸

Time magazine still didn’t get it. All these belated criticisms well after the fact were all, indeed all of them, forecast and laid out by Morgenthau

as the war was being fought. And just as *Time*, in its May 12, 1975, opinion page, asked participants and critics of the war, for their “reflections” and “reactions,” which included among the critics Daniel Ellsberg, of the *Pentagon Papers*, Sam Brown, an organizer in Senator Eugene McCarthy’s campaign for the Presidency, and Tom Hayden, the SDS organizer and husband of Jane Fonda, among others, the name most conspicuously absent is that of Hans Morgenthau. Thus, *Time*, in its moment of contrition, failed even then to add up the meaning of the Vietnam tragedy because it missed the importance of national interest. And in this failing, as it had throughout the war, it ignored the one man whose warnings about the impending tragedy could have averted that tragedy.

NOTES

1. Morgenthau, “Vietnam: Another Korea?” *Commentary*, May 1962, 373; also in Morgenthau, *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, *The Reconstruction of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 373.

2. Morgenthau’s *New York Times Magazine* articles in chronological order: “Can We Entrust Defense to a Committee?” 7 June 1959; “What the Big Two Can, and Can’t Negotiate,” 20 September 1959; “Reaction to the Van Duren Reaction,” 22 November 1959; “Alone With Himself and History,” 13 November 1960; “Critical Look at the New Neutralism,” 27 August 1961; “Is World Public Opinion a Myth?” 23 March 1962; “Dilemma of the Summit,” 11 November 1962; “Germany Gives Rise to Vast Uncertainties,” 8 September 1963; “The Future of Europe,” 17 May 1964; “The United Nations of Dag Hammarskjöld is Dead,” 11 March 1965; “We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam,” 18 April 1965. Morgenthau’s reviews in chronological order: “Living With the Bomb,” 15 April 1962; “Has the Creative Imagination Lost Confidence in Itself,” 6 May 1962; “Bigness Is Not to Be Done Away With, It is to Be Controlled,” 26 January 1964; “How Different Are the Two Systems?” 30 August 1964; “When Reason is Required,” 7 March 1965; “What Was, Is and May Be,” 28 March 1965; “At War with Asia,” 17 January 1971; “The Diffusion of Power,” 10 December 1972; “My Country and the World,” 9 November 1975. Morgenthau’s Op-Ed essays: “Détente: The Balance Sheet,” 28 March 1974; “Vladivostokmanship,” 22 November 1974; “Gambling on China,” 25 July 1978.

3. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, 113.

4. I borrow the terms “war of necessity” from the title of Richard N. Haass’s recent book, *War of Necessity: War of Choice* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), which Haass subtitles “A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars.”

5. Morgenthau, *In Defense*, 131.

6. Morgenthau, *In Defense*, 118.

7. Morgenthau, “Notes on American Foreign Policy,” *The University of Chicago Magazine*, November 1965, 23.

8. Morgenthau, "Notes," 23.
9. *Times's* reporters included David Halberstam, Homer Bigart, Neil Sheehan, Malcolm Browne. See also William Prochnau, *Once Upon a Distant War* (New York: Random House, 1995), 141. Prochnau writes of Halberstam, "not once during his Vietnam years or well afterward did he question America's right, even her need to be there."
10. *Times'* editorials: "The Vietnam Crisis," 27 February 1964; "Escalation in Vietnam," 15 July 1964; "Escalation in Vietnam," 13 December 1964; "Silence in Vietnam," 7 January 1965; "New Phase in Vietnam," 1 April 1965; "Vietnam's Wider War," 6 April 1965; "End of the Pause," 20 May 1965; "Grimmer War in Vietnam," 8 August 1965; "Bombing in North Vietnam," 18 December 1966; and "The Tragedy of Vietnam," 2 January 1967.
11. "The Campaign Issues," editorial, *New York Times*, 27 August 1972; "A Time to Begin," editorial, *New York Times*, 20 January 1973.
12. "The Toll: 12 Years of War," *New York Times*, 28 January 1973, 1; six months later, "Pentagon Reports 10,000 Died in War of Noncombatant Causes," *New York Times*, 5 June 1973, 3; the number reported is 10,303; the number of combat casualties is 45,958.
13. "After Vietnam," editorial, *New York Times*, 4 May 1975; "More Heat on Vietnam," editorial, *New York Times*, 1 March 1962.
14. "Vietnam's Wider War," editorial, *New York Times*, 6 April 1965; "Grimmer War in Vietnam," editorial, *New York Times*, 8 August 1965.
15. "Statement by McNamara on Vietnam," *New York Times*, 5 August 1965, 2.
16. Frankel, "Ferment Grows in Communist World; Pravda Offers Plan for Coexistence," *New York Times*, 22 January 1962, 1.
17. Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: Back to Broad Principles," *New York Times*, 5 May 1965, 46.
18. Morgenthau, "We Are Deluding Ourselves," in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the United States*, 66–67.
19. Morgenthau, "War With China," *The New Republic*, 3 April 1965, 13.
20. Sulzberger, "Broad Principles," *New York Times*, 5 May 1965, 46.
21. Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: Implications of Vietnam," *New York Times*, 24 March 1965, 42.
22. Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: More Realism in the World," *New York Times*, 11 June 1965, 30; Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: Power and the Unloved One," *New York Times*, 27 February 1966, E10.
23. "McNamara Called Force Immense," *New York Times*, 18 March 1962, 28.
24. "Foreign Relations: Frank Talk to the Gullible," *Time*, 30 April 1965, 29.
25. Remarks for Additional Appropriations, 4 May 1965, Johnson, *Public Papers 1965*, Vol. 1, 485; The President's News Conference, 13 July 1965, Johnson, *Public Papers 1965*, Vol. 1, 738.
26. "Johnson Decries Draft Protests; Presses Inquiry," *New York Times*, 19 October 1965, 1. Moyers, as press secretary, by definition, enthusiastically supported the war. In a memo to Johnson, 9 February 1965, Office of the President File, LBJ Library,

Box 10, Moyers encouraged the President to use the office as an “instrument of education” for “freedom-loving people around the world” about “the real nature of the struggle in which we are involved in Southeast Asia.” On 15 August 1965, memo to the President, Office of the President File, Box 9, Moyers wants to “improve coverage of the Vietnam War.” He is disturbed about press criticism and tells Johnson, “We will never eliminate altogether the irresponsible and prejudiced coverage of men like Peter Arnett and Morris Safer, men who are not Americans and do not have the basic American interest at heart, but we will try to tighten things up.” On 26 November 1965, “For the President,” Office of the President File, Box 7, where Moyers tells Johnson the American people support the war and “believe that we must continue to frustrate Communist aggression while pursuing diligently, a peaceful settlement.” Moyers, a year after he left the White House, changed his mind. He wrote to John J. McCloy and wanted the Council on Foreign Relations to study what went wrong; Moyers to McCloy, 2 February 1968, Armstrong Papers, Box 42, McCloy Folder, where Moyers asks about “the development of policy over a long period of time culminating in one of the most costly and dangerous wars in which the United States has ever engaged.” Moyers wants “a sustained study” of United States policy in Vietnam in which “the counsel of the best scholars” could be enlisted.

27. This is Morgenthau’s interpretation of the events in his review of the five books on Vietnam he discussed under the title “Wild Bunch” in the *NYRB*, 11 February 1971 one of which is Henry Graff, *The Tuesday Cabinet* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970). About Graff’s assignment to interview the President and his advisers, Morgenthau writes: “I was told at the time that this commission was a response to White House complaints to *The Times* which had just published my article, ‘We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam.’” Graff replies in *NYRB*, 6 May 1971, and rejects Morgenthau’s charge on the grounds that “anyone familiar with either the *Times* or the White House knows how absurd such a statement is on its face.” Thus, it is Graff’s naïve contention that neither the White House nor the *Times* would stoop to such deception. Morgenthau replies in the same issue noting that “Professor Graff’s letter has no relevance to the issue I raised in my letter. I nowhere so much as intimated that Professor Graff was a party to the arrangements. Thus, his arguments completely miss the point. What Professor Graff denies, I never asserted, and what I asserted, he is in no position to deny.” Indeed, Morgenthau said nothing in his review to suggest that Graff was complicit in the commission. But he did pronounce the book “a court chronicle” which is “neither journalism nor history” recording “in indiscriminate detail” what Graff accepted as “American humaneness and American commitment” in its war in Vietnam. Graff did not reply to the substantive criticism in Morgenthau’s review. For Morgenthau on Graff, see *NYRB*, 11 February 1971, <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/10672>>; For Graff’s reply to Morgenthau and Morgenthau’s to Graff, see *NYRB*, 6 May 1971, <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/10567>>.

28. Graff, “Decision in Vietnam: How Johnson Makes Foreign Policy,” *New York Times Magazine*, 4 July 1965, 16.

29. Graff, “Decision,” 17.

30. Graff, “Decision,” 17.

31. Graff, "Decision," 20.
32. Graff, "Decision," 18.
33. Graff, "Decision," 20.
34. "Foreign Policy: Drift or Design," *Newsweek*, 17 May 1965, 27.
35. "Drift or Design," 27.
36. "Drift or Design," 28.
37. Memorandum for the Record, 22 April 1965, in *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam January–June 1965*, 599.
38. Memo, Bundy to President Johnson, 23 April 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam January–June 1965*, 604.
39. "Vietnam Debate Heard on 100 Campuses," *New York Times*, 16 May 1965, 62.
40. Inter-University Committee for Public Hearings on Vietnam, "National Teach-In on the Vietnam War," May 15, 1965, 9 a.m. to Midnight, Program, Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington D.C., Richard D. Mann papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Box 1.
41. Mann's rough notes, undated and unpaginated, in Mann Papers, Box 1. Mann cites Yale Professor Mary Wright as saying "Morgenthau may use all the panel's time," to which the panelists agreed.
42. Robert A. Scalapino, telephone conversation with author, 18 August 2003. Professor Scalapino told me he did not talk to Morgenthau on May 15 and his criticism of Morgenthau was that he "approached the problem of Vietnam as a generalist."
43. "Excerpts from National Teach-In on Vietnam Policy and Text of Bundy's Statement: Educators Debate Issues because of Doubt Over Wisdom of U.S. Action in Asia," *New York Times*, 17 May 1965, 30.
44. "Excerpts From National Teach-In," 31. I recall watching this incident on television from which my description of the good-natured exchange is based.
45. "Excerpts From National Teach-In," 31.
46. "Excerpts From National Teach-In," 31.
47. "Excerpts From Transcript of McNamara's Report," *New York Times*, 27 April 1965, 12.
48. "Educators Debate Issues Because of Doubt Over Wisdom of United States Actions in Asia," *New York Times*, 17 May 1965, 31.
49. "Transcript of McNamara's Report," 12. Morgenthau's comment about the bridges in Vietnam is in Menashe and Radosh, eds., *Teach-Ins*, 161.
50. Andrew Kopkind, "The Teach-Ins on Vietnam," *The New Republic*, 29 May 1965, 16.
51. Frankel, "Future of the Teach-In," *New York Times*, 17 May 1965, 29.
52. Frankel, "Future," 29.
53. Stephen Chapman, "Reston on His Laurels," *The New Republic*, 19 April 1980, 19, 21, 24, 25.
54. Reston, "Washington: The Larger Implications of Vietnam," *New York Times*, 25 April 1965, E10; Reston, "Washington: The Johnson Doctrine," *New York Times*, 5 May 1965, 46; Reston, "Washington: The Undeclared and Unexplained War," *New York Times*, 14 February 1965, E8; Reston, "Washington: The Agonies of Vietnam," *New York Times*, 21 February 1965, E8.

55. Reston, "Ann Arbor: The Strange Bedfellows in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 2 May 1965, E10; Reston, "Washington: The United States and Asia," *New York Times*, 12 September 1965, E 12; Reston, "Washington: Peking's Upside-Down Diplomacy," *New York Times*, 2 October 1965, 4; Reston, "Washington: The Deeper Tendencies of the War," *New York Times*, 26 March 1967, 154.

56. Reston, "Washington: Variations on a Theme by Dean Rusk," *New York Times*, 13 October 1967, 38. Contrast Reston's appraisal with that of I. F. Stone, in I. F. Stone, "Our Secretary of State and the Academic Community," *A Time of Torment*, introduction by Murray Kempton (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 228 where Stone writes, 3 May 1965, that "It is hard to match Rusk's record for stubborn disregard of plain facts."

57. "The Logic of the Battlefield," *Wall Street Journal*, 23 February 1968, 14; Walter Cronkite, "Who, What When, Where, Why; Report from Vietnam", CBS Television, 27 February 1968, transcript in Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington*, introduction by Leonard Sussman and a public opinion analysis by Burns W. Roper, Vol. 2 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), 180–89.

58. Reston, "Washington: The Vietnam Reappraisal in the Cabinet," *New York Times*, 13 March 1968, 46.

59. Reston, "Washington: The Tragedy of Skepticism," *New York Times*, 2 October 1966, 212; Reston, "Who Lost the War in Vietnam? Who Lost the Future?" *New York Times*, 6 April 1975, 207; Reston, "Washington: Senator Fulbright's Teach-In," *New York Times*, 13 February 1966, 176; Reston, "Washington: An Enterprising Debate," *New York Times*, 16 May 1965, E12.

60. Reston, "Santa Cruz, California: Johnson and the Universities," *New York Times*, 6 May 1966, 46.

61. Reston, "Washington: The Stupidity of Intelligence," *New York Times*, 17 October 1965, E10; Morgenthau is briefly mentioned in Reston, "Strange Bedfellow," *New York Times*, 2 May 1965, E10 and in Reston, "How About Some Honest Talk," *New York Times*, 26 August 1973, 185.

62. Reston, "Washington: The Decline of Serious Debate," *New York Times*, 21 April 1965, 44. Reston dissembles. He writes that the "political debate" on Vietnam "takes the form not of serious intellectual inquiry but of one-sided headline hunting ..." What debate is Reston referring to? Then he adds: "For almost a decade there was hardly any debate at all" and "Those of us who protested against the deepening involvement during most of the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations raised scarcely an echo in the country or even in the Congress." Reston thus continues to dissemble. To include himself among the protestors, as in "Those of us who protested," is a bold misstatement of fact. Moreover, in his column titled "The Two Concepts of China," *New York Times*, 19 January 1966, 40, Reston echoes Rusk and McNamara when he likens Defense Minister Marshal Lin Pao's call for "Communist Wars of National Liberation" to "Hitler's *Mein Kampf*."

63. Reston, "The Enduring Illusions," *New York Times*, 28 February 1971, E13.

64. Reston, *Deadline, A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1991), 282.

65. Reston, "Washington: Galbraith on the War in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 2 July 1967, 96.

66. Reston: "The Underlying Principle in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 22 May 1964, 34; Reston, "What Are Our War Aims in South Vietnam," *New York Times*, 2 October 1964, 36; Reston, again the same question five months later, "What Are Our Aims in Vietnam?" *New York Times*, 12 February 1965, 28; Reston, "Washington: The Two Concepts of China," *New York Times*, 19 January 1966, 40.

67. *NBC Meet the Press*, transcript, 16 May 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 159, 7–8.

68. *NBC Meet the Press*, transcript, 16 May 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 159, 6, 8.

69. *NBC Meet the Press*, transcript, 16 May 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 159, 7.

70. *NBC Meet the Press*, transcript, 16 May 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 159, 8.

71. Transcript of NBC's *Huntley-Brinkley Report*, 9 September 1963, Kennedy, *Public Papers* 1963, 559.

72. Address at John Hopkins University: "Peace without Conquest," 7 April 1965, Johnson, *Public Papers* 1965, Vol. 1, 395.

73. Jack Raymond, "Sec. McNamara Sets New Mark for Tenure in Defense Post," *New York Times*, 2 October 1965, SUA5-1.

74. "Rusk Says China Bars Asia Peace," *New York Times*, 6 October 1965, 2.

75. Roy Reed, "Chinese Communist Peril Emphasized by Humphrey," *New York Times*, 16 October 1967, 1; Katzenbach's remarks in "Rostow Discerns Isolationist Gains," *New York Times*, 18 October 1967, 11.

76. Reston, "Washington: An Enterprising Debate," *New York Times*, 16 May 1965, E12.

77. "'Home on the Range' Spices the Three Hour Banquet," *New York Times*, 22 February 1972, 15.

78. "The Island Domino," *The New Republic*, 9 February 1974, 7. According to *TNR*, "The so-called Chinese menace was never anything more than an alibi contrived to camouflage U.S. intervention in a civil war between Vietnamese factions that had been fighting for years ..."

79. Newspaper Clippings in Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.

80. Raymond Daniell, "U.S. Assailed on Vietnam Before 17,000 at Garden Rally", *New York Times*, 9 June 1965, 4.

81. 'United States Lacks 'de Gaulle's Moral Courage,'" the *Guardian*, 1 July 1965, 3.

82. Newspaper clippings in Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.

83. "The Talk of the Town" column in *The New Yorker*, 28 August 1965, 24–25 in Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.

84. "Talk of the Town", 25.

85. Horace Mann Forum, September 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.

86. Newspaper clippings, Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.

87. "Significant Rumbblings," 33–36. Morgenthau's response on 36.

88. "Silence on Vietnam," editorial, *New York Times*, 7 January 1965, 30.

89. The titles of *Washington Post* editorials: "The Asia War," 8 February 1965; "Sword and Olive Branch," 8 April 1965; "Brutalization ...," 1 October 1965; "The Long War," 28 October 1965; "Truce For Christmas," 24 December 1965.

90. Brian Wingfield, "Philip Geylin Dies at 80; A *Washington Post* Editor," obituary, *New York Times*, 11 January 2004, 32.
91. Memo, Mc Pherson to the President, 5 March 1965 in David M. Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers: A Documentary Collection* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1997), 131.
92. Memo, Cater to the President, 16 July 1965, *Johnson Vietnam Papers*, 211.
93. "The Demonstrators: Why? How Many?" *Newsweek*, 1 November 1965, 26.
94. "Any Way Out? Ambassadors, Generals, Scholars Reply," *Newsweek*, 18 January 1965, 36.
95. "South Vietnam, A New Kind of War," *Time*, 22 October 1965, 28.
96. "Vietnam: The Right War at the Right Time," *Time*, 14 May 1965, 30.
97. "The Presidency, There is No One Else," *Time*, 6 August 1965, 19.
98. "How Should Americans Feel?" *Time*, 14 April 1975, 27.

Chapter 4

Morgenthau and Schlesinger and the National Interest

“How could Vietnam happen?” This was the title of an article that appeared in *The Atlantic* in April, 1968, shortly after the North Vietnamese Tet offensive forced Lyndon Johnson from office. The author, James C. Thomson, Jr., could not have known, while writing the article months earlier, that on the evening of March 31, Johnson would announce the end of his presidency. Thomson had quit as deputy assistant in McGeorge Bundy’s national security council and had returned to Harvard to teach history. The question asked by Thomson was how could men of such “superior ability, sound training, and high ideals” have produced a war so brutal, “calamitous, and immoral?” How could such men have created a “costly and divisive policy?”¹

It was the same question asked a year later in 1969 by Henry Brandon, the American correspondent from the *Times* of London, who attended the send-off dinner for Rostow and Taylor in October 1961 at the home of General Taylor where Brandon notes the enthusiasm of both Rostow and Taylor on the eve of their fact-finding mission to Vietnam. In his book, *The Anatomy of Error: The Inside Story of the Asian War on the Potomac*, Brandon, like Thomson, could not fathom how Vietnam could happen. “What went wrong?” Brandon asks. How could men of “great experience, high intelligence, and essentially peaceful intentions” become “embroiled in this unheroic, unwinnable war?” “A war,” Brandon adds, “that has undermined Americans’ confidence in the judgment of their leaders [and] in their institutions.”²

Add to the list a July, 1970 article in *Foreign Affairs* written by Townshend Hoopes, a Yale graduate and former Marine officer who worked for the first Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, from 1948 to 1953. Hoopes left government for private business until 1965 when he returned to join McNamara’s Pentagon. He left in 1967. In Hoopes’s words: “Why did so many intelligent,

experienced, and humane men in government fail to grasp the immorality of our intervention in Vietnam and the cancerous division it was producing at home, long after this was intuitively evident to their wives and children.”³

Indeed, how to account for the tragedy of Vietnam? It is not the randomness of fate that produced the Vietnam War. It is rather the result of neglect and indifference to fact and the elevation of dogma as foreign policy. First and foremost, it is the result initially, of a Harvard-educated President monumentally indifferent to the hard study of foreign policy based on national interest and consumed with the threat of a fictitious monolithic Communism and an equally fictitious theory of falling dominoes. Repeatedly, as we have seen, he conveyed these myths to the American people and the American press as he nurtured the national hysteria that Communism had to be defeated wherever it appeared on the globe.

And he chose, as his foreign policy subordinates, those who shared his worldview of Communism: an unimaginative and quiet bureaucrat as the secretary of state; a quick witted and brash national security adviser without foreign policy experience whose reputation at Harvard was that he had never made a mistake; a secretary of defense whose pose is that of a brilliantly read man but who resembles the Sinclair Lewis fictional character, George F. Babbitt; an under secretary of defense who drafts a memo to his chief and sets out American objectives in Vietnam in quantitative terms; and a brilliant word master who is installed in the East Wing of the White House as an intellectual adornment without purposeful portfolio who writes memos and movie reviews because there is not much for him to do.⁴

The word master is Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., one of America’s premier historians, whose career as prodigious writer began with his first book, *The Age of Jackson*, published in 1947 when he was a twenty-eight-year-old Harvard history professor. The book won Schlesinger his first Pulitzer Prize. The same year he was voted by the Jaycees one of the “Ten Outstanding Men of the Year,” a list that also included John F. Kennedy. He won his second Pulitzer in 1965 when he published *A Thousand Days*, his history of the Kennedy Presidency in 1,031 pages of text. Following the Bay of Pigs disaster in April, 1961, Kennedy gave Schlesinger free rein to compose note cards about what he observed in the White House since Kennedy feared what his detractors would write especially after the failed American sponsored invasion of Cuba. It was Schlesinger’s intention to present the President with his typed notes for Kennedy to write the history of his own Presidency, which ended prematurely in Dallas in November 1963.⁵

Schlesinger stayed with the Johnson government until early 1964 when he retreated to a rented office in Washington with hundreds of single-spaced typed pages in three loose-leaf binders. This was the rough draft of *A Thousand*

Days, which Schlesinger put into polished form in about fourteen months. On December 17, 1965, just after the appearance of his book, Schlesinger was on the cover of *Time* magazine and also the subject of a five-page article in the same issue. In the 1950s, Schlesinger published three massive volumes of the Roosevelt Presidency, which were all "Book-of-the-Month Club" selections and best sellers. In 1949, he published *The Vital Center*, which reveals Schlesinger's great fear of the "Communist mission" in the United States to undermine American institutions. Moreover, the book also reveals Schlesinger's premature assessment of future U.S.-Soviet relations for here, Schlesinger writes, "it is idle to delude ourselves into thinking that totalitarianism and democracy can live together happily ever after." Schlesinger continues: "Unless we are soon able to make the world safe for democracy," it may be "too late to the great and final struggle to make the world safe for humanity." Thus, in two sentences, Schlesinger reveals his propensity for a Wilsonian approach to foreign policy in his assessment of the Soviet threat. And then there is his dire conclusion: "Free society will survive, in the last resort, only if enough people believe in it deeply enough to die for it."⁶

In 1973, Schlesinger wrote *The Imperial Presidency*, a 419-page history of the Presidential office inspired by Richard Nixon's abuse of executive power, which Schlesinger rightly concluded exceeded the bounds of the Constitution. In 1978, Schlesinger published *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, a 916 page encomium in what has become the Schlesinger tradition of complete and unquestioned loyalty to the Kennedy family. In November 2000, Schlesinger published what was supposed to be the first of a two-volume autobiography aptly titled *A Life in the Twentieth Century*, the history of his first 33 years, from 1917 to 1950. On November 26, 2000, there is a glowing review by Max Frankel in *The New York Times Book Review* and the caption reads "The Age of Schlesinger." He is pictured on the front cover, which captures the Schlesinger features: the high forehead, the receding hairline, the distinctive mouth that suggests both determination and hauteur, the horn-rimmed glasses, the familiar bow-tie. Schlesinger died in February, 2007 and never completed the second volume. The notes for the second volume of his life story were edited by Schlesinger's sons, Andrew and Stephen Schlesinger, and published posthumously in 2007 under the title, *Journals, 1952–2000*.

It is curious that in the *Journals*, which encompass the Vietnam years, there is very little on the war or on Schlesinger's commentaries on the war or on his participation in the Vietnam War debate. The year-by-year inclusions read like a compendium of the politically prominent, both international and local, as well as glimpses of Schlesinger's familiarity with movie celebrities including Angie Dickinson, Mariel Hemingway, and Mia Farrow. Schlesinger also records the deaths of Marilyn Monroe and Lillian Hellman, as well as those

of Reinhold Niebuhr, Averell Harriman, Joseph Alsop, and Adlai Stevenson. Yet oddly, there is no mention of the death of Hans Morgenthau in July, 1980, nor is there any mention of Morgenthau in the entire text.

Schlesinger knew Morgenthau, but they were never close friends. They had appeared on the same platform at the opening of the May 15 National Teach-In. In November 1960, Schlesinger asked Morgenthau to write President-elect Kennedy and recommend the appointment of Adlai Stevenson as secretary of state, which Morgenthau did in a letter to Kennedy on November 15, 1960.⁷ When, in September 1960, Schlesinger published an article in *Esquire*, the subject of which was a required reading list for the new President, it was another compendium of the prominent including a number of foreign policy specialists such as Kissinger and Rostow, but that conspicuously omitted Morgenthau. When it was decided in the Kennedy White House to convey a public image of the administration as a group of intellectuals fascinated with ideas, Schlesinger was asked to convene evening seminars featuring prominent specialists in various fields to talk and answer questions among the cabinet officials and their wives. Because they met initially at the Hickory Hill home of the attorney general, the meetings came to be known as the Hickory Hill Seminars. In 1962, the speakers included the English philosopher A. J. Ayer, the historians David Donald, Oscar Handlin, and Elting Morrison, and the philosopher Mortimer Adler, among others.⁸ Morgenthau was never invited though foreign affairs was reportedly the President's chief interest. When it was convenient, however, as it was for the state dinner honoring Ludwig Erhard, the new Chancellor of West Germany in early November 1963, Morgenthau, as an émigré from Germany, was useful and was invited. In his memo to the President, Morgenthau headed the list of political scientists and in parenthesis, Schlesinger told Kennedy: "I think he feels neglected by the Administration, and it might be a good idea therefore to invite him."⁹ In none of his memos to the President did Schlesinger ever suggest that Morgenthau's expertise in foreign affairs could be useful to the administration. Years later, when the Schlesingers had a dinner party for Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist and author of books on American society, Morgenthau received an invitation.¹⁰ In the long course of the Vietnam War debate in which Schlesinger and Morgenthau were pivotal figures, the public record does not indicate any Schlesinger interest in probing, first hand, Morgenthau's cogent and persistent arguments against the war. And just as the columnists and editors had neglected the national interest, so too did Schlesinger ignore the national interest and Morgenthau, and therein lies another component of neglectful indifference leading to the tragedy of Vietnam.

For Schlesinger, widely influential and highly respected, came upon the importance of national interest only belatedly, in the closing years of the war

and even much later. Thus, writing in *American Heritage*, May 1994, on the greatness of Franklin D. Roosevelt as “The Man of the Century,” Schlesinger stumbles upon what he calls “a minefield of clichés” in the utterances of the great man. But there is one Rooseveltian utterance that is not a cliché, and that is what Schlesinger calls Roosevelt’s “sense of the historic life-interests of the United States.” And what is this “historic life-interest?” By another name, Schlesinger says it is “national interest,” which, Schlesinger suggests, is the “key” to understanding Roosevelt foreign policy and thereby, his greatness. Here, Schlesinger borrows from Morgenthau and makes reference to Morgenthau as he writes:

No one, except a utopian or a millennialist, is against the national interest. In a world of nation-states the assumption that governments will pursue their own interests gives order and predictability to international affairs. As George Washington said, “No nation is to be trusted farther than it is bound by national interest.” The problem is the substance one pours into national interest. In our own time, Lyndon Johnson and Dean Rusk thought our national interest required us to fight in Vietnam; William Fulbright, Walter Lippmann, Hans Morgenthau thought our national interest required us to pull out of Vietnam.¹¹

Schlesinger adds that Roosevelt could “distinguish between vital and peripheral interests”; he understood why “the national interest required the maintenance of balances of power...”¹² Indeed, these are all terms and principles enunciated in great detail, not by Fulbright or Lippmann, but by Hans Morgenthau.

Thus, in 1994, Schlesinger endorses Morgenthau and national interest, which means he accepts, as he writes, the geopolitical components on which it is based such as power, balance of power, spheres of influence. Is this an authentic Schlesinger acceptance? And if it is, why did it take so long for Schlesinger to understand this? There is no well thought out treatise in the Schlesinger historiography on foreign policy by which to answer this question. There is, however, a 1970 Schlesinger article in *Foreign Affairs* titled “Origins of the Cold War” in which Schlesinger enumerates “six reasons” for what appears to be his acceptance of “Wilsonian universalism.”¹³ Responding to Schlesinger in a 1970 American Forum publication, Morgenthau writes that he has “always regarded this commitment [to Wilsonian universalism] as completely divorced from the reality of international relations and utterly quixotic in its application...”¹⁴ As will be seen in these pages, it is this Wilsonian universalism and its concomitant rigid mindset about Communism, which, at bottom, prevents Schlesinger from accepting Morgenthau’s earliest opposition to the war.

As noted above, Thomson, Brandon and Hoopes are convinced that the United States was served by the best men available, first as advisers to President Kennedy and then, to President Johnson. Moreover, Thomson and Hoopes are convinced that dissent was absent. Hoopes writes “There was no dissent from within government, very little from Congress or the press and nothing significant from scholars or other close observers of foreign affairs.” Thomson concurs. He asks: “Where were the experts, the doubters and the dissenters who could warn of the dangers of an open-ended commitment to the Vietnam quagmire?”¹⁵

Thomson and Hoopes betray an ignorance characteristic of the men they praise as intelligent, superior and humane. There was little public knowledge of Kennedy’s initial dispatch of men and military hardware to Vietnam in 1961, but there were dissenters within the government such as John Kenneth Galbraith, who warned Kennedy, and later Johnson, that Vietnam could become a major military problem for the United States. When Kennedy asked Senator Mike Mansfield to visit Vietnam on a fact-finding mission, Mansfield returned with disturbing facts that Kennedy did not want to hear and simply brushed aside. Kennedy, reputedly an avid reader of the nation’s political journals, paid no attention to the critical dissent in the pages of *The New Republic* and *The Nation*. Kennedy also did not escape notice by I. F. Stone, who wrote that the Kennedy administration was, from the beginning, a warlike administration. And, as noted earlier, Morgenthau, in May, 1962, warned in *Commentary*, that “if the present military approach is persisted in, we are likely to be drawn ever more deeply into a Korean type war ... a war [that] cannot be won quickly, if it can be won at all ... [and] a war which would certainly have a profound impact on the health of the nation.” Indeed, as early as July 1961, in the same journal, Morgenthau warned of “the folly of trying to transform Laos into an American military stronghold at the borders of China without anticipating a reaction.” He added: “Here looms the prospect of another catastrophe”; both the officials of government and the American people “live in virtual ignorance of the realities of the situation in Asia.”¹⁶

Three years later, on March 4, 1964, and one year before Johnson sent the first wave of officially designated combat troops to Vietnam, Senator Wayne Morse in a foreign policy speech delivered on the Senate floor, said: “We should never have gone in. We should never have stayed in. We should get out.”¹⁷ On December 23, 1963, I. F. Stone warned the United States is headed “for a new crisis in South Vietnam.”¹⁸ And five months after the Morse speech, on July 11, 1964, 5,000 college and university professors signed an eighty-six-word petition urging “the neutralization of North and South Vietnam.” The petition called for an “end [to] the terror and suffering in this

war-ravaged land” that would also “end the continuing loss of American and Vietnamese lives.” The petition was given to the press in Washington by three spokesmen for the petitioners led by Morgenthau, who told the reporters what he urged repeatedly over the years, which was his vision of “a kind of Titoist Vietnam” in which “neither the United States nor Communist China would be the dominant power” and would “be independent of both.” The State Department reacted immediately and rejected the petition out of hand.¹⁹

Ten days later, on March 15, 1964, Morgenthau published “The Case Against Further Involvement” in *The Washington Post*, which was a reply to an earlier article in the *WP* written by Zbigniew Brzezinski. Brzezinski’s piece argued for “a deeper U.S. involvement in the affairs of Vietnam.” Morgenthau took issue with several of Brzezinski’s arguments. Brzezinski endorsed the domino theory, that if South Vietnam falls, so does Southeast Asia and perhaps all of Asia. Morgenthau replied that “half of Vietnam and of Laos have gone Communist, but nobody else has.” Brzezinski equated containment in Europe with containment in Asia; Morgenthau replied, somewhat tired of pointing this out repeatedly, that “it should hardly be necessary to point out the differences” between the containment of the Soviet Union “due to the plausible military threat” of the surrounding nations, whereas in Asia, no such military factors are present. As for Brzezinski’s claim that “our military disengagement would” enhance the Chinese position in their competition with the Soviet Union, Morgenthau argues that this is based on “the assumption” that it is China that is chiefly responsible for planning and directing the conflict in Vietnam. Morgenthau’s answer: “I know of no evidence to support that assumption. Not being the result of Chinese policies, events in South Vietnam can have no bearing upon the outcome of the Soviet-Chinese conflict.”²⁰ History eventually confirmed Morgenthau’s position.

Morgenthau’s March 1964 “Case Against Further Involvement” contains a number of significant facts that called for further discussion by the nation’s Vietnam observers but that were ignored. Morgenthau writes that there is no “direct causal nexus between the war in Vietnam and the policies of the North Vietnamese government”; that “the war in the South” cannot be won by breaking what is a non-existent “causal nexus”; for the conflict in the South is “a South Vietnamese civil war, aided and abetted by the North Vietnamese government but neither created nor sustained by it.” Again, this is confirmed by history and corroborated also by George Kennan.²¹ Here, in this article, Morgenthau continues his criticisms of the Brzezinski piece by recalling his visit to Vietnam. Morgenthau writes: Any one who “has traveled in Vietnam must recognize” the “physical impossibility” of North Vietnamese “bodies” carrying large supplies of material to the guerrilla forces in the “Mekong Delta” “over a distance of 1000 miles.” “The truth of the matter,”

Morgenthau writes, “is that the Vietcong supply themselves with captured American weapons” as they increase their forces “from the people of South Vietnam” who are thereby supporters of the Vietcong.²²

And then there is the question of China: What would be the response of China if the United States heavily bombarded North Vietnam in the attempt to bring it to its knees? Far too many dismissed Chinese intervention as a minor problem. In Morgenthau’s view “whoever wants to carry the war to North Vietnam must be ready to fight China?” For “it is conceivable,” Morgenthau writes, “that China, in view of its national interest, confirmed by 2000 years of history and the recent experiences in Korea and Laos,” would not idly stand by and see North Vietnam become battered by the might of U.S. military power. To talk of containing China militarily is folly because it would mean that the United States would have “to strike at the sources of China’s power itself,” which would produce retaliation and a catastrophic war that the United States could not win. It would also reunite “the unity of the Communist camp.”²³

Thus, contrary to what Hoopes and Thomson contend, there was Morgenthau’s dissent, as well as Mansfield’s, Galbraith’s and the public dissent noted in *I. F. Stone’s Weekly*, *The New Republic*, and *The Nation*. In 1963, another journal of dissent made its appearance designed originally to make up for the loss of newspapers in New York City during the sixty-day strike. This was *The New York Review of Books*, which became a mainstay of critical dissent throughout the course of the war to which Morgenthau was a frequent contributor. And, as noted in the previous chapter, dissent appeared in several regional newspapers that carried reports of Morgenthau’s participation at university teach-ins around the country. Indeed, much of this dissent appeared well before the distinguished array of scholars opposed to the government’s policy assembled at the Sheraton Hotel in Washington to take on an equally distinguished number of government supporters at the National Teach-In on May 15, 1965.

Sunday, May 16, 1965. The front page cover story in the *New York Times* is titled “Vietnam Debate Heard on 100 Campuses,” and depending on the early or later edition, there were two different front page pictures below the headline. In one edition, the speaker standing before the microphone and desk with much of the audience in view is Hans Morgenthau. In the second, it is Arthur Schlesinger standing before the microphone with Morgenthau and another, presumably the third speaker, Isaac Deutscher, seated to his right. In the official program, Morgenthau is listed as a critic and Schlesinger is listed as a spokesman for the government though Schlesinger prefaces his remarks by saying he is speaking for himself. The title of Morgenthau’s address is “Political Folklore in Vietnam.” Schlesinger’s title is “The Three Alternatives

in Vietnam.” And though Schlesinger claims he is not speaking for the government, the substance of his speech, though carefully contrived to conceal that support, belies that disclaimer.²⁴

Schlesinger begins his address with what he calls “procedural reflections.” He is moved, he says, to see such “deep national concern which has produced this meeting” and other comparable meetings around the country. In an earlier letter to Bundy for whom he is the replacement in the morning session, he is not so deeply “moved” and regards the event as a distraction. He says he sees too much “self-righteousness” by both the critics and the supporters, and he specifically points to the recent comment of Secretary of State Rusk who criticized “the gullibility of educated men.” Schlesinger says this tempts him “to think about ‘the gullibility of Secretaries of State.’” But while he raises the issue of Rusk’s “gullibility,” he says nothing about Bundy’s comparable remark in his reply to the professors, as noted earlier, to whom he would not give a high grade for their reasoning in their letter of invitation requesting his participation in the May 15 teach-in. Bundy, however, is a friend while Rusk is Schlesinger’s whipping boy described in his book on the Kennedy years as a “Buddha-like figure” who sat silently at meetings and contributed nothing.²⁵ As for the “self-righteousness” of Schlesinger’s “friends in the academic community,” Schlesinger employs a broad brush and implies unanimity in their use of “bright slogans and easy generalizations” to resolve a “serious” and “intricate situation.” It is an inexcusable accusation because many, if not most of the critics, namely Morgenthau, I. F. Stone, Mary Wright, George Kahin, Bernard Fall, among others, never resorted to easy slogans and generalizations in their criticisms of the war. But Schlesinger has an agenda that he soon gives away, though deceptively, by first conceding that the initial decision to intervene in 1954 was devoid of “hardheaded and rational analysis of our specific national interests.” This, in itself, should have cautioned him that something was wrong in our initial entanglement in Southeast Asia. But then he says, “Whether or not we had vital interests ... once we made that commitment, we created a vital interest” and now “we are stuck with it.”²⁶

Schlesinger’s foreign policy reasoning is all wrong. Nations do not create vital interests; the geopolitics of the situation and the region create vital interests. Indeed, if there is no hard study of the geopolitical facts, there can be no rational foreign policy. Moreover, if we made, as we may infer from what Schlesinger implies, the initial mistake by first creating “a vital interest,” in essence, what we created was our own problem that became a monumental mistake. And then to say that “we are stuck with it,” compounds the problem as the military involvement escalates, as the government and its supporters, including Schlesinger, defend their indefensible mistake, as the casualties mount, as the divisiveness of the American public grows, as the protests and

demonstrations increase, and, in sum, as the nation's political and social stability are threatened. In the closing years of the war, and well before his 1994 tribute to Roosevelt in *American Heritage* magazine, Schlesinger was slowly beginning to question his 1965 "we are stuck with it" statement.

Thus, in *Harper's* magazine in August 1971, Schlesinger writes that "a nation that rejects national interest as the mainspring of its policy cannot survive." Morgenthau, twenty years earlier, in 1952, wrote, "a nation has one prime obligation—to take care of its interests," which, if it "does not take care of its own interests, nobody else will." And not to take care of its national interests, is to invite national suicide, to which Schlesinger, in 1971, concurred when he said that a nation that rejects the primacy of national interest "cannot survive."²⁷ On February 1, 1973, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Schlesinger asks rhetorically: "Is it really over, at last, this longest, most unpopular, most useless, most mysterious war in the history of the republic?" Two years later, on April 3, 1975, again in the *Wall Street Journal*, Schlesinger concedes that "few people in the world think that the United States has any vital interest in Southeast Asia."²⁸ In March 1982, in *Harper's*, Schlesinger rejects Norman Podhoretz's defense of the war in his book, *Why We Were In Vietnam* and concludes that Vietnam was "*a ghastly war in which we had no identifiable stake and which we could not be expected to win*" [Emphasis added]. Schlesinger adds: "What national interest of the United States justified large-scale military intervention in a war it could not win."²⁹ Expressed differently, Schlesinger is telling us that there was never any national interest that warranted America's involvement in Vietnam.

And then there is a revealing disclosure in Schlesinger's letter to *Harper's* in October 1971 in response to a letter-writer who had criticized his use of the word "amorality" in the title of his August 1971 article. The disclosure is telling because the Schlesinger letter is vintage Morgenthau. Here, Schlesinger writes:

The word "amorality" is not to be found in the essay. My point was to discuss the necessary interpenetration of morality and international politics and to suggest that, in an era of nation-states, international relationships are likely to come closer to practical morality if nations act on the basis of national interest and accept the legitimacy of the interests of other nations than if they act as the executors of universal moral principles.³⁰

Indeed, this passage comes right out of *Politics Among Nations*. But there's more. Schlesinger goes on:

Nations will do better, I think, to stick to limited purposes and methods than to cast themselves as saviors of mankind. National interest, in short, if

accompanied by an understanding that other nations have interests too, seems the most probable foundation of decent international conduct in a world where a single code of moral values simply does not exist.³¹

And then he repeats from his earlier passage, that “our best hope for rational foreign policy lies in accepting the ideas of national interest, for other nations as well as for ourselves.”³² Indeed, as we have seen, this is Morgenthau’s argument.

But on May 15, 1965, six years before Schlesinger discovered Morgenthau, national interest borne out by factual details does not enter Schlesinger’s appraisal of what he calls America’s three alternatives in Vietnam and that is because he is acting on the false assumption that the national interest has already been created. And, as he addresses those three alternatives, Schlesinger reveals his skill, not as a foreign policy analyst, but as a deft word master who conceals his support for the government while he manages, at the same time, to appear as a critic of the government’s policy.

Thus, the first alternative that Schlesinger rejects is “precipitate withdrawal” from Vietnam because this, he says, would insure Chinese hegemony in the region. This is to set up a straw man since none of the factual critics of the war advocate immediate or instant withdrawal, which is impossible both on tactical and diplomatic grounds. But he attributes the withdrawal advocacy to the “realist” school whose members, unnamed, Schlesinger accuses of promoting the view that “it is irrational to suppose that anything can block the spread of Chinese power.” Moreover, Schlesinger adds, it is the “realist” school that proclaims that “we must accept the inevitability of Communist domination of Asia [or] at least of South Asia.”³³

But Schlesinger does not accept this. He wants to do something to halt the spread of Chinese power especially as he shortly invokes the Munich analogy when he says “people used to tell me there was absolutely no point in trying to resist the inevitable German domination of Europe.” [Indeed, one can see where Lawrence Spivak got the idea for his “Meet the Press” question to Morgenthau the next day where Spivak equated Mao Tse-tung with Hitler.] But then Schlesinger wants to have it both ways. He wants to block Chinese power and prevent Chinese domination of Asia yet he is unsure if China will dominate. It is a large country on “a very large continent,” Schlesinger says. And will the nations of Asia who “like their independence” retreat and allow themselves to be “swallowed up in the Chinese Empire?” He doesn’t think so. But, on the other hand, this is what will happen should America leave Vietnam because, Schlesinger says, any Asian nation “interested in survival” would have “to go to Peking and make the best possible bargain for itself.”³⁴ This is Schlesinger’s clever way of suggesting that these Asian

nations would eventually fall under the political domination of the Chinese Empire because they would never do well in their bargain with the Chinese. So, in Schlesinger's convoluted thought processes, Chinese hegemony or Chinese domination does not go away. Yet, he says Chinese domination can be stopped, but he also says there might not be a Chinese domination to stop. This is rhetorical legerdemain. Moreover, there's also nothing in the Schlesinger address that even hints at Chinese spheres of influence or China's past cultural and political influence in Asia by which to gauge the nature of current Chinese influence.

But if Asian nations get swallowed up by China, Schlesinger asks "Is this the domino thesis?" Well, for Schlesinger, it is and it isn't! He doesn't call it dominoes; he calls the results of the American "expulsion" from Vietnam "side effects." And where does he look for evidence? Here he quotes the prime minister of Singapore from an interview in the *New Statesman*: that "If Vietnam goes, the rest goes, including Malaysia." And Schlesinger concurs: it "would be a clear and profound disaster—less perhaps for the United States than for the presently independent states of South Asia" should America leave Vietnam.³⁵ Thus, there can be no "precipitate withdrawal," which no one has suggested, but there is also no plan for any later withdrawal or any prospective for an exit strategy presumably because Schlesinger's working assumption is that our created "vital interest" requires us to stay in Vietnam indefinitely.

Indeed, this is the corollary of Schlesinger's appraisal of his last two policy alternatives. He rejects the second option, which he calls "the enlargement of the war" and endorses the third alternative, which is negotiations. In rejecting the option of enlarging the war, he does not mean rejecting the ground war, but only the air war. He says that "air power cannot win this war," and it is thus not "the appropriate kind of military force to apply" and will not get the North to negotiate. But while he opposes an increased air war, he is not opposed to an increased ground war. Thus, if air power is restricted, what is needed, he says, is more ground troops, as if this will not enlarge the scope of the war. In Schlesinger's reasoning, "If our object is to persuade North Vietnam that we are not going to withdraw, that object will be more effectively attained by ground force commitments than by air strikes." Thus, Schlesinger's advice is to "put much greater stress on a limited increase" of American ground forces. "Indeed," he suggests, "if we took the Marines now in the Dominican Republic and sent them to South Vietnam, we would be a good deal better off in both countries."³⁶

Schlesinger's third alternative, which he says is the policy he favors, and which, in Morgenthau's view, anyone in his right mind would favor, is "the policy of negotiation." This, he notes, is "the policy of the administration"

and the “policy I would defend today.”³⁷ If, however, the nature of the conflict is greatly misunderstood, as it was even by the brilliant Schlesinger,—that monolithic Communism was not the enemy, that the conflict was a civil war, that conventional and overwhelming American fire power did not have the advantage in fighting a jungle war—all the talk about “the policy of negotiations” to convince the North that the United States means business, was really the policy of inflicting the most horrendous devastation on the Vietnamese people and their country.

Throughout his address, Schlesinger evokes the vocabulary and the rationale of the government’s war policy. The Vietcong, he says, are simply “a collection of very tough terrorists”; they inspire, not “hope,” but only “the fear they have created.” “At some point,” he adds, “We will have to confront the existence of the Vietcong and deal with them.” He anticipates that the Vietcong will mount one major offensive during the monsoon season, and it is Schlesinger’s view that this “must be repulsed.” There exists, he notes, a “world Communist movement” in which China aspires to be the leader. He says the “conflict began as a civil war,” and it is “Hanoi’s resignation from it [that] would only make it a civil war again.”³⁸ In fact, North Vietnam never resigned from the civil war, which remained, to the end, a battle among indigenous Vietnamese, North and South, Communist and non-Communist, to determine who would govern all of Vietnam. Thus, in his endorsement of the government’s position, Schlesinger errs egregiously, which is confirmed by his own admissions years later in those publications cited above where he concedes the war was never a matter of America’s vital interests.

In the closing paragraph of his speech, Schlesinger suggests a moratorium in the debate on Vietnam. “It may well be,” he says, “that what the country needs today more than anything else is a good night’s sleep.” He repeats his choice of policy alternatives by emphasizing that “we must persevere through a combination of military, political, economic and diplomatic action to bring us closer to a negotiated settlement.” He ends with platitudes: it is important to remember, he says, “that there are reasonable and decent men on all sides of the debate”; that it should not be assumed by “the academic community” that “their opponents are warmongers” or that the other side assumes “their opponents are cowards.” He adds: “Let us sustain the level of debate, assuming that there is an equality in purpose and virtue on both sides. Let us confine the debate to the real issues.”³⁹

As we have seen, Schlesinger, in his support of the government’s policies, did not examine the “real issues.” And when he said he “thinks that the differences” among the debaters “are narrower than the rhetoric on both sides suggest,” he is mistaken. Indeed, for during the six weeks preceding the May 15 National Teach-In, it is Morgenthau who demonstrated, in three separate,

multi-page articles, the wide disparity of views that separated his view from Schlesinger's and that of the government and its supporters. For whereas Schlesinger accepted the unquestioned premise that the United States was engaged in a war against Communism, Morgenthau argued repeatedly that we are not faced with one monolithic Communism, but with a different number of Communisms and that it is incumbent on the government to deal with each based on how these affect American interests.

Schlesinger, in the months preceding the May 15 Teach-In, was busy completing his book on the Kennedy Presidency. He was also busy as an informal adviser to Senator Robert Kennedy, who wanted to be the vice presidential nominee on the 1968 ticket. How much time Schlesinger had for study and preparation on Vietnam is problematical. He was also a Bundy friend with whom he shared a similar mindset about Communism and Vietnam. On May 5, Schlesinger tells Bundy that he has been invited to attend a one day conference organized by the National Research Council on Peace Strategy. Schlesinger adds that he cannot attend but suggests that "you would wish to have someone at the meeting to set forth the administration position."⁴⁰ On the same day, he tells Bundy that he has been "lecturing at various colleges" where the mood of the students indicates support for the war. He refers approvingly to a Max Lerner column in the *New York Post* that also supports the war. He ridicules as "dopey" a well-thought-out argument against the war and the "ex-educators" now making policy published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and written by a Stanford University professor apparently known by both men. His salutation to Bundy, which implies disdain for the entire teach-in movement is: "as you gird your loins for May 15."⁴¹ All this is smartly covered up as Schlesinger "girded" his "loins" and told the crowd on May 15 that he was speaking for himself and not the government when he was, in fact, speaking for the government. Indeed, the Schlesinger speech, as we have seen, reveals the deft quality in much of Schlesinger's writings. He can appear to repudiate what he actually believes and convey to the audience that what he advocates is consistent with what he does not believe. What Schlesinger really endorsed on May 15 was halting the spread of Communism in South Vietnam without saying so explicitly and which was part and parcel of the government's policy.

There is evidence, as we have seen, that Schlesinger was familiar with Morgenthau's *Politics* and several of his articles. At the same time, however, the logic and substance of Morgenthau's opposition to the war contained in articles published on the eve of the May 15 Teach-In, though repugnant to Schlesinger, simply could not have escaped Schlesinger's attention. His later endorsement of those arguments came at a time when it no longer mattered.

The first of these Morgenthau articles appeared in *The New Republic* on April 3, 1965. Here Morgenthau argues that “the crusading opposition to Communism” had become for the government and its spokesmen not only its basic “political philosophy” but also its “way of life.” It had become the central mantra of its existence. The dogma had become the government’s world-view. Communism had to be extirpated wherever it appeared on the globe. Here was the major error of the government’s policy and it is from this first intellectual error, Morgenthau writes, that the two corollary intellectual errors derive: the failure to understand the contemporary nature of Communism; and the failure to understand the difference between the policy of containment in Europe and of Asia (as noted above).

Morgenthau then deposes two witnesses. He quotes McNamara: we are “engaged in a global crusade against Communism which we must fight wherever we find it.” He quotes Undersecretary of State Ball: “Our mission in Asia” is “the defense of ‘freedom,’ that is, of non-Communist governments, against Communism.” Thus, though the Communist monolith had fragmented, the President and his advisers continued to act on the illusion that it had not. Again, Morgenthau notes, it follows from their myopia on the monolith, that they failed to understand that there were several different Communisms whose “character” and “aims” had to be evaluated by their “relevance to the interests of the United States.” In their advice to the President to continue “our struggle to halt Communist expansion in Asia,” they have developed “a simple, indiscriminate and crude” policy that is “the peripheral containment of China,” which cannot work. For China’s ascendancy in Asia—Morgenthau repeats here what he has said previously—reflects China’s emergence as a major power, which is the result of its “cultural and political predominance.” And “it is futile,” Morgenthau argues, to assume “that we can contain that predominance by militarily defending Vietnam or Thailand.” Moreover, as a secondary fact, the ascendancy of China as the predominant power in Asia has little to do with its Communist form of government but rather with its attempt to restore its traditional national interest in Asia.⁴²

On April 18, 1965, Morgenthau published, in the *New York Times Magazine*, “We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam.” It is the article that, by far, is Morgenthau’s most comprehensive argument against the war in a publication with a circulation in the millions. It was ignored by Schlesinger and those who wrote the columns and editorials in the same newspaper. It was composed by Morgenthau after President Johnson had delivered his address at Johns Hopkins University two weeks earlier on April 7, 1965 proposing an economic development project for all of Southeast Asia that Morgenthau used as the jumping off point for his article.

Thus, Morgenthau writes, on the one hand, by his proposal, the President “has opened the door to negotiations without preconditions,” which his earlier “preconditions had made impossible”; he has thereby opened the opportunities for the “evolution” of future “relations between North and South Vietnam.” Yet in doing so, the President has repeated “the intellectual assumptions and policy proposals” that created the impasse in the first place and thereby “makes it impossible to extricate ourselves” from Vietnam. And what are those assumptions that make extrication impossible? They are, Morgenthau writes, “the repetition of the sophistry of linking our involvement in Vietnam with our war of independence”; that the President “has [then] proclaimed the freedom of all nations as the goal of our foreign policy”; that the President errs in seeing two independent Vietnamese nations instead of two temporarily divided regions of the same country; that the President sees one as the aggressor that has attacked the other; “that he mistakenly sees that attack as an integral part of unlimited Chinese aggression”; and that he is willing thereby “to negotiate with China and North Vietnam but not with the Vietcong.” For Morgenthau, it cannot work. “We cannot have it both ways,” Morgenthau writes; “We cannot at the same time embrace these false assumptions and pursue new sound policies.” And it is this that is “the real dilemma” “we are faced with.”⁴³

From this point, the article is a foreign policy paper that could serve as the basis for a national security council review to determine what the United States should do in Vietnam. Here, Morgenthau provides an abundance of detail, historical and current, to make his case to liquidate the war as he debunks the false assumptions of U.S. policy. Thus, the foreign policy of indiscriminate containment is the legacy of John Foster Dulles; the “simple juxtaposition of ‘Communism’ and ‘free world’ was erected by Dulles’ crusading moralism into the guiding principle of American policy”; “the juxtaposition” became “invalid” with the emergence of Tito, in Yugoslavia, “the incipient split between China and the Soviet Union,” and “the neutralism of the third world.” Morgenthau again points out why military containment worked in Europe but cannot work in Asia: “even in her present underdeveloped state, China [is] the dominant power in Asia”; she is so, Morgenthau writes in elegant prose, “by virtue of the quality and quantity of her population, her geographic position, her civilization, her past power, remembered, and her future anticipated.” He repeats: it is impossible to contain China militarily; he adds: “the United States can no more contain Chinese influence in Asia by arming South Vietnam and Thailand than China could contain American influence in the Western hemisphere by arming, say, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.” Moreover, “China is the hereditary enemy of Vietnam”; Ho Chi Minh would “become the leader of a Chinese satellite only if the United

States forces him to become one”; and “how adversely,” Morgenthau asks, “would a Titoist Ho Chi Minh, governing all of Vietnam, affect the interests of the United States? The answer can only be: not at all.”

Historically, Morgenthau points out, “the foundations of the present civil war” go back to Diem who, beginning in 1954, “ruthlessly suppressed all opposition, established concentration camps, organized a brutal secret police, closed newspapers, and rigged elections”; civil war was thus “inherent in the very nature of the Diem regime.” Moreover, U.S. policymakers have “a complete misconception of the nature of a civil war.” Here Morgenthau emphasizes that “people fight and die in civil wars because they have a faith which appears to them worth fighting and dying for”;⁴⁴ thus, there is a strong nationalistic component in a peoples’ struggle to establish independence. “In South Vietnam, he adds, “there is nothing to oppose the faith of the Vietcong and, in consequence, the Saigon government and we are losing the civil war.” He calls attention to the white paper issued by the State Department in February 1965 that is titled “Aggression from the North: The Record of North Vietnam’s Campaign to Conquer South Vietnam.” “The white paper,” Morgenthau writes, “is a dismal failure” because of the enormous “discrepancy between its assertions and the factual evidence adduced to support them”; the white paper also confirms “that the main body of the Vietcong is composed of South Vietnamese and that 80 to 90 per cent of their weapons are of American origin.”⁴⁵

Thus, the content and arguments in Morgenthau’s “We Are Deluding Ourselves” published a month before the National Teach-In is the clearest warning yet of the impending catastrophe awaiting the United States in Vietnam. In his closing paragraph, Morgenthau concludes with the “hope” that

the vaunted pragmatism of the American mind will act as a corrective upon these misconceptions before they lead us from the blind alley in which we find ourselves today to the rim of the abyss. Beyond the present crisis, however, one must hope that the confrontation between these misconceptions and reality will teach us a long —overdue lesson—to rid ourselves of these misconceptions altogether.⁴⁶

The third Morgenthau article appeared on May 1, 1965. Published in *The New Republic* and titled “Russia, the United States, and Vietnam,” it was composed after Morgenthau returned from a trip to Moscow where he consulted with both Russian and American officials. It is another article that could well serve the policy-makers because it demonstrates the complex dilemmas of conflicting goals and interests facing the principal participants. It is foreign policy analysis at its best because it illuminates that complexity and thereby underscores the limitations of what American policy can accomplish. Thus,

Morgenthau writes, Russia's "vital interest" is to avoid "a direct military confrontation with the United States"; at the same time, "it cannot remain indifferent to the fate" of North Vietnam, "another Communist nation and ally." The Soviets thereby must defend Hanoi or else admit that "the United States can impose its will upon a small Communist nation." That while "Hanoi, Peking and the Vietcong" are united in "seeking the elimination of the American military presence in South Vietnam," the United States is determined to remain until there is "stability in Vietnam." That while the United States seeks a negotiated settlement, Morgenthau claims this is "impossible" under present conditions and thus "unattainable in the foreseeable future" as the military situation remains "desperate" and continues to deteriorate. That while China has been critical of the Soviet Union for its lack of "revolutionary militancy," "in the present conflict," Morgenthau writes, "China is in no position to come to the aid of North Vietnam..." Thus, while China "speaks loudly," particularly in the bellicose language of its defense minister, as we have seen, it is "the Soviet Union" that "actually carries the big stick and is willing to use it on behalf of its Communist ally." And should there be a further breakdown in Chinese-Soviet relations, "the monolithic character of the Communist camp would be restored under the auspices of the Soviet Union."⁴⁷

These considerations make up the substantive elements of the conflicting policy goals among the several participants. Turning to the "intellectual quality" of these policies, Morgenthau raises the question of the "prestige" element, or the reputation of the participants based on how they defend their positions. For the United States, Morgenthau writes, "beneath the rationalizations for our military presence in Vietnam," "the dominant motivation," as he has repeatedly proclaimed, is the "so-called Domino Theory," that "the Communization of South Vietnam would be the beginning of the end of the free world." As we have seen, even the brilliant Schlesinger succumbed to this theory though he called the dominoes "side effects." Here, Morgenthau writes that "this theory is a slogan born of fear and of a misconception of history and politics.... It is unsupported by any historic evidence." As for the Soviet Union and the traditional defense of its positions, Morgenthau interestingly calls "the Domino Theory" "a replica of a vulgar Marxism" that, in a somewhat similar fashion, "believes in the inevitable spread of Communism from one country to the rest of the world." Both theories are false and discredited by history⁴⁸ but no one among the leadership of both countries is paying attention to history.

Thus, in Moscow, Morgenthau asked a Soviet official about "American considerations of prestige" and noted "the need for a face-saving device" to leave Vietnam "and Soviet cooperation in providing one." The official

answered, "Other nations must take care of their prestige, too," to which Morgenthau notes that the official was right. Morgenthau then adds that

it is the task of statesmanship to settle disputes in such a way as to minimize the damage to the prestige of the parties concerned. Of such statesmanship there is not a trace to be found on either side. As a result, we are moving closer and closer to the military confrontation which nobody wants but which nobody knows how to end.⁴⁹

On May 15, and in great contrast to Schlesinger's "three alternatives" that presuppose the legitimacy of American policy, Morgenthau's address is aptly titled "Political Folklore in Vietnam." He begins with several personal observations. First, he is greatly impressed with the meeting, which he calls "extraordinary" because "nothing like this had ever happened before." "That in the history of any nation," there had never emerged a popular "questioning of the policies of the government, forcing the government to justify itself in the eyes of the people." As for the reaction of the government to the critics and the teach-in movement, Morgenthau is justifiably appalled: the government has responded "not with reason and argument," but with "scorn," "contempt" and "invective." The government thus does not want rational debate, which is borne out by the facts revealed in the meetings of the President and his advisers. Morgenthau then makes reference to the members of the administration who had been professors themselves and who were now denigrating the legitimate questions raised by their former colleagues as "nonsense." In particular, he calls attention to the administration's "main spokesman," unnamed, who refused to appear on an "equal basis" with Morgenthau in public debate. That official is McGeorge Bundy. He also makes reference to the insults that had been hurled at him by "one of the most fervent journalistic representatives of the administration," again, unnamed by Morgenthau, but who was syndicated *Washington Post* columnist, Joseph Alsop.⁵⁰ Alsop had distorted his objections to the war and had viciously impugned Morgenthau's credentials as a scholar. Morgenthau's rebuttal appeared in the letters' section of *The Washington Post* and had the better of the argument, as will be examined later in this chapter.

Following these opening remarks, noting that the administration's "case" for the war is "indeed weak," Morgenthau says he will not repeat what he has put into print in recent years, but will confine himself to "two main points" on which the government's case "seems to rest": one is the fiction that "South Vietnam is a sovereign state subject to outside aggression"; the second is that "we are in honor obligated in law committed to aid the victim of this aggression." Morgenthau adds: "Both the arguments on the face of them . . . appeal

to the moral emotions of the public at large to come to the aid of the poor victim of aggression and to honor one's commitment. Yet ... both arguments are completely specious."⁵¹ The remainder of Morgenthau's address is his two-point historical refutation of the administration's case, which is a distillation of his April 18 "We Are Deluding Ourselves" article, but with added emphasis on the legacy of the Founders on the primacy of national interest.

First, Morgenthau points out, North and South Vietnam are not two sovereign states. They are by the "emphatic" terms of the Geneva Agreement of 1954, two temporarily divided regions of the same country called Vietnam to be united based on general elections in 1956, which never occurred. "Furthermore and most importantly," Morgenthau adds, until the beginning of February 1965 when "we embarked upon a new military policy of bombing North Vietnam," it was "the general opinion" of the Administration's spokesmen, "as documented by hundreds of newspaper reports," that the conflict was "a civil war in South Vietnam, aided and abetted by the government in the North." "It was only when our policy changed that facts had to be created to support our policy." We were now in Vietnam to assist the South in fighting the aggressors from the North. Morgenthau is justifiably contemptuous that the Administration has created "a fictitious world" to support its changed policy. He points out that while "regular units of the North Vietnamese army are to be found in South Vietnam," it remains a fact that the civil war that has been going on for "almost ten years," is the product of an "internal disintegration" of South Vietnam, and "not the result of foreign aggression." It remains a civil war in which "the Communists of the North" have taken advantage.⁵²

Secondly, as for the policy of a moral and legal commitment to defend the victim of aggression, Morgenthau makes three points: the roots of the disorders in South Vietnam go back to its early history when we "installed" the government of South Vietnam and Diem with the help of the CIA. South Vietnam under Diem then became a client government of the United States. Thus, in Morgenthau's words, "We put him into power and promised him our support," and thereby "we made an agreement with ourselves to support him." It is thus "absurd," Morgenthau said, "to maintain that this kind of commitment is the equivalent of an agreement with a sovereign government that has entered freely into a commitment."⁵³

Morgenthau's second point is the fiction that "South Vietnam has asked us to come to their aid" and that "we have responded." Here, Morgenthau points to the "vast evidence to show how unpopular this war is among the people of South Vietnam"; that the South Vietnamese "regard this war as our war into which they have been dragged"; and that "their real aim is to be done with that war, to get us out of South Vietnam, and to alleviate their terrible situation..." He then notes that it is Defense Secretary McNamara whose

frankness about the war is revealed when he stated that “we are in South Vietnam to contain Communism.” This, Morgenthau proclaims, is “the true reason” for our presence in South Vietnam; it is not “the freedom of South Vietnam or the commitment we have entered into with South Vietnam.” It is also “part and parcel of [the] peripheral military containment of Chinese Communism.”⁵⁴

Lastly, Morgenthau takes up the question of commitment from the standpoint of its relation to national interest. He notes that the President has said repeatedly “that America honors its commitments and therefore we must honor this commitment to South Vietnam.” Morgenthau, the historian, then points to 1793 when “we had a commitment to come to the aid of France if France were attacked.” “It was a simple treaty of alliance” when “the [American] people at large” wanted the United States to come to the aid of France against “the First Coalition of the European monarchies.” Morgenthau cites the reports that “mobs roamed Philadelphia” in opposition to Washington. He cites a biographer of Washington who writes that if a motion of impeachment had not been tabled, it would have been passed by an overwhelming majority. Washington’s refusal “to honor a clear and simple legal commitment” was based on the advice of Alexander Hamilton who laid down, once and for all, “in one of the ‘Pacificus’ letters,” the principle “that must govern sound policy on such commitments.”⁵⁵ For Morgenthau, as we have seen, it is also the principle, the bedrock standard, on which all foreign policy matters should be based. It does not mean, as we have also seen, that national interest excludes the interests of other nations. Indeed, it does, and Vietnam is a case in point. In his May 15 address, Morgenthau quotes Hamilton:

There would be no proportion between the mischiefs and perils to which the United States would expose themselves, by embarking in the war, and the benefit which the nature of their stipulation aims at securing to France or that which it would be in their power actually to render her by becoming a party. This disproportion would be a valid reason for not executing the guaranty. All contracts are to receive a reasonable construction.⁵⁶

That part of the Hamilton quote that has particular relevance to Vietnam goes as follows:

Self-preservation is the first duty of a nation; and though in the performance of stipulations pertaining to war, good faith requires that its ordinary hazards should be fairly met, because they are directly contemplated by such stipulations, yet it does not require that extraordinary and extreme hazards should be run; especially where the object to be gained or secured is only a partial or particular interest of the ally, for whom they are to be encountered. No country

is bound to partake in hazards of the most critical kind, which may have been produced or promoted by the indiscretion and intemperance of another. This is an obvious dictate of reason, with which the common sense and common practice of mankind coincide.

In the concluding paragraph of his speech, Morgenthau points out, following his quotes from Hamilton, that

This is the wisdom upon which this Republic was founded, and the contrary opinions we hear today are the mere reflections of a folklore that is pleasing to our sensibilities but that has no relation to the actual problem or the actual issues with which nations are confronted in their relations with each other.⁵⁷

Morgenthau adds that he could go on almost indefinitely in challenging the assumptions of our policy with the actual facts “to show how we have embarked on a policy and how, after the fact, we set out to create an imaginary world to fit the policy.” It is the facts, however, that “have their own logic, their own dynamics,” and if disregarded, they exact “terrible revenge” as “one sees time and again how such illusions lead to catastrophe. . . .” Morgenthau ends his speech with these words:

So it is, I think, a special virtue and a special function of this meeting that it reminds all of us, and especially those who govern us and would rather not be reminded, that our policy is contradicted by the facts. If they do not have the wisdom and the courage to adapt their policies to the facts, the facts will overtake them and take vengeance on them for having been disregarded.⁵⁸

Sunday, May 16, the day after the National Teach-In, it was business as usual in the White House. The President met with McNamara, Rusk, former Secretary of State Acheson, Under Secretary of State Ball, Director of Central Intelligence, William F. Raborn, and special aide, Jack Valenti. The five-day bombing pause was about to expire, and the purpose of the meeting was to determine when they would resume the bombing. The usual questions emerged. Johnson wanted to know how the Russians might react. Rusk answered that after talking to Dobrynin [Soviet Ambassador to the UN] and Gromyko [Soviet Foreign Minister], there was “nothing on the Russian side to cause us to hold off [the] bombing.” The question was when to resume: the President wanted to give Hanoi “notice on Tuesday”; that by Monday, the pause will have lasted “for six days.” He added that “If you want to start the bombing on Tuesday, that’s okay.” “Now, if this is what you all want, we’ll go on Tuesday evening our time, but I would go on Monday.” McNamara then asked, “What do we say to the press?” Johnson answered: “We don’t need to disclose every piece

of strategy to the press . . . for six days we have held off bombing. Nothing happened.” The President then added: “We are anxious to pursue every diplomatic adventure to get peace. But we can’t throw our gun away. We have laid off them for six days—meanwhile we have lost planes at Ben Hoa. No one has ever thanked us for the pause.” McNamara suggested that Senator Mansfield “ought to know [that] Hanoi spit on our face.” The President: “My judgment is the public has never wanted us to stop the bombing. We have stopped in deference to Mansfield and Fulbright, but we don’t want to do it too long else we lose our base of support.”⁵⁹

McNamara had already picked the targets: “Target # 29,” McNamara said, “is military barracks 10 miles further north than we have ever gone. I urge to leave this target in.” His next target was to hit the MIG [Soviet-built fighter aircraft] airfields before hitting the SAM [surface-to-air-missiles] sites. Johnson wanted to know when McNamara would take out the SAM sites. McNamara said “you go after the MIG airfields” before we “go after the SAM sites.” McNamara continues: in going after the MIG airfields, the “most you would lose would be 3 or 4 crews”; the “B-52s to plaster the airfields at night. There may be civilians involved since all bombs won’t hit target. Then fighter bombers go in. And then we take out the SAM’s.” Former Secretary of State Acheson concurred with the general strategy: “The important thing is you haven’t bombed in six days and now you are going to bomb again. This is a good thing for people to know.”⁶⁰

A day later, May 17, Johnson received a memo from Clark Clifford, an unofficial adviser, who warned the President the war could become a “quagmire.” “It could turn into an open-ended commitment,” that will require “more and more ground troops, without a realistic hope of ultimate victory.”⁶¹

Two days before the National Teach-In, on May 13, press secretary Moyers bolstered the President, who was appalled that McGeorge Bundy had agreed to participate in the teach-in though Johnson had not given Bundy his approval. Moyers agreed and fed the President’s antagonism toward the critics. Moyers told Johnson:

I just hate for the President’s representative to be debating with that bunch of—A lot of them would be kooks, a lot of them just misguided zealots. It just sort of demeans our position. I don’t think the White House ever has to debate. . . . You don’t make decisions by debating. You make the decisions and then history will justify them. . . . There’s reports that they’re going to be picketed over there. And the Communists will try to get in and raise a little hell. TV live cameras will be there.⁶²

Moyers wondered if Bundy could “back out” of the debate, which he did when Johnson sent him to the Dominican Republic. Bundy’s appearance,

Moyers told Johnson, “gives the other side a real platform.” In Johnson’s view, it “leaves the impression in the world that we’re divided.”⁶³

Indeed, the best evidence that the country was divided is to be found not far from the White House just the day before the President met with his advisers on the resumption of bombing. The fifteen-hour National Teach-In held at the Sheraton Hotel was attended by hundreds of scholars and foreign policy experts and over 5,000 students, professors and other interested observers. Almost every facet of almost every government defense of the war was explored and in some cases, decimated. The official program listed such debate topics as “The U.S. record in Vietnam,” “The realities of North Vietnam,” “The ‘Civil War’ and The ‘Aggression from the North’” question, “the ‘Domino Theory’ as it applies in Southeast Asia,” “Can this War Be Won?” among other related topics. The marathon teach-in, meticulously organized by members of the University of Michigan faculty, was truly an educational forum in which some participants speaking for the government such as James Thomson and Daniel Ellsberg eventually had a change of mind. Others such as William Bundy, Walt Rostow, Robert Scalapino, and Wesley Fishel remained convinced that the war had to be fought, which proves, as with any educational forum, some learn quickly, some learn slowly, and some learn not at all.

It is not that the President learned nothing from the teach-in. Rather, he ignored the entire proceeding. As we have seen, he was intent on resuming the bombing but he was also busy with his Great Society Program. A large anti-poverty bill, an Appalachian aid bill and a manpower-training program extension had recently been passed. The Voting Rights Act was passed two months later on August 6. On July 30, 1965, Medicare became law. Two days earlier, on July 28, 50,000 troops were sent to Vietnam.⁶⁴

On May 16, the day after the teach-in, Mrs. Johnson noted in her diary that the newspapers report how the President “is not interested in—does not give as much time to foreign affairs as he does to domestic affairs.” That while he finds “less joy in foreign affairs,” it is foreign affairs, Mrs. Johnson records, that “devour his days and nights.”⁶⁵ But it is obviously not the hard study of geopolitical foreign policy that consumed Johnson’s time. It was the time spent in the situation room and in the strategy sessions with his military advisers that took up much of his time. For the President, imperious and commanding with all who served him, believed he could bend the North Vietnamese into capitulation; that if he could talk to Ho Chi Minh personally, he could convince him to give up the struggle and accept American aid in much the same way he could obtain recalcitrant members of Congress to support his domestic agenda. Moreover, by the spring of 1965, Johnson had

convinced himself, with the help of his advisers and the support of former President Eisenhower, that the war had to be prosecuted and that there was no turning back. On May 12, just three days before the National Teach-In, Eisenhower told Johnson that if the North failed to respond, the United States “should return to the bombing campaign, and use ‘everything that can fly,’”⁶⁶ meaning to hammer the North into submission. Implicit in the message from the former President and America’s most esteemed military commander was that the Vietnam policy was right and that the critics were wrong. Johnson was determined to do battle, not only with the Vietcong, but with his critics as well.

To this end, Johnson used every means at his disposal to steer Congressional and public opinion to support his war. Thus, in mid-August 1965, Johnson organized a marathon series of closed briefings for members of Congress in which 140 members of the House met for three sessions in the East Room of the White House while the Senate assembled in two shifts in the White House dining room. Johnson was the principal speaker with an unlimited time to address the assembled. McNamara and Rusk were allowed only five minutes, while former Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, having just returned from South Vietnam, was permitted fifteen minutes. Taylor, with his usual bluster, offered his overdone estimate of imminent American success: the Vietcong, Taylor said, have been “severely mauled” in recent encounters; “their morale is sagging”; their desertions have increased; American forces have greatly contributed to the “fighting spirit” of the South Vietnamese forces.⁶⁷

To address those not quite convinced of the government’s policy, Johnson assigned UN Ambassador Arthur Goldberg and former World Bank President Eugene Black to speak to the group. They were not to answer the critics or to explore matters of substance. Goldberg said he would do everything he could to bring about a negotiated settlement. Black told the group that the Far Eastern nations were very interested in Johnson’s plan for a billion-dollar Asian Development Bank. Johnson spoke to the group and twice within three minutes told them: “Our goal is to seek peace with honor and try to get out of this mess.” At one point, Johnson poked his finger at the assembled and warned: “I know which of you have made statements supporting me and which have made statements criticizing me on Vietnam. And when the right time comes, I intend to throw some of these statements from my critics right back in their faces.”⁶⁸

On August 13, as noted in the previous chapter, Morgenthau expressed his objections to the government’s Vietnam policy before the Congressional Committee chaired by Representative William Fitts Ryan. Again, he ripped into the administration’s “myths” about Vietnam: the myth of falling dominoes, the myth of a commitment to our client government, the myth that the

war is the result of foreign aggression. At one point, when another panelist said the answer is “unilaterally to stay or go,” Morgenthau replied “Then I say let’s liquidate this enterprise of war and go.”⁶⁹

As the Ryan hearings were being held, there was another series of public cheerleading for the war as four high level government spokesmen appeared on national television on four successive Mondays in August 1965. It was another CBS News Special Report, which was titled “Vietnam Perspective: How We Can Win.” The title assumes the rightness of America’s cause in Vietnam and the spokesmen who defended their policies were impervious to the fine points of the policies they were defending.

The programs were televised at the State Department and the Pentagon and were aired on prime time in one hour segments. The generosity of CBS afforded to the government came about through the intervention of Arthur Sylvester, an assistant secretary of defense, who served as McNamara’s public relations man. Sylvester called CBS news director, Fred Friendly, to complain about a previous CBS program that reported that the United States was so short of ammunition in Vietnam, that it was buying back supplies from our European allies. Friendly called Frank Stanton, the President of CBS, and the result was, as Friendly put it, “four extremely low-budgeted Vietnam Perspective broadcasts.”⁷⁰ The result was also four hours of fixed certitudes, utter banality, and gross absurdity.

Thus, when asked about the possibility of a twenty-year war that the North said they are prepared to fight and whether a “South Vietnamese capitulation” would be acceptable to the United States, General Taylor, responding with the can-do attitude characteristic of generals, said there would be no capitulation because “that’s just unthinkable,” that the South Vietnamese generals “just won’t allow it,” that the United States would “blunt and bloody” the Vietcong forces and continue the air war against the North and that it “will not take 20 years to convince Hanoi that, indeed, this is a losing operation when each month that picture should be clearer” to the North Vietnamese leaders. Then, when reporter Harry Reasoner asked Taylor about “the frightening similarities” between the French and now the American experience in Vietnam, Taylor, again, as a military man not given to public expressions of doubt, replied that it is a matter of “attitude”; that “you are not going to allow yourself to be defeated.” He added: “Now if we have that attitude toward the problem in South Vietnam, sooner or later—I can’t predict a date—we do have the resources to reach the objectives.”⁷¹ Years later, responding to a book in which Taylor explained his foreign policy views, Morgenthau, in *The New York Review of Books* wrote: “What is disturbing is not that such things can be said, but that a man of substance can say them without being aware of their absurdity.”⁷²

Bundy's contribution, similar to what he said a month earlier, as noted in the previous chapter, was "to honor a commitment" and halt "Communist aggression." Rusk made it a "deep commitment" and launched into a peroration on what the South Vietnamese people want. As we have seen, Morgenthau's facts based on numerous reports in the press, ascertained that the South Vietnamese wanted to be left alone. Not Rusk, however, who claimed the South Vietnamese wanted the Americans to stay and continue the fight, though he produced no evidence to support his view. Asked if there were grounds for optimism, he made no mention of the South Vietnamese Army, which was rife with desertions and inefficiency. Astonishingly, the Secretary of State of the United States replied that the basis of his optimism is to be found in the President's stalwart approach to Vietnam, which Rusk defined as his determination "not to be pushed out of South Vietnam" and to honor his commitment.⁷³ Thus, it is on the basis of this less than threadbare reasoning that Rusk proclaimed his optimism. Years later, in October 1967, in a letter to a colleague at the University of Wisconsin, Morgenthau wrote about Rusk: "While our personal relations are friendly whenever we meet, I refrain from arguing with him; for I have regretfully arrived at the conclusion that he is intellectually hopeless."⁷⁴

The administration's public relations efforts knew no limits. There were "truth squads" comprised of State and Defense Department officials who visited America's campuses. On April 23, just three weeks before the bombing pause of May 13 to 17, Presidential aide Jack Valenti told Johnson "We simply aren't doing our propaganda job right" and suggested the appointment of a "propaganda czar," someone "out of Bundy's shop—who will do nothing but direct 'information activities.'" The man chosen by Bundy was his deputy assistant, Chester L. Cooper. "Our immediate objective," Valenti said, were the nation's campuses. "Every student" who demonstrates against United States policy, Valenti said, is "priceless gold for the Vietcong." On April 24, Johnson gave his approval. Johnson didn't know it, but he had another formidable, though unofficial spokesman for his Vietnam policy.⁷⁵ And this was Arthur Schlesinger.

Adlai Stevenson once told Schlesinger he could not fathom how Schlesinger could churn out article after article and do it so well. Another Schlesinger associate commented that "not many minds can move at his speed of thought."⁷⁶ It was not only that Schlesinger wrote fast, but that he also wrote in brilliantly fashioned prose. As historian, he wrote landmark "Book of the Month Club" selections on the Roosevelt years and won his first Pulitzer on Andrew Jackson when he was twenty-nine years old. As a journalist, he wrote for *Life*, *Fortune*, *Colliers*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic*, *The*

Nation, and *Saturday Review*. But he also wrote for *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Esquire*, *Mademoiselle*, *Look*, *TV Guide*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall's*, *New York Magazine*, *Vogue*, *Playboy*, and *Women's Wear Daily*. He also contributed a once-a-week column for the *New York Post* during the 1950s. In the 1970s, he wrote columns for the *Wall Street Journal*. During his movie-reviewing career, his work appeared in *Show* magazine from 1962 to 1964. In 1964, he was honored as a judge at the Cannes Film Festival.

As Schlesinger wrote for so many different audiences on so many different subjects in a career that spanned over half a century, there is a question of consistency in the Schlesinger historiography particularly when it comes to foreign policy. Did Schlesinger, the journalistic polymath, occasionally forget to learn from what he had previously written? And how does this apply to Schlesinger's rather muddled views on Vietnam?

It is apparently the acceptance of Wilsonian universalism that remains the bedrock principle of Schlesinger's foreign policy views. But whereas universalism in any form transcends, by definition, the actual and the concrete, in practical terms, the actual and the concrete cannot be avoided and here perhaps is the source of Schlesinger's inconsistencies. Thus, in his October 1967 *Foreign Affairs* piece cited earlier, it is "universalism," Schlesinger affirms, that is "rooted in the American legal and moral tradition." In this article, Schlesinger writes that occasionally Roosevelt "backslid" from the principles of "the pure faith" of universalism that abjured "spheres of influence," "alliances," "balance of power."⁷⁷ Yet, as we have seen, Schlesinger later wrote approvingly of the steadfast quality in Roosevelt foreign policy based on "national interest" and "balances of power." And in *Harper's*, 1971, it is national interest alone that Schlesinger says is the "foundation of decent international conduct" where there is no "single code of moral values." Nations act with greater decency, Schlesinger affirms, and "come closer to [a] practical morality" if they act on the basis of national interest rather than as "executors of universal moral principles."⁷⁸ Yet, on May 15 at the National Teach-In, Schlesinger defined morality as "not abandoning" our commitment to "oppose Communism."⁷⁹ Thus, at the National Teach-In, it is universalism behind Schlesinger's morality. In *Harper's*, it is national interest and the components of power and spheres of influence that determine morality. And this echoes what he says in one of his earliest essays, that it is the morality derived from national interest that is the key determinant of foreign policy that Schlesinger endorses, but only for the moment.

And this takes us back to the Fall, 1951 number of *Partisan Review* in which Schlesinger reviewed George Kennan's *American Diplomacy* that explains Kennan's well known containment thesis. The review is six pages long and Schlesinger makes two telling points about the subject of foreign

policy, which, as he says, is a discipline of study and practice in its own right. He writes that "foreign policy demands to be thought about in its own way and according to its own principles." He adds: "Like any serious art, foreign policy is a craft for professionals." He notes also Kennan's insistence that "the only safe basis for foreign policy is national interest." He also points to Kennan's indictment of "the legalistic-moralistic approach to international politics," which defines "international relations in terms of abstract and formal principles" in the mistaken belief that this somehow contributes to "world order." Schlesinger concludes his review with an unequivocal confirmation that it is national interest that is "the only solid foundation of national action."⁸⁰

This is all well and good, but a review that emphatically endorses national interest as the "only foundation of national action," should make some reference to the doyen of national interest foreign policy and the book that was published just three years earlier in 1948 and another book by the same author titled *In Defense of the National Interest*, which appeared in 1951. Yet there is no direct reference to Hans Morgenthau or *Politics Among Nations*; there is, however, a passing reference to "Morgenthau followers" who, Schlesinger writes, do not see the world as Kennan does, that is, in the full light of Kennan's "understanding of the tragedy of history."⁸¹ He does not disclose who those followers are but the implication that Morgenthau is one of them is egregiously false. And when Schlesinger writes of the world in its manifold "complexity, indeterminacy, insolubility, and above all, [the] deep sadness of history," he is oblivious of the fact that it is Morgenthau, and not Kennan, who wrote about the uncertainties and contingencies in history where tragedies are wrought by those who failed to understand the world's complexities.

Indeed, it is a dangerous world, and what is required of statesmen, Morgenthau frequently pointed out, is the wisdom of discernment to proceed with caution and the understanding that a statesman's policies may result in consequences that have nothing to do with what the observable facts permit. Schlesinger, who mentions the inadequacies of "Morgenthau followers," must thereby have known something about Morgenthau and the two books that made his national reputation. But since there is no evidence of study or further mention of Morgenthau until 1971, one may conclude that it is Schlesinger's universalism that delayed his understanding of national interest foreign policy.

In October 1965, the liberal organization known as the ADA, Americans for Democratic Action, of which Schlesinger was a co-founder in 1947, asked its membership to participate in an anti-war rally and demonstration on November 27. Sponsored by several groups, including SANE, the National

Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, the demonstration was billed as “The Mobilization in Washington to Support Steps to Peace in Vietnam.” ADA official, Leon Shull, sent out the call for participation noting that the demonstration will include “individuals prominent in many walks of life and is supporting a position congruent with ADA’s position on the Vietnam war.” Shull continued:

We see no gain coming from the war in Vietnam. We see only the growing victimization of the Vietnamese people, the erosion of a better society at home, and the clear possibility of a world conflict.

Caught between terror, torture, and the senseless use of force, the Vietnamese people have seen their land turned into a bloody testing ground by the Vietcong, the Saigon government, by the North Vietnamese people and the United States. WE SEEK to end this war.⁸²

Harvard history professor Samuel H. Beer and Berkeley political science professor Paul Seabury, responded to Snull’s call for participation in a five page single-spaced letter to the National Chairman, Don Edwards. The letter, in brief summary form, rejects the proposal for the following reasons: they do not subscribe to Morgenthau’s “foolish notion” that China will eventually dominate Asia; too many Asians disagree with Morgenthau; the Sino-Soviet split is a dispute about tactics only and thus, they do not believe that “the Chinese are only fooling,” as “some have said,” meaning Morgenthau, that “when they talk big, they themselves act prudently”; there is corruption in South Vietnam but administration spokesmen, such as Bundy, cannot denounce this in public; the highly visible protests against the war can only prolong the war; there is no domino theory, but there is an anti-domino theory by which there are “subsequent effects” if one of the dominos falls, and thus they do believe in the domino theory; there is a reference to Chamberlain and an allusion to the Munich analogy; there are U.S. “commitments to defend certain nations against Communist aggression”; they note that “one doesn’t get peace cheaply; and perhaps the Vietnam war is our heavy price for peace elsewhere”; they remark strangely that the “extremist clamor” of the anti-war demonstrators is “every bit as dishonest as that of the John Birch Society.” And they conclude: “In all honesty, let’s not lose our nerve, or feel we are losing our liberal masculinity by refusing to join the fashionable protestors.”⁸³

These assertions are, on their face, simply absurd. Yet, on October 21, 1965, Schlesinger wrote to ADA National Director, Don Edwards, endorsing, without qualification, Seabury and Beer’s letter to Edwards. Schlesinger writes: “I want very strongly to associate myself with the letter written by Sam Beer and Paul Seabury regarding the ADA quasi-endorsement of the

Vietnam march on Washington.” Schlesinger listed four reasons for his objection: “the only effect of the March” will be to persuade “the Vietcong and Hanoi that the United States” will reduce “our military action” or even a “withdrawal” from Vietnam; “a demonstration of this sort” is not “a serious intellectual contribution to the debate”; his “suspicion” is that “for some of the participants,” he repeats, the March is a means to advocate “American withdrawal” and—highly incredulously—“to begin a reconstitution of the [Communist] popular front of the thirties”; the participation of the ADA “will do damage to the organization.” He concludes by telling Edwards that ADA should “reverse its decision to cooperate with the March.”⁸⁴ But what is significant in Schlesinger’s letter to Edwards, is his complete support for the administration’s war policy as this is expounded in great detail by Seabury and Beer.

What is also astonishing is Schlesinger’s reference, in 1965, to a possible resurgence of Communist subversive activity in the United States similar to the attempt of American Communists to increase their membership in the CPUSA, the Communist Party of the United States of America during the 1930s and to promote allegiance to Moscow. In 1965, this is an unwarranted fear for the Soviets are no longer capable of directing what is no longer a worldwide Communist movement. Moreover, it is Schlesinger who wrote about this breakup and disarray of the Communist Bloc in a January 1960 *Harper’s* article in which he affirmed that “Communism is not a monolith,” that “the one safe generalization about the Soviet Union is that it is in flux,” that its “citizens talk freely about the ‘bad times,’” and the overall picture Schlesinger describes is the lost homogeneity and “sameness” of the Communist populace within the Soviet Union⁸⁵ let alone among the remnants of the Communist Party members in the United States. It is again, the Schlesinger mindset and his Wilsonian universalism that is at work in Schlesinger’s private universe that is reflected in his total acceptance of the Seabury and Beer claim that the war must be fought. In his posthumously published *Journals, 1952–2000*, Schlesinger, on page 705, says that he “opposed the Vietnam war in the 1960s.” This is forgetfulness of a very high order.

For Morgenthau, it is a senseless war “which can only be won by the indiscriminate killing of everybody in sight.” On September 16, 1965, in *The New York Review of Books*, as the ADA queried its members about the war, Morgenthau writes:

We have tortured and killed prisoners; we have embarked upon a scorched earth policy by destroying villages and forests; we have killed combatants and non-combatants without discrimination because discrimination is impossible. And

this is only the beginning. For the logic of guerrilla war leaves us no choice. We must go on torturing, killing, and burning, and the more deeply we get involved in this war, the more there will be of it.⁸⁶

The article, titled “Vietnam: Shadow and Substance,” argues that American prestige, that is, its reputation, can survive the loss of America’s standing in the world caused by its involvement in the Vietnam debacle. The argument is almost a plea for Americans to understand that “what others think about us is as important as what we are.” That “the prestige of a nation” is its reputation for how its power is used or misused, and that America’s prestige has been greatly tarnished by its brutal war in Vietnam.⁸⁷ How to restore that prestige? And how to answer those who say that American prestige will suffer permanent damage should the United States leave Vietnam.

In Morgenthau’s reasoning, “the prestige of a nation is not determined by the success or failure of a particular operation at a particular moment.” It is thus not a temporary or a momentary phenomenon but “reflects the sum of a nation’s qualities and actions, of its successes and failures, of its historic memories and aspirations.” And the United States, he notes, is rich in its foreign policy history and thus in its prestige or reputation among nations. He recounts several of the many examples of nations “secure in their status of great powers” and “recognized as such by their peers [who] have suffered defeat and returned from exposed positions without suffering a loss in prestige.” Again, he uses the example of France, which gained in prestige after it liquidated its wars in Indochina and in Algeria as it demonstrated “the wisdom and courage” to abandon its “two losing enterprises.” He also concludes that American prestige did not suffer any lasting effect from “the debacle of the Bay of Pigs,” which, he notes, was a “thorough and spectacular failure” and a “humiliating revelation of governmental incompetence.” “The spectacular debacle” of the Bay of Pigs “lasted a day”; “The expedition into Vietnam,” he warns, “is a creeping debacle more insidious for not being spectacular, conjuring up immense risks and narrowing with every step the avenues of escape.”⁸⁸

The risks, however, are also to “ourselves . . . to our very existence as a distinct nation,” to “the image we have of ourselves,” which “will suffer grievous blemishes as we get ever more deeply involved in the war in Vietnam.” As to America’s image abroad, Morgenthau asks, “Can anyone who has followed foreign public opinion carefully and with at least a measure of objectivity doubt that our prestige throughout the world has declined drastically since the beginning of 1965?” “Everywhere,” Morgenthau writes, “people question . . . the wisdom and morality of the government of the United States.” “And what will be our prestige,” Morgenthau asks, “if hundreds of thousands

of American men are bogged down in Vietnam, still unable to win and unable to retreat?"⁸⁹

In his concluding sentence, Morgenthau despairs of "the kind of country America will be when it emerges from so senseless, hopeless, brutal and brutalizing war." Morgenthau, the émigré from Nazi Germany, fears for his adopted country, which, he says, stands "alone among the nations of the world" as a "beacon of hope." "For this nation," Morgenthau writes, "was created for a particular purpose: to achieve equality in freedom at home, and thereby [to] set an example for the world to emulate." "This was the intention of the Founding Fathers," he adds, "and to this very day the world has taken them at their word." Moreover, it is "exactly for this reason that our prestige has suffered so disastrously among friend and foe alike; for the world did not expect of us what it had come to expect of others."⁹⁰

Throughout the first ten years of the war, from 1961 to 1971, Schlesinger ignored Morgenthau and nowhere is this neglect and omission more conspicuous than in Schlesinger's slim volume of 144 pages of previously published essays collectively titled *The Bitter Heritage, Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941–1968*. The blurb on the cover of the paper edition tells us the book is "cogent, lucid, penetrating—tells us what really ought to be done about Vietnam." In fact, because it is a replication of previous Schlesinger writings, it says nothing new and is a reminder of previous Schlesinger's statements on the war. Thus, in *The Bitter Heritage*, Schlesinger writes that we must "stop widening and Americanizing the war"; that we should "limit our forces, actions, goals and rhetoric"; that "instead of bombing more places, sending in more troops," he advises nothing more than to "recover our cool and see the situation as it is." And what is that situation? Schlesinger says it "a horrid civil war in which communist guerrillas, enthusiastically aided and now substantially directed from Hanoi, are trying to establish a communist despotism in South Vietnam." But while he says we must not send in more troops, in the next paragraph he writes "we must have enough American armed force in South Vietnam to leave no doubt in the minds of our adversaries that a communist government will not be imposed on South Vietnam by force. They must have no illusion about the prospect of an American withdrawal." "Therefore," he says, "holding the line in South Vietnam is essential."⁹¹ This is not fundamentally different from what he said at the National Teach-In two years earlier.

The Bitter Heritage is a strange book. On one level, it is a vast name-dropping compendium in which Schlesinger quotes and makes reference to a wide variety of scholars that include professors Henry Kissinger, James MacGregor Burns, Ernest R. May, John Kenneth Galbraith, Arnold J. Toynbee

and others. There are references to journalists that include James Reston, Walter Lippmann, Joseph Alsop, Denis Warner, Malcolm Browne, Douglas Pike, Chris Mohr, Philip Geyelin, Robert Shaplen, Paul Mus and others. There are two quotes by Sir Robert Thompson, the British authority on anti-guerrilla warfare, four quotes by Richard Goodwin, and a quote by military specialist Liddell Hart, whose passage about giving China a chance to save face, Schlesinger reports, without any connecting relevance, was one of President Kennedy's favorite passages. George F. Kennan is noted as are Winston Churchill, Randolph Churchill, and Herbert Butterfield.⁹² It is 1967, the war is in full swing, the casualties are mounting, it is a dirty jungle war, the national debate continues unabated, and Arthur Schlesinger omits the name of Hans J. Morgenthau from his book on Vietnam. There is not one single reference to Morgenthau in *The Bitter Heritage*.

But there are, on a casual count, about twenty references to John F. Kennedy including several quotes by the late President and here, Schlesinger attempts to perpetuate the great charade of the Kennedy presidency. Thus, Schlesinger writes about "Kennedy's profound insight," Kennedy who "had the mind of a first-rate historian," Kennedy, who had no "illusion about the infallibility of historical analogy," Kennedy who "put the matter so well some years ago," Kennedy who "rejected the march of combat soldiers" in Vietnam, "Kennedy's early insight into the political character of the problem in Vietnam," and "Kennedy's effort" to neutralize Laos.⁹³ In fact, every one of these claims is open to serious challenge, and Schlesinger's idealization of Kennedy tells us more about Schlesinger than it does about Kennedy.

The idea for writing *The Bitter Heritage* is found not in *The Bitter Heritage* but in Schlesinger's 1978 biography of Robert Kennedy. In the spring of 1966, Schlesinger writes, that he, Galbraith, and Goodwin were at lunch in New York commiserating about the war when Goodwin declared that it would be "terrible" if nuclear bombs were dropped on Washington and Peking and all they could do in the summer of 1966 is reflect on how comfortably they rested at the beach. Schlesinger adds that Goodwin then spoke of Johnson as "possessed, wholly impervious to argument," and that "political opposition" was all he understood. What to do? Schlesinger then writes, "We decided to do what little we could to stir public opinion."⁹⁴ And the upshot, according to Schlesinger, was the publication of his book, *The Bitter Heritage*, Goodwin's *Triumph or Tragedy: Reflections on Vietnam*, and Galbraith's *How to Control the Military*. In fact, not much of anything was stirred up by the publication of these books. Joseph Alsop, however, believing that Schlesinger had gone soft on communism, wrote a column criticizing his good friend, which caused consternation among Schlesinger's friends who responded with a flurry of letters and columns.

The Goodwin book was reviewed unfavorably by Morgenthau in *The New York Review of Books*. Morgenthau points out that Goodwin stirred up only confusion because the book is “a maze of contradictions.” Goodwin, Morgenthau wrote, embraces the government’s policy while adapting the criticisms of the opposition.⁹⁵ In fact, it is the same with the Schlesinger book. As for Galbraith’s contribution, these comprise two thin pamphlets, the second of which is titled *How to get out of Vietnam*, which is a strong statement of opposition. Here, as one of the first steps, Galbraith advocates the enclave plan, the plan that was first put forward by Morgenthau in 1965 and later endorsed by retired General Gavin, Senator Fulbright, the *New York Times* and others.⁹⁶ Though Galbraith accepts the plan as one of the immediate steps for getting out, he makes no attribution to Morgenthau. There is also no mention of enclaves in *The Bitter Heritage*.

There is also no mention of Morgenthau in a Schlesinger essay published in *Esquire* in September 1960 alluded to earlier on the eve of the presidential election. The essay is titled “Required reading for the two men seeking America’s most important job,” and it is another form of name-dropping, but one name is not dropped. It is a reading list with annotations of brief commentary and allusions to history that one might expect to find as expanded notes at the end of a scholarly book. It is also surprising that at the time of its writing, Morgenthau served on a foreign policy subcommittee working as an adviser on behalf of the Kennedy campaign of which Schlesinger was well aware.

The annotated reading list is over three pages long. The list includes Jefferson, Madison, and Theodore Roosevelt; there are six books on the subject of presidential power including that of Richard Neustadt, who became a Kennedy assistant; there is one recent book on the President’s cabinet; Herbert Croly’s *The Promise of American Life*, published in 1909, is on the list; two Galbraith books are on the list; as expected, there is a plug for John F. Kennedy’s *Profiles in Courage*, which Schlesinger suggests could well sit on the president’s night table when confronted with majority-minority problems. Schlesinger’s foreign policy authors include four books by Walt Rostow, one book by Henry Kissinger, one book and one article written by George F. Kennan; other foreign policy specialists on the list include John K. Fairbank and Oscar Morgenstern. Books on national defense by Generals Maxwell D. Taylor, Matthew B. Ridgeway, and James Gavin are on the list.⁹⁷ Yet, there is not one single Morgenthau article or book on Schlesinger’s required readings for the new president.

For whatever reason, the Schlesinger neglect of Morgenthau as foreign policy analyst is deliberate and may be explained by an incident involving Schlesinger’s good friend, Joseph Alsop. On January 13, 1967, Alsop, from

his residence in Washington, DC, wrote to Schlesinger, then teaching at the City University of New York that “I that I have just written a piece about your book [*The Bitter Heritage*], which I am afraid you will regard as pretty unkind.” Alsop continues: “You know the theme already, for I expounded it to you at Ham Armstrong’s.” Ham was Hamilton Fish Armstrong, scion of the prominent Fish family and editor, for fifty years, of the journal, *Foreign Affairs*. What Alsop tells Schlesinger is that Schlesinger and the others who had not visited Southeast Asia and who knew little of Asian history, were simply not qualified to question Vietnam policy. For Alsop, “the President’s harshest critics on Vietnam have no credentials”—because they haven’t been there—on which “to give national policy advice.”⁹⁸ Not that Schlesinger had even been a mild critic of the war. Moreover, for Alsop, Schlesinger had betrayed America’s cause in Vietnam by proclaiming in 1967 that the war was the result of a series of incremental mistakes.

Thus, in *The Bitter Heritage*, Schlesinger writes that Vietnam is a “tragedy without villains,” that it is “a triumph of the politics of inadvertence,” the result of a “series of small decisions,” made by a succession of administrations in the belief that “one more step,” with each step promising the final victory, though each new step resulted in another failure. It was this, Schlesinger writes, which “lured the United States deeper and deeper into the morass” of Vietnam as the United States became “entrapped” into the “nightmare” of “a land-war in Asia.”⁹⁹ Thus, in 1965, Schlesinger, at the National Teach-In, said the United States was in Vietnam because it had created a “vital interest” by which it could not abandon its ally, South Vietnam. In 1967, in *The Bitter Heritage*, Schlesinger abandoned “vital interest” and replaced it with the entrapment theory with its sequence of accidental steps to explain the genesis of the war. For Alsop, there was nothing accidental about it; America was in Vietnam to stop Communism and this was the *raison d’être* of America’s military involvement in Vietnam.

Another column followed that, in Schlesinger’s view, continued the attack and identified Schlesinger’s position on Vietnam with that of Morgenthau’s. On February 8, Schlesinger told Alsop, “Your attempt to identify my position on Vietnam with Hans Morgenthau’s is, as you must know, grotesque.”¹⁰⁰ “Grotesque” is a very strong word which connotes revulsion. The word appears in the first paragraph of Schlesinger’s two page letter. He does not elaborate. It is useful only in what it tells us about Schlesinger. Indeed, their views—Schlesinger’s and Morgenthau’s—are diametrically opposed. And when the word master chooses the term “grotesque,” we must take Schlesinger literally. He is offended. He never publicly rebuked Morgenthau for his views on Vietnam. But there are, as we have seen, snippets of muted criticisms of the “realist” school and, by implication, criticisms of Morgenthau.

Schlesinger and Alsop had been very good friends. In his autobiography, Schlesinger revels in the lively Alsop dinner parties he attended. "Joe Alsop," he writes, "was the generous center of our social life."¹⁰¹ In his February 8, 1967, letter to Alsop, Schlesinger is hurt that the "attack" is personal, and beyond basic "intellectual disagreement." "I have regarded you for years with admiration and affection," Schlesinger writes, "and I have greatly valued our friendship."¹⁰² Ten months later, on November 6, 1967, in *The New Leader* magazine, it was Schlesinger who turned on Alsop.

Schlesinger's eight page article titled "Vietnam and the 1968 Elections," replicates previous Schlesinger support for the Administration's war policy. The article is also an endorsement for Senator Robert F. Kennedy as the Democratic nominee for president. The article also includes Schlesinger's attack on Alsop.

As for the war, Schlesinger writes: "Let us have no confusion here. There will be no chance of negotiation if the other side thinks it is going to win." Schlesinger is also ambivalent about the results of a bombing halt, which he says "might still lead to talks, but there is a steadily decreasing chance that it will do so." He says he advocates de-escalation, but not liquidation. He also includes himself with the critics: "We," he writes, "are questioning the judgment" and not the "morality" of those who favor the escalation policy. But he errs here in failing to see that the judgment to escalate is a moral judgment but it is the moral judgment derived from universalism and not the morality of national interest geopolitics. And then his revenge on Alsop: Schlesinger calls Alsop the "superhawk," the "herald angel of the hawks"; here he adds: "Hark how this herald angel has sung through the years" as he ridicules Alsop by quoting lines from previous Alsop columns that predict military victory over the Communists.¹⁰³

Indeed, the public record shows that Alsop was deranged about Vietnam and Communism. From the beginning, he wanted all-out war in Vietnam. On May 15, 1964, Bundy told Johnson that Alsop is "breathing absolute fire and sulphur about the need for war in South Vietnam."¹⁰⁴ A month later, on June 15, at a dinner with the Johnsons and the Clark Cliffords, Alsop advised the President to send combat troops to Vietnam or risk being the first president in U.S. history to lose a war.¹⁰⁵ In his column of December 12, 1964, it was "the Communist aggressor," which was "the true enemy" of South Vietnam. On May 21, 1965, he opposed the bombing pause that interrupted "the momentum gained when the bombing attacks began." On June 6, 1965, he wanted heavier bombing because "the new targets are trivial." On September 13, 1965, he minimized U.S. casualties, which, he says, "have been very light." On September 2, 1966, he called for greater "escalation" and "the possibility of winning the Vietnamese war." He opposed the critics whom he called "the

anti-escalators”; he called them “either ignorant or dishonest.” On March 27, 1968, just three days before Johnson announced he would not be a candidate for re-election, Alsop pronounced the Tet offensive “a play from weakness” since Hanoi believed General Westmoreland “was winning his ‘war of attrition.’” By year’s end, on December 28, 1968, it was Hanoi that was in military trouble after the Tet offensive and, as Alsop wrote, “If President-elect Nixon only had the guts and patience to keep the pressure on until the end came.”¹⁰⁶

Privately, on October 4, 1966, he told Mrs. David Bruce, wife of foreign service officer, David E. K. Bruce, that his recent visit to Vietnam, “though hideously exhausting, was also very cheering.” He added: “Unless I am gravely mistaken, we are not merely winning the war there; we are even winning much faster and rather more completely than any of our own people are prepared to admit.”¹⁰⁷ He repeated this on January 18, 1967, to the French political philosopher, Raymond Aron. He told *New York Post* editor and columnist James Wechsler on January 31, 1967, that “I am further willing to bet that when all the returns are in, I shall have been found to have judged the Vietnamese situation more accurately than you and Arthur [Schlesinger] have done.” Wechsler also came to Schlesinger’s defense and wrote a column titled [the] “Alsop Archives” chronologically recording Alsop’s errors of judgment on Vietnam.¹⁰⁸

Alsop retired as a columnist in 1974, one year before his many predictions about an American victory in Vietnam were finally proved false. But the damaging effects of Alsop’s irresponsibility had been done. His nationally syndicated column, perhaps the longest running syndicated column in newspaper history, appeared three times a week in some 300 newspapers. His influence was immense. He never retracted or admitted error on Vietnam. He was, as Schlesinger writes, “the last ditch defender” of the war in Vietnam. In *The Bitter Heritage*, Schlesinger says it is “idle and unfair” to seek out “villains.” Vietnam, he writes, is “a tragedy without villains.”¹⁰⁹ In fact, the tragedy of Vietnam is replete with villains and one of the major villains is Joseph Alsop whose villainy as a journalist was unfettered dishonesty especially on Vietnam but also on those he attacked with a ruthlessly personal venom. And the case in point involves Hans Morgenthau.

On April 21, 1965, Alsop wrote a column titled “Pompous Ignorance.” It was a direct attack on Morgenthau whose views Alsop declared to be “curiously exact” to “the be-nice-to-Hitler group in England before the war.” Morgenthau thus was a “modern appeaser,” “ignorant,” whose advice “to recognize Communist China as ‘the dominant power in Asia’” was similar to “the need to recognize Hitler’s Germany as the dominant power in Europe.”

Morgenthau, whose writings on China Alsop called “silly chaff,” lacked the “forthrightness” to recognize that we must “defend our own vital position as a Pacific power.” In his most heated paragraph, Alsop wrote: “What is not pardonable in any serious academic thinker is simple, pompous ignorance.”¹¹⁰

Morgenthau wrote to the editor of the *Washington Post* and called the Alsop article “an attack” on his “professional honor.” He included “a factual refutation” of Alsop’s statements and requested that it be printed in the *Post* and made “available to all the publications” that participate in the Alsop syndications. But as a *Washington Post* official told Morgenthau, “only if they desire to do so.”¹¹¹ From this it may be inferred that while over 300 newspapers printed Alsop’s attack on Morgenthau, it is wholly problematical as to how many newspapers printed Morgenthau’s rejoinder. Moreover, “the effect of the Alsop column,” Morgenthau told Walter Lippmann, was “striking and distressing.” He told Lippmann:

Before its publication, my mail was overwhelmingly favorable and even the dissenting voices were respectful and polite. Now the gates of the political underworld seem to have opened. I receive every day letters with xenophobic, red-baited, and anti-Semitic attacks, not to speak of anonymous telephone calls at all hours of the day and night. This goes to show how thin the veneer of political civilization is. Once one man dares overstep the bounds of what is permissible and gets away with it, the underworld shakes off its restraint and joins in the hunt. This also goes to show how enormous the responsibility of the mass media is. While the *Washington Post* has acted correctly after the publication of the column, I think it has acted not only unwisely but irresponsibly in printing and distributing it in the first place.¹¹²

Morgenthau’s column size refutation was printed on April 30, 1965. It is simply titled “A Communication.” Here, Morgenthau writes:

Mr. Joseph Alsop, in his column of April 21, is obviously angry with me, and he chooses to express his anger by questioning my intelligence, my knowledge, and my character. If Mr. Alsop had arguments with which to demolish my position, he would have used them rather than hurling invectives at my person. Mr. Alsop misrepresents my position with regard to our involvement in Vietnam and our relations with China virtually out of recognition. I cannot be expected to repeat here what I have said elsewhere for the benefit of the readers of Mr. Alsop’s column who might be misled by his misrepresentation. I refer to *The New Republic* of April 3 and 31 and to *The New York Times Magazine* of April 18. I cannot be expected either to explain to a literate public that Mao Tse-tung is not Hitler, that the position of China in Asia is not like that of Nazi Germany and Europe, that Vietnam is not Czechoslovakia, that my opposition to our involvement in Vietnam is not identical to that of the appeasers of 1938. Anyone

who believes that these disparate situations are identical is beyond the reach of rational judgment.¹¹³

In his concluding paragraph, Morgenthau condemns Alsop's lack of journalistic integrity.

Mr. Alsop's column is indeed a scandal. It is a flagrant abuse of the freedom of the press, for he uses that freedom as a license to smear, abuse, and misinform. But there is a consolation in that episode, too; for since the real reason for Mr. Alsop's excesses is my opposition to a policy which is likely to lead to war with China or the Soviet Union or both, that small but influential group within our Government whose spokesmen Mr. Alsop has been consistently must be pretty desperate if they have nothing better to offer in support of their cause than this column of Mr. Alsop's.¹¹⁴

When Alsop attacked Schlesinger over *The Bitter Heritage*, Schlesinger's friends, Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith, reprimanded Alsop in a private note while James Wechsler, editor and columnist of the *New York Post*, scolded Alsop publicly in one of his columns.¹¹⁵ No one, to my knowledge, publicly criticized Alsop for his vicious attempt to discredit Morgenthau.

As the war wound down, Schlesinger became an *ex post facto* critic of the war. In *Harper's*, 1971, as noted earlier, Schlesinger discovered Morgenthau and national interest. In four *Wall Street Journal* columns starting on November 30, 1972, Schlesinger finally grasped the idea the war was a mistake. As he asks, "Was the Cold War Really Necessary?" he concludes finally that Dulles and Nixon were ideologues instead of national interest policymakers. He adds that it was "ideology" that "beguiled many Americans into assuming the indivisibility of Communism," a fallacy that Schlesinger forgets to note that it was President Kennedy who also perpetuated the same myth. On March 2, 1973, Schlesinger again reaffirms the primacy of national interest in making foreign policy. Two years later, on April 3, 1975, on the eve of the collapse of the Saigon government, Schlesinger berates Secretary of State Kissinger for his claim that if Congress did not come to the aid of South Vietnam and Cambodia, the world would have no assurance of promised U.S. support to its friends and allies. As Kissinger put it, "We cannot abandon friends in one part of the world without jeopardizing the security of friends everywhere." The new Schlesinger calls this a "breathtaking declaration of American universalism—the idea that our interests are equal everywhere on the planet." The former universalist then adds: "Few people in the world think that the United States has any vital interest in Southeast

Asia. Are we to understand that, because we desist from a futile effort in a part of the world where we have no vital interest, other powers will conclude we will therefore offer no resistance in parts of the world where we do have vital interests?"¹¹⁶

What is striking about the Schlesinger turnabout is that almost every substantive Schlesinger criticism of Dulles, Nixon, Kissinger, Podhoretz and their failure to recognize the futility of the war may be traced to Morgenthau. Even Schlesinger's "tables of priority for the United States" in *The Bitter Heritage*¹¹⁷ and his admission noted above that American interests are not "equal everywhere on the planet" derives from Morgenthau. For it is Morgenthau who wrote years earlier that American foreign policy must presuppose that Mexico is geopolitically more important than Korea, that there is a vast geopolitical difference between Canada and China, that Poland is not more important as Panama, that Laos and Vietnam are not as important as Cuba.¹¹⁸ Yet, there is no attribution to Morgenthau and at the conclusion of his 1975 article, who does Schlesinger cite as "The wisest man in foreign affairs?" The public record and Schlesinger's newly discovered principle of national interest as the only standard by which to make foreign policy plus the sheer volume of his published writings on Vietnam points to one man only and that is Morgenthau. But who does Schlesinger cite? Averell Harriman,¹¹⁹ the former governor of New York and chairman of President Kennedy's Task Force on Southeast Asia, credentials that can make no claim to foreign policy wisdom.

On July 14, 1978, while Schlesinger might have known that Morgenthau was ill and contemplated heart surgery—Morgenthau died two years later on July 19, 1980 at age seventy-six, and the cause of his death was a bleeding ulcer—Schlesinger wrote Morgenthau "urging" him to write his memoirs. What is striking about the letter are Schlesinger's reasons. "You have a rather special experience," Schlesinger writes. "It would be fascinating" to read "your reflections on intellectual life ... on the way statesmen conduct foreign policy ... and the way political scientists write about it ... on the serious thinkers and the phonies of our age." "I beg you to plunge ahead," Schlesinger concludes.¹²⁰

Of all the striking surreal ironies in the relationship of Morgenthau and Schlesinger, this is, by far and away, the most mystifying of all. Indeed, after a decade of omission and neglect, and the occasional innuendo, and the admonition to Alsop that any resemblance between Schlesinger and Morgenthau on Vietnam policy is "grotesque," Schlesinger now implores Morgenthau to write what he has already written about in amplitude. He had already written favorably about the "serious thinkers" such as Adlai Stevenson, Senators Eugene

McCarthy and J. William Fulbright and unfavorably about Robert F. Kennedy, Walt W. Rostow, presidential assistant John Roche; he had debated Bundy and Scalapino and Leo Cherne of Freedom House and the AFV; he had already written decades earlier about the principles that should govern foreign policy that Schlesinger neglected to include in his recommendations for presidents to consult.

Morgenthau replied politely to Schlesinger's letter and thanked him for his interest. But he had no intention, he said, to write his memoirs.¹²¹

Over a decade later, on October 12, 1983, in another *Wall Street Column*, Schlesinger reflects on Morgenthau's discussion of what happens when truth speaks to power from Morgenthau's November 26, 1966 *New Republic* article titled "Truth and Power: The Intellectuals and the Johnson Administration." In this article, Morgenthau provides another dimension of understanding as to the question that began this chapter: How could Vietnam happen? How could such men of talent, America's foremost intellectuals from America's foremost universities, have failed their countrymen by being oblivious to the facts of Vietnam?

In "Truth and Power," Morgenthau distinguishes between the two different worlds of the scholar and the politician who are "oriented toward two different ultimate values: the intellectual [who] seeks truth; the politician, power." What happens when the intellectual becomes a servant of government? For Morgenthau, when the eminent academic enters politics, truth becomes an adjunct of power by which truth is used to enhance power. The intellectual has thus abdicated his role as an objective seeker of truth. The intellectual questions and criticizes. As a servant of power, he no longer applies the standard of truth as he becomes a defender of the power he serves. Schlesinger quotes Morgenthau: the "genuine intellectual tells the world what it doesn't want to hear"; "the intellectual's duty is to look at the political sphere from without, judging it by, and admonishing it in the name of the standards of truth accessible to him"; and thus the intellectual "speaks, in the biblical sense, truth to power."¹²²

Schlesinger disagrees, which takes the form of a question: "Is it really possible for the intellectual to engage in the exercise of power without corrupting himself and betraying his commitment to truth?" Of course Schlesinger has to disagree since he, as an intellectual, is a case in point: he was chosen by Kennedy to serve power but he keeps himself out of the present discussion. Instead, he uses Kissinger as an example of the intellectual who serves power with whom, he says, he has had his moments of agreement and disagreement. And what then is Schlesinger's answer to Morgenthau's critique? Schlesinger answers: "We require both the Hans Morgenthau and the Henry

Kissingers.” And while he says, “So let us salute the Trouble Makers,” his salute is not genuine. For he writes: “The critic speaking truth to power will be more effective if there are people in power who understand what the critic is talking about—who have ideas to be revised and ideals to be revived.”¹²³ Indeed. “Ideas to be revised”! “Ideals to be revived”! This is empty rhetoric and not even good prose. Schlesinger is too lenient to “the people in power.” For Vietnam happened, not because the critic failed to criticize effectively; It failed because Schlesinger, Kissinger, Alsop and their colleagues in power did not want to have their assumptions challenged. It failed because power did not listen to truth.

NOTES

1. James C. Thomson, Jr., “How Could Vietnam Happen,” *The Atlantic*, April 1968, 47.

2. Henry Brandon, *The Anatomy of Error: The Inside Story of the Asian War on the Potomac, 1954–1969* (Boston: Gambit, Inc., 1969), 2, 1. Brandon’s account of the send-off dinner for Rostow and Taylor is in Henry Brandon, *Special Relationships, A Foreign Correspondent’s Memoirs from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: Atheneum, 1988), 191–93.

3. Townshend Hoopes, “Legacy of the Cold War in Indochina,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 1970, Vol. 48, No. 4, 601.

4. We have it on the authority of the President’s brother, the Attorney General, that Schlesinger did not do much while serving in the White House. In Robert Kennedy’s oral history interviews, Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy In His Own Words* (London, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Auchland: Bantam Press, 1988), 419, Robert Kennedy says: “He [JFK] liked Arthur Schlesinger, but he thought he was a little bit of a nut sometimes. He thought he was sort of a gadfly and that he was having a helluva good time in Washington. He didn’t do a helluva lot, but he was good to have around. He was a valuable contact, and he’s also contributed some very stimulating, valuable ideas at various times. That made it well worthwhile. He wasn’t brought in on any major policy matters, but he’d work on drafts of speeches ... he used to stimulate people ... by writing them memos, what they should be doing and what they should be thinking. ... I think he was a valuable addition. ...”

5. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company; Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1965), x–xi.

6. Arthur M Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 235, 242, 245.

7. Morgenthau to Senator John F. Kennedy, 15 November 1960, Morgenthau Papers, Box 33. Morgenthau’s first sentence reads: “Arthur Schlesinger has suggested

that I express to you the reasons why I think that Adlai Stevenson would make a good Secretary of State.”

8. Memo, Schlesinger to Robert Kennedy, 8 November 1963, Roswell Gilpatric Papers, JFK Library, Dorchester, Mass., Box 9, suggesting speakers. Also, see Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 695–96.

9. Memo, Schlesinger to Kennedy, 1 November 1963, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Papers, JFK Library, Dorchester, Mass., Box WH-64.

10. Letter, Schlesinger to Morgenthau, 12 November 1974, Morgenthau Papers, Box 53.

11. Schlesinger, “The Man of the Century,” *American Heritage*, May/June 1994, 85.

12. Schlesinger, “The Man of the Century,” 86.

13. Schlesinger, “Origins of the Cold War,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967, 36–40.

14. Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Origins of the Cold War*, The American Forum Series (Lexington, Mass., Toronto: Ginn and Company, Xerox Corporation, 1970), 121–22.

15. Hoopes, “Legacy,” 605; Thomson, “How Could Vietnam Happen?” 48.

16. Morgenthau, “Vietnam: Another Korea?” *Commentary*, May 1962 and Morgenthau, “Asia: The American Algeria,” *Commentary*, July 1961, are reprinted in Morgenthau, *The Restoration of American Politics*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 357, 375.

17. Morse quoted in John D. Morris, “Policy in Vietnam Divides Senators,” *New York Times*, 21 March 1964, 2.

18. I. F. Stone, “A Crisis and a Turning Point Approaches in Vietnam,” *I. F. Stone Bi- Weekly*, 23 December 1963, 1.

19. “5,000 Scholars Ask A Neutral Vietnam,” *New York Times*, 10 July 1964, 1, 2.

20. Morgenthau, “Case Against Further Involvement,” *Washington Post*, 15 March 1964, E4.

21. Kennan, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 10 February 1966, called the war “a civil conflict within South Vietnam,” *The Vietnam Hearings* (New York: Random House, 1966), 143–44. Also Kennan, in “The Meaning of Vietnam,” *New York Review of Books*, 12 June 1975, 28, where Kennan writes: “The lessons of Vietnam are few and plain: not to be hypnotized by the word ‘Communism’ and not to mess into other people’s civil wars where there is no substantial strategic interest at stake.” He adds: “Learning to view Russia and China as national rather than communist great powers, we must treat them accordingly, with a view primarily to avoid serious destabilization of the international balance....”

22. Morgenthau, “Case Against,” E4.

23. Morgenthau, “Case Against,” E4.

24. Schlesinger, “The Three Alternatives in Vietnam,” in Louis Menashe and Ronald Radosh, eds., *Teach-Ins: USA. Reports, Opinions, Documents* (New York, Washington, London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 165.

25. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 433–35, 438.
26. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 166.
27. Schlesinger, “The Necessary Amorality of Foreign Policy,” *Harper’s*, August 1971, 74. Here, Schlesinger has adopted Morgenthau’s principles of foreign policy *in toto*. He writes: “Without the magnetic compass of national interest, there would be no regularity of predictability in international affairs”; “the idea of national interest provides the focus and framework within which the debate on strategic interests can take place”; “Any consistent defender of the ideas of national interest must concede that other nations have legitimate interests, too, and this sets bounds on international conflict”; here, Schlesinger quotes Morgenthau: “You can compromise interests, but you cannot compromise principles”; here, Schlesinger abjures “the invocation of moral absolutes” which “produce[s] ideological crusades for unlimited objectives” as he reemphasizes “national interest joined in unremitting respect for the interests of others ... to bring about greater restraint, justice, and peace among nations.” Indeed, the article is vintage Morgenthau.
28. Schlesinger, “Are We Really Out of Vietnam?” 1 February 1973, *Wall Street Journal*, 10; Schlesinger, “Congress and Mr. Kissinger,” 3 April 1975, *Wall Street Journal*, 12.
29. Schlesinger, “Make War Not It,” *Harper’s*, March, 1982, 72, 73. Here, Schlesinger writes that Morgenthau is one of several critics who made “devastating criticisms of the Vietnam folly ...” And he repeats the principle, unknown to Podhoretz, that “the function of American foreign policy was to protect the national interest of the United States.”
30. Schlesinger, Letter, *Harper’s*, October 1971, 12–13.
31. Schlesinger, Letter, *Harper’s*, 12–13.
32. Schlesinger, Letter, *Harper’s*, 12–13.
33. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 166.
34. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 167.
35. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 167.
36. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 170.
37. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 169.
38. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 168.
39. Schlesinger, “Three Alternatives,” 171.
40. Schlesinger to Bundy, 5 May 1965, Schlesinger Papers, Box P-31.
41. Schlesinger to Bundy, 5 May 1965, Schlesinger Papers, Box P-31.
42. Morgenthau, “War With China,” in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the United States* (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965), 50–60.
43. Morgenthau, “We Are Deluding Ourselves,” in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the United States*, 61–73.
44. Morgenthau, “Deluding Ourselves,” 70. I cite this sentence particularly because the language is remarkably similar to lesson Number 3 on page 322 in McNamara’s *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1995), published three decades later. Here McNamara writes: “We underestimated the power

of nationalism to motivate a people ... to fight and die for their beliefs and values....” In his concluding chapter, titled “The Lessons of Vietnam,” McNamara lists 11 such lessons preceded by his admission, 320, that “Given these facts—and they are facts—I believe we could and should have withdrawn from South Vietnam either in late 1963 ... or early 1965 in the face of increasing political and military weakness in South Vietnam.” McNamara’s 1995 lessons, 321–23, include: “We misjudged ... the geopolitical intentions of our adversaries ... and we exaggerated the dangers to the United States of their actions”; “We failed ... to recognize the limitations of modern, high-technology military equipment, forces and doctrine in confronting unconventional, highly motivated people’s movements”; “We failed to draw Congress and the American people into a full and frank discussion and debate” about a “large-scale United States military involvement in Southeast Asia....”; “We failed to recognize that “our own security” was “not directly at stake” as we failed in “our judgment” of what we determined was in “the best interest” of South Vietnam. In lesson no. 11, McNamara writes: “We thus failed to analyze and debate our actions in Southeast Asia—our objectives, the risks and costs of alternative ways of dealing with them, and the necessity of changing course when failure was clear.” At the Sheraton Hotel on May 15, 1965, not far from the Pentagon, Morgenthau made the argument for America to withdraw from Vietnam. In 1965, McNamara paid no attention. But in 1995, he discovered the reasons without attribution to what the major critic of the war had been saying from day one.

45. Morgenthau, “Deluding Ourselves,” 71–72.

46. Morgenthau, “Deluding Ourselves,” 73.

47. Morgenthau, “Russia, the U.S., and Vietnam,” in *Vietnam and the United States*, 74–78.

48. Morgenthau, “Russia,” 77–78.

49. Morgenthau, “Russia,” 78.

50. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore in Vietnam,” in *Teach-Ins*, 158–59.

51. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 160.

52. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 160–161.

53. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 161.

54. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 162.

55. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 163–64.

56. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 163.

57. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 164.

58. Morgenthau, “Political Folklore,” 164.

59. Notes of a Meeting, 16 May 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam January–June 1965*, 665–66.

60. Notes of a Meeting, 16 May 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam January–June 1965*, 667–68.

61. Clifford to Johnson, 17 May 1965, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam January–June 1965*, 672.

62. Moyers’ conversation with President Johnson, 13 May 1965, Michael Beschloss, ed, *Reaching for Glory, Lyndon Johnson’s Secret White House Tapes* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 321.

63. Moyers' conversation with President Johnson, Beschloss, ed., *Reaching for Glory*, 321.
64. "Johnson Orders 50,000 More Men to Vietnam and Doubles Draft," 29 July 1965, *New York Times*, 1.
65. Lady Bird Johnson's tape-recorded diary, 16 May 1965, Beschloss, ed., *Reaching for Glory*, 328.
66. Note of Meeting, 16 May 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. 2, *Vietnam January-June 1965*, 668n.
67. "Foreign Relations," *Time*, 20 August 1965, 21.
68. "Foreign Relations," 21.
69. "The Talk of the Town" column in *The New Yorker*, 28 August 1965, 24-25, Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.
70. See Fred W. Friendly, *Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control ...* (New York: Random House, 1967), 215.
71. "Vietnam Perspective: How We Can Win," from transcript of the *CBS News Special*, Part 2, 16 August 1965, Gilbert Jonas Papers, Michigan State University Archives and Historical Collection, East Lansing, Michigan, Box 3, Folder 22, 29, 33, 35-6.
72. Morgenthau, "Time for a Change," *NYRB*, 6 April 1967, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/12129>.
73. "Vietnam Perspectives: The Decisions," from transcript of *CBS New Special*, 9 August 1965, Jonas Papers, Box 3, Folder 22, 3, 4-5.
74. Morgenthau to Professor Earl S. Johnson, 30 October 1967, Morgenthau Papers, Box 31.
75. Valenti report to President Johnson, 23 April 1965, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas, Reference File, Vietnam Aides' Memos, PC 4, PR 19.
76. Stevenson to Schlesinger, 19 October 1954, Walter Johnson, ed., *The Papers of Adlai Stevenson, 1952-1955* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1974), Vol. 4, 417. The quote about Schlesinger's "speed of mind" is also in William V. Shannon, "Controversial Historian of the Age of Kennedy," *New York Times Magazine*, 21 November 1965, 135.
77. Schlesinger, "Origins of the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967, 27.
78. Letter, Schlesinger, *Harper's*, October 1971, 12-13.
79. Schlesinger, "Three Alternatives," 167.
80. Schlesinger, "Policy and National Interest," *Partisan Review*, November-December 1951, 706-707, 711.
81. Schlesinger, "Policy and National Interest," 709.
82. Memo, Shull to ADA Chapters and Board, undated, Schlesinger Papers, Box P-1.
83. Seabury and Beer to Don Edwards, 20 October 1965, Schlesinger Papers, Box P-1.
84. Schlesinger to Don Edwards, 21 October 1965, Schlesinger Papers, Box P-1.
85. Schlesinger, "The Many Faces of Communism," *Harper's*, January 1960, 52-53.
86. Morgenthau, "Vietnam: Shadow and Substance," *NYRB*, 16 September 1965, 4. Also reprinted in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the U.S., 1965*, 9-20.

87. Morgenthau, "Vietnam: Shadow," 1–2. Also in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the U.S.*, 9–11.

88. Morgenthau, "Vietnam: Shadow," 2. Also in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the U.S.*, 11.

89. Morgenthau, "Vietnam: Shadow," 1–2. Also in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the U.S.*, 9–11.

90. Morgenthau, "Vietnam: Shadow," 5. Also in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the U.S.*, 13.

91. Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941–1968*, revised edition (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1967), x–xi, 105–106.

92. Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, 50, 57, 71, 72, 74, 75, 96, 98, 102, 103, 107, 119.

93. Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, xix, 27, 37, 39, 40, 51, 59, 71, 76–77, 87, 88, 93, 98, 127.

94. Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), 739.

95. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top," *NYRB*, 23 June 1966 ><http://www.nybooks.com/articles/12426>.

96. John Kenneth Galbraith, *How to Get Out of Vietnam* (New York: Signet, 1967), 35–36.

97. Schlesinger, "Required Reading List for the Two Men Seeking America's Most Responsible Job," *Esquire*, September 1960, 59–65.

98. Alsop to Schlesinger, 13 January 1967, Joseph Alsop Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Box 77.

99. Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, 47–48.

100. Schlesinger to Alsop, 8 February 1967, Alsop Papers, Box 77.

101. Schlesinger, *A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917–1950* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000), 378.

102. Schlesinger to Alsop, 8 February 1967, Alsop Papers, Box 77.

103. Schlesinger, "Vietnam and the 1968 Election," *The New Leader*, 6 November 1967, 10–11.

104. McGeorge Bundy telephone conversation with President Johnson, 15 May 1964, Michael Beschloss, ed., *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963–1964* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 357.

105. Johnson dinner with the Joseph Alsops and the Clark Cliffords, 15 June 1964, Beschloss, ed., *Taking Charge*, 410n.

106. Several Schlesinger citations of Alsop's misjudgments are in Schlesinger, "Vietnam and the 1968 Elections," 10–11. Several appear to derive from James Wechsler's column, "Alsop Archives" in *The New York Post*, 23 January 1967. Wechsler, a long time friend of Schlesinger's, also reprimanded Alsop for his "attack on Schlesinger's book" and noted "the tone of your denunciation of Arthur was especially painful . . ." Wechsler to Alsop, 27 January 1967, Alsop Papers, Box 77.

107. Alsop to Mrs. David Bruce, 4 October 1966, Alsop Papers, Box 73.

108. Alsop to Wechsler, 31 January 1967, Alsop Papers, Box 77. Wechsler's "Archives" column is noted above, 106n.

109. Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, 47–48.

110. Alsop, “Matter of Fact: Pompous Ignorance,” *Washington Post*, 21 April 1965, A25.

111. George W. Siegel to Morgenthau, 27 April 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 62. Siegel wrote on behalf of J. Russell Wiggins, editor of the *Washington Post*, who, as we have seen, was a major supporter of the war.

112. Morgenthau to Lippmann, 6 May 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 36.

113. Letter, Morgenthau, “A Communication,” *Washington Post*, 30 April 1965, A25.

114. Letter, Morgenthau, “A Communication,” *Washington Post*, 30 April 1965, A25.

115. Wechsler’s scolding is noted above in 106n. Also, Galbraith to Alsop, 20 January 1967, Alsop Papers, Box 76. Galbraith writes: “I have just read your column on Arthur Schlesinger’s book . . . your readers will consider it rather long on ire and polemics and rather short on informed rebuttal.”

116. Schlesinger’s emphatic rejection of ideological universalism and his acceptance of national interest geopolitics is in Schlesinger, “Congress and Mr. Kissinger,” *Wall Street Journal*, 3 April 1975, 12.

117. Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage*, 86. Schlesinger’s “two tables of priorities for the United States,” he writes, is “one based on strategic significance [and] the other on cultural accessibility.” He then adds: “And by both standards Western Europe and Latin America are the parts of the world which matter most to the United States. We could survive the subjection of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Polynesia by a hostile power or ideology; but if either Western Europe or Latin America were organized against North America, our position would be perilous indeed.” This is indeed a Morgenthau principle adopted by Schlesinger.

118. Morgenthau, *In Defense*, 118, refers to his “order of priorities” as an “order” of possible “hierarchical” objectives of a “nation’s foreign policy” as “the first step in framing a rational foreign policy” chosen “in view of their respective importance for the national interest.” Thus, he writes, “France’s or Canada’s freedom from foreign control is obviously of vastly greater importance for American foreign policy than Poland’s or Korea’s.” Conversely, 119, if promoting democracy around the world is “the moral standard by which political action is to be judged,” then Korea is as important as France, China is as worthy an objective as Canada, and there is no difference between Poland and Panama.”

119. Schlesinger, “Congress and Mr. Kissinger,” 3 April 1975, *Wall Street Journal*, 12, where Schlesinger bases his judgment on Harriman’s statement that “No foreign policy will stick unless the American people are behind it. And unless Congress understands it the American people aren’t going to understand it.” Here Schlesinger concludes that Harriman, “the wisest American in foreign affairs,” had “said it all.” Indeed, Harriman had never questioned the war policy and his most striking public contribution is reported in Raymond H. Anderson, “Harriman Fears Red Threat Rises,” *New York Times*, 15 April 1965, 4 where Harriman is quoted: “The aggression in Vietnam is the expression of what the Communists expect to do all around the world.” He adds: “The question is whether we are going to permit them to succeed.

This must be stopped, for if we don't stop it now it will be more difficult to stop it some place else."

120. Schlesinger to Morgenthau, 14 July 1978, Morgenthau Papers, Box 53.

121. Morgenthau to Schlesinger, 24 July 1978, Morgenthau Papers, Box 53.

122. Schlesinger, "Intellectuals' Role: Truth to Power?" *Wall Street Journal*, 12 October 1983, 60.

123. Schlesinger, "Intellectuals' Role," 60.

Chapter 5

Morgenthau and the Council on Foreign Relations

Hamilton Fish Armstrong graduated from Princeton in 1916, began a short career in the foreign service as a military attaché in Belgrade in 1919, turned to journalism as a special correspondent, and later became a member of the editorial staff of the *New York Evening Post*. In 1921, he was associated with the newly formed Council on Foreign Affairs, which was an offshoot of the defunct American Institute of International Affairs. The Institute had been formed in Paris in 1919 by members of the American delegation at the Versailles peace congress and with the war's end, the Institute came to an end, and the Council on Foreign Relations became its replacement. When it was determined that the Council needed an organ to disseminate foreign policy views on subjects not likely to be found in other magazines, the journal *Foreign Affairs* was born.¹

In 1922, Armstrong became its managing editor. In 1928, Armstrong began his career as editor, a position he held until his retirement in 1972, almost a half century later. Thus, the Armstrong imprint was clearly stamped on the journal, and his influence, reflected in those he commissioned to submit articles, particularly in his final decade as editor, the decade of the Vietnam war, reflected also his strong support for the war. As this chapter demonstrates, another opportunity for broader debate on Vietnam was lost as Armstrong permitted no dissenting articles on the war; that is, until 1967, when Armstrong published Morgenthau on the subject of intervention and non-intervention. But the damage was done, particularly as the journal's readership of professors and specialists and molders of public opinion on foreign affairs were thereby deprived of Morgenthau's arguments in opposition to the war because of his exclusion from the journal.

The avowed purpose of the journal was stated in its first issue and an abbreviated version has appeared in all subsequent issues. The statement in full goes as follows:

In pursuance of its ideals *Foreign Affairs* will not devote itself to the support of any one cause, however worthy. Like the Council on Foreign Relations from which it has sprung, it will tolerate wide differences of opinion. Its articles will not present any consensus of beliefs. What is demanded of them is that they shall be competent and well informed, representing honest opinions seriously held and convincingly expressed ... we hold that while keeping clear of mere vagaries, *Foreign Affairs* can do more to guide American public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent ideas than it can by identifying itself with one school.²

For almost fifty years, as the editor of *Foreign Affairs* and as a member of the Council, Armstrong forged, without plan or premeditated design, the emergence of an informal association of men who came to be known as the American foreign policy Establishment. He did this by placing into prominence those he commissioned to write articles for the journal, many of whom were also invited to become members of the Council. The Establishment was never a formally organized body of dues-paying members with an official newsletter. But it did have its unofficial organ of foreign policy opinion directed by Armstrong, which was the Council's journal. Thus, it was *Foreign Affairs* that maintained the orthodoxy of Establishment views as determined by its editor, Hamilton Fish Armstrong.

The genesis and character of the American foreign policy Establishment has been the subject of several studies. For journalists, Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, co-authors of *The Wise Men*, there were six original men of the establishment, "six friends," "with early careers on Wall Street and in government."³ The Wall Street and government connection is also borne out by journalist and author, Godfrey Hodgson, who adds the educational component. Hodgson writes that there are three places "where a reputation for foreign policy can be established: at Harvard, the White House, and in Manhattan."⁴ For Isaacson and Thomas, the "six friends" are "the original best and brightest" who, "out of duty and desire, heeded the call to public service" and "left a legacy that dominates American policy to this day."⁵ Another book on *The American Establishment* authored by Leonard and Mark Silk notes that "63 of the first 82" prospective State Department appointees on President Kennedy's list in 1961 were all "members of the Council." The Silks cite John J. McCloy, himself a prominent member of the Council, who, when recruiting for the expanded foreign policy positions in the State Department after World War II, is quoted: "Whenever we needed a

man, we thumbed through the roll of Council members and put through a call to New York,” the offices and headquarters of the Council.⁶

For Isaacson and Thomas, their hyper-inflated “original best and brightest” are pictured in the opening pages of their book, arranged by photo and brief introduction. They are: William Averell Harriman, Groton and Yale; Robert Abercrombie Lovett, Yale; Dean Gooderham Acheson, Groton and Yale; John Jay McCloy, Jr., Harvard Law; George Frost Kennan, Princeton; and Charles Eustis Bohlen, Harvard. Who were the other prominent members cited by Isaacson and Thomas? They are David Bruce, Clark Clifford, Douglas Dillon, McGeorge and William Bundy, Dean Rusk, Cyrus Vance, Paul Nitze, and James Forrestal, among others. For Hodgson, it is McGeorge Bundy who is the most prominent member. “Raised in the inner circle of the foreign policy establishment” and who, if it had not been for Vietnam, Hodgson writes, “must have been regarded as the natural successor to the national presidency of the American Establishment.”⁷

Bundy’s prominence is corroborated in another study of the Establishment, which also confirms the Council’s rigid orthodoxy regarding Vietnam. Thus, *New York Times Magazine* staff writer, J. Anthony Lukas writes that “the striking failure” of the Council during the Vietnam era was that it did not hold “a single study group on the war”; that most speakers who addressed the Council were “proponents of the war” while the most celebrated speeches “were three lectures delivered last spring [1971] by McGeorge Bundy.”⁸

Thus, in the course of the Vietnam war, Armstrong’s declaration of “hospitality to divergent ideas” became a mere fiction. As Hodgson points out in 1973,

From 1956 to 1965, virtually every member of the establishment endorsed the broad lines of U. S. policy in Southeast Asia. With certain exceptions ... there was no serious dissent within establishment circles from the U. S. commitment to contain Communism in Asia as it had been contained in Europe; from the commitment to maintain South Vietnam independent of the North, in spite of the 1954 agreements; nor indeed at the level of tactics, was there noticeable dissent from the support for Diem, or from the initial aid and “advisers.” And this was because it was a prerequisite ... to support the general policy ... of active intervention wherever required to defend “the free world” against Communist encroachment, Communist subversion....⁹

Indeed, this became so obvious that Armstrong admitted to his Council colleague, John J. McCloy in February 1968, that “most of the articles we have printed in *Foreign Affairs* over the years have tended to support Washington policies.” He adds: “As a result, we quite often receive letters attacking us for being a stooge of the government, most recently letters that ask specifically

why, if we pretend to provide a variety of points of view, we have never published a piece sharply opposed to our policy in Vietnam.” Armstrong, delusional about the integrity of his journal, then tells McCloy: “I wouldn’t dream of printing an article just because it opposed the administration, but it doesn’t seem to me detrimental to *Foreign Affairs* to indicate once in a while that we really are an independent organ of opinion.”¹⁰

Their conversation began when Armstrong sent McCloy a copy of an article he had written that contained his newly developed misgivings about the war that he intended to publish in his own journal. McCloy responded that he didn’t like the idea because it was what McCloy called a “cut and run policy.” It was 1968 almost immediately following the devastating Tet offensive and McCloy said “I do not like the timing. It is almost at the pitch of battle” and the wrong time “to strike a sour note on the trumpet at such a critical time. . . .” He tells Armstrong, “You should not trust your judgment immediately after a serious military setback.”¹¹ As will be seen later in this chapter, Armstrong, for the first time, embracing Morgenthau’s views without attribution and based on copies of Morgenthau articles that I found in Armstrong’s papers at Princeton, put forth what McCloy called a “Plan for Liquidation” of the war. In fact, it was not a plan for ending the war, but it was a sound criticism, which indicated that Armstrong, in 1968, had finally woken up to the disaster, which his negligence as editor of *Foreign Affairs* had fostered by not taking up the discussion of the war in his journal until 1966. And even then he did it in a piecemeal fashion.

Thus, in April, 1966, Armstrong published “The Faceless Viet Cong” by George A. Carver, a CIA analyst who remained unidentified in the journal as an official member of the American intelligence community. In October 1966, Armstrong published Bernard A. Fall, the journalist, scholar and professor of Vietnamese history, who wrote “Viet Nam in the Balance.” And Fall, while meticulous in his analysis and highly knowledgeable about the war, questioned U.S. military policy but did not explore whether Vietnam was a vital security interest for the United States.¹² The frivolous nature of Armstrong’s selections of articles in 1966 while the United States was advancing its military cause in Vietnam is reflected in the inclusion of David Rockefeller’s piece titled “What Private Enterprise Means to Latin America,” in the April number, a subject dear to the hearts of the Rockefeller empire with its oil interests in Venezuela. In January 1968, another member of the family, Nelson A. Rockefeller, Governor of New York, published “Policy and the People.” In the same time period, McGeorge Bundy’s “The End of Either/Or,” a defense of the war, as noted in a previous chapter, was published in January 1967. And within a two year span, in July 1966 and in January 1968, Armstrong published two Brzezinski articles, the first titled “Tomorrow’s

Agenda"; the second, "The Framework of East-West Reconciliation." In April 1967, Armstrong finally published Morgenthau on the subject of when and when not to intervene in matters not clearly identifiable as crucial to the national interest.¹³ Armstrong, in his denial that something was terribly wrong with our involvement in Vietnam, was clearly negligent.

Indeed, that negligence is also responsible for articles egregiously wrong on Vietnam and that should never have seen the light of day. A case in point is *Public Interest* editor Irving Kristol who, in the journal dedicated to the study of foreign policy, writes that there is no such thing as foreign policy. Why? Because he says there is no uniform text on foreign policy: "The entire tradition of Western political thought has very little to say about foreign policy," he writes. Thus, he foolishly remarks, the texts by Machiavelli and Grotius, Kennan and Morgenthau, are "all used indifferently by all parties as circumstances allow." This, he claims, makes "the very idea of 'foreign policy' so amorphous as to be misleading." There cannot be a meaningful foreign policy, he says, because "one 'policy'" cannot encompass the full range of "economic, military, political, and sentimental relations with nations neighborly or distant, friendly or inimical." And what becomes apparent in his "American Intellectuals and Foreign Policy" article is his attempt to demean those intellectuals who oppose the war. Thus he distinguishes between the good intellectuals, "Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Eric Goldman, and John Roche" (Goldman, who replaced Schlesinger in the Johnson government and Roche, who replaced Goldman for not being sufficiently hawkish on the war) and the bad intellectuals, particularly Morgenthau as the "intellectual" in "perpetual 'prophetic confrontation'" with the government. Kristol sums up the difference: "Tell the American intellectual that he is a disturber of the intellectual peace, and he is gratified. Tell him he is a reassuring spokesman for calm and tranquility, and he will think you have made a nasty accusation."¹⁴ Such is the thinking or lack of thinking that serves only as a dumb distraction in the debate on Vietnam and that reflects poorly on Armstrong's editorial judgment.

In 1956, a German-Jewish émigré from Nazi Germany was admitted to the Council and thus the Establishment, but it was not the German-Jewish émigré who taught at Harvard as a visiting professor in 1951 and who had published, three years earlier, the classic text on international politics. In November 1954, Armstrong asked McGeorge Bundy, then dean of the Harvard School of Arts and Sciences, if he had a candidate among his roster of political science professors who would be interested in writing for his journal. Bundy replied that he "could come up with only one name," and that was Henry Kissinger. Bundy then provided some details: Kissinger was editor of

Harvard's international quarterly *Confluence* and was currently on a Rockefeller Foundation grant to publish his Ph.D. thesis into a book, which was later titled *A World Restored, The Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Age*. Bundy also provided some personal details: Kissinger, age thirty-one, came from Germany, "is of Jewish extraction" and oddly, added the comment that "neither these elements in his background has ever seemed to me to distort his judgment of men and politics." He has "real natural ability," Bundy told Armstrong, and "is a young man with a future."¹⁵

In December 1954, Kissinger was also recommended by Schlesinger. Kissinger, Schlesinger writes, is "one of the most interesting minds I have recently met in the field of international affairs." Schlesinger adds that as editor of *Confluence*, Kissinger has shown "imagination and judgment" in his "selection of articles and authors"; in their discussions, Schlesinger says he is impressed with Kissinger's "imaginative and searching analysis."¹⁶ It is worth noting that Bundy and Schlesinger were among the contributors to *Confluence* and that Bundy and Schlesinger were also members of the journal's Advisory Board.

A quick perusal of the journal's seven-year duration from 1951 to 1958 reveals nothing exceptional in the literature of foreign policy discussion. Apparently, it was not meant to be exceptional. "I dreamed it up," Kissinger tells his most recent biographer, Walter Isaacson, co-author of the aforementioned Establishment's *Wise Men*. For Isaacson, Kissinger's motive in establishing the journal and Kissinger's concomitant establishment of his summer conference program known as the International Seminar was self-promotion and the advancement of his career. It appears, according to Isaacson, there was nothing serious about the journal except for the contacts Kissinger made by selecting its authors as well as in his selection of those to present papers at his summer seminars. To pay for the journal, Kissinger solicited funds from various grant organizations, which included a Rockefeller Foundation grant that contributed \$26,000. This alone enabled Kissinger to print about a thousand copies of each issue and send them out free of charge to those on Kissinger's mailing list.¹⁷

Isaacson quotes Kissinger's Harvard colleague, Thomas Schelling: "I always suspected it was a fake. Kissinger used to keep piles of issues stashed away in his closet because he didn't have a distribution system." Isaacson puts it this way: the journal "was weighty"; "it seemed distinguished but it had few subscribers other than those on Kissinger's list who got it free." He concludes the journal was largely unread. According to Schelling, Kissinger "used it, like he used the summer seminars, to meet people and establish contacts." The whole enterprise, Isaacson quotes Schelling, "was designed to make Henry known to great people around the world."¹⁸

In 1956, following the recommendations of Bundy and Schlesinger, Kissinger became an Armstrong favorite and a regular contributor to *Foreign Affairs*. From 1956 to 1969, Kissinger published eleven articles, many of which exhibited the white heat stridency of a military strategist who posed as a foreign policy analyst. Thus, in his first article, in April 1956, Kissinger wrote about “Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age”; in April 1958, it was “Missiles and the Western Alliance”; in October 1958, Kissinger wrote “Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace”; in July 1959, it was “The Search for Stability”; in July 1960, Kissinger published “Arms Control, Inspection and Surprise Attacks”; in July 1962, “The Unsolved Problems of European Defense”; and in July 1964, “Coalition Diplomacy in a Nuclear Age.”¹⁹

In 1957, Kissinger published *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, a 436 page text published by the Council on Foreign Relations that grew out of a conference in which Kissinger served as study director. The book is as Strangelovian as a book can get that endorses limited nuclear war as a means of avoiding all-out nuclear war, as the following quotation reveals:

It may be objected that if a strategy of limited nuclear war is to our advantage it must be to the Soviet disadvantage, and the Kremlin will therefore seek to escape it by resorting to all-out war. But the fact that the Soviet leadership may stand to lose from a limited nuclear war does not mean that it could profit from all-out war. On the contrary, if our retaliatory force is kept at a proper level and our diplomacy shows ways out of a military impasse short of unconditional surrender, we should always be able to make all-out war seem an unattractive course.²⁰

“To make all-out war seem an unattractive course”! The understatement is indeed baffling, and so is the perverse logic on which it is based. Could either limited nuclear war—let alone all-out nuclear war—ever be considered anything but horrendous and a calamity from which, in all likelihood, there could be no recovery? In a much-abbreviated version of *Nuclear Weapons*, Kissinger published, in 1958, a sixty-two page paperback in which he summarized the need for an increased military defense capability this way: “The willingness to engage in nuclear war, when necessary, is part of the price of our freedom.”²¹

Three years later, in a September 1961 *Commentary* article titled “Death in the Nuclear Age,” Morgenthau writes: “To defend freedom and civilization is absurd when to defend them amounts to destroying them. To die with honor is absurd if nobody is left to honor the dead.” What is Morgenthau’s answer to what he calls the possibility of “universal destruction,” which “signifies the simultaneous destruction of tens of millions of people, of whole families, generations, and societies, of all things they have inherited and

created . . . their visible achievements, and therefore reducing the survivors to barbarism?" The only answer is through diplomacy. He writes: "As all-out war is tantamount to suicide, so successful diplomacy provides the only certain chance for survival." He adds: "A nation which under present conditions is either unwilling or unable to take full advantage of the traditional methods of diplomacy condemns itself either to the slow death of attrition or the sudden death of atomic destruction."²²

The members of Kissinger's study group who contributed to Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* included Hamilton Fish Armstrong and McGeorge Bundy. Listed as officers and directors of the Council were Armstrong, John J. McCloy, David Rockefeller, and CIA Director Allen Dulles among others; a "committee on studies" included Armstrong, Gordon Dean, Chairman of the Council, Columbia University President Grayson Kirk, and Harvard historian William L. Langer, among others. Gordon Dean wrote the forward to *Nuclear Weapons*, which contains these words: "We believe that on this fast-shrinking globe our freedom is somehow bound up with the freedom of all people and particularly of those who have it today or are determined to have it some day."²³ Thus, here on the first page of this book, is the kind of abstract theorizing about an abstract freedom that has nothing to do with the problem of making foreign policy in the nuclear age or, for that matter, in any age.

The roster of participants and Council members among the Rockefeller Special Projects Study that led to Kissinger's 1958 paperback titled *Prospect for America: The Rockefeller Panel Reports* included Nelson Rockefeller, Governor of New York, listed as Chairman of the panel; Henry Luce, editor-in-chief of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*; Dean Rusk, then president of the Rockefeller Foundation; Gordon Dean, noted earlier and listed here as senior vice-president, "nuclear energy, General Dynamics Corporation"; Chester Bowles, former Ambassador to India; and Edward Teller, professor of physics at Berkeley and director of the University of California Radiation laboratories. Teller, who had worked on the Manhattan Project, which produced the atomic bomb, was the leading theorist that produced the hydrogen bomb and was an enthusiastic supporter of a nuclear arms build-up. Also included among the participants were a number of business executives: the president of the Scott Paper Company, the chairman of the Radio Corporation of America, the president of the Rexall Drug Company, the board chairman of the New York Life Insurance Company, and the presidents of the Glass Blowers Association of the United States and the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company.²⁴

What these men of corporate America brought to the discussion of foreign policy is highly problematical. For Kissinger, however, the tone of his slim

paperback is one of urgency. In his opening chapter he uses the word “peril”; sometimes it is “dire peril,” or the “reality of our peril,” or the “continuing peril” as the United States faces “the Communist thrust to achieve world domination.” Kissinger continues and repeats what Gordon Dean had proclaimed: “We have been forced to realize that our security is inextricably bound up with the safety of the rest of the free world and that freedom everywhere depends on our strength and resolution.”²⁵ These words also bring to mind the first of America’s Vietnam presidents, John F. Kennedy, who, as we have seen, either in reference to Vietnam or Laos or Berlin, expressed the same sentiment: that freedom everywhere was somehow linked to freedom at home.

On November 7, 1951, Hans Morgenthau wrote Armstrong about an article that appeared in a recent issue of his journal that attacked Morgenthau by name and his defense of the national interest as the fundamental principle of sound foreign policy.²⁶ The article titled “The American Tradition in Foreign Relations” was written by Columbia University Professor Frank Tannenbaum. The article contends that “the American people have always had a principle of foreign policy” that is pacific and humanitarian that derives, Tannenbaum writes, “from the assumption that security rests upon cooperation, that cooperation is possible only among equals, that equality eliminates the basic reason for political disruption because those equal politically are coordinate in dignity and in rank.” Tannenbaum accuses Morgenthau of propounding advice based on “national interest” and “spheres of influence,” which, Tannenbaum asserts, “has ruined half of the nations of the world” and “have always led to war and often to national suicide.”²⁷

In his letter to Armstrong, Morgenthau wanted to submit a rejoinder. “I wonder whether you think it might be of interest to your readers,” Morgenthau asks, “to have an exposition of my views, perhaps under the title, “The Concept of the National Interest.” Morgenthau adds that he has also been developing an article on the Anglo-American alliance and asked Armstrong if he might be interested.²⁸

Armstrong replied two days later on November 9 and rejected Morgenthau’s offer. “I am sorry to say,” Armstrong wrote, “that we have an issue in process of going to press at the moment, and what will be happening before we make our plans for our next issue is anybody’s guess.” It is a very short and to-the-point rejection in which Armstrong falsely expressed his appreciation for Morgenthau’s proposal and said he would “return to it when an opportunity seems to ofer” [sic].²⁹ In fact, as will be seen, Armstrong had no intention to return to this or any Morgenthau proposal, that is, until 1967 following Morgenthau’s year as senior fellow at the Council in 1966, when Armstrong

could no longer reject the contribution of one who had been appointed to the fellowship and membership to the Council that came with it.

Morgenthau, from what we have seen in these pages, did not take lightly any aspersions to his character, his honor, or his scholarship. Bundy and Alsop are cases in point. Now it would be Tannenbaum's turn. And while Armstrong deprived the readership of *Foreign Affairs* the benefit of Morgenthau's answer to Tannenbaum, the editors of *The American Political Science Review*, in December 1952, did not so deprive their readers. They printed Morgenthau's answer titled "Another 'Great Debate': The National Interest of the United States." But it was not just a rejoinder; it was also a history lesson. Have the principles of balance of power and spheres of influence led to the wars and catastrophes as Tannenbaum proclaims? And is the fundamental principle of American foreign policy one of cooperation, of "humanitarian and pacific traditions?" Tannenbaum had also replicated his *Foreign Affairs* piece in the *Political Science Quarterly* in June 1952 under the title "The Balance of Power versus the Coordinate State." In this article, Tannenbaum had written of Morgenthau's views as

This dreadful doctrine has now won wide acceptance by teachers and scholars in the field of international relations and has, in fact, become the leading theme in such circles in many of our largest universities. It has become the *science* of international relations—and who would quarrel with science, especially when it comes packaged in good clear English and from high sources? But it is not science. It is, in fact, only poor logic based upon false premises, and its claim to be a science is only a bit of unholy conceit.³⁰

Morgenthau's answer:

In order to refute a theory which pretends to be scientific, it is first necessary to understand what a scientific theory is. A scientific theory is an attempt to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible. Any one who disputes the scientific character of such a theory either must produce a theory superior in these scientific functions to the one attacked or must, at the very least, demonstrate that the facts as they actually are do not lend themselves to the interpretation which the theory has put upon them. When a historian tells us that the balance of power is not a universal principle of politics, domestic and international, that it was practiced in Europe only for a limited period and never by the United States, that it has ruined the states that practiced it, it is incumbent upon him to tell us how we can dispose by means of theory of the historic data ... [which demonstrates] the universality of the balance of power ... its practice by the United States ... the Greek city-states, the Roman republic ... and how the nations which either neglected these principles or applied them wrongly suffered political and military defeat and even

extinction, while the nation which applied these principles most consistently and consciously, that is, Great Britain, enjoyed unrivalled power for an unparalleled length of time.³¹

As for Tannenbaum's contention that the foreign policy tradition of the United States is rooted in cooperation and the belief in the equality of states living in coordinate harmony with one another, Morgenthau writes that the historian "who wishes to replace the balance of power as the guiding principle of American policy" with "humanitarian and pacific traditions . . . must first of all explain how it has come about that the thirteen original states expanded into the full breadth and a good deal of the length of the continent . . ."; that "our historian must explain not only the great sweep of American expansion, but also the specific foreign policies that in their historic succession make up that sweep." Morgenthau continues:

Is it easier to explain the successive shifts of American support from Great Britain to France and back again from the beginning of King George's War in 1744 to the War of 1812 in terms of the 'coordinate state' than in terms of the balance of power? The same question might be asked about the postponement of the recognition of the independence of the Spanish colonies until 1822, when the Floridas had been acquired from Spain and Spain had thereby been deprived of the ability to challenge the United States from within the hemisphere. The same question might be asked about the Monroe Doctrine itself, about Lincoln's policies toward Great Britain and France, and about our successive policies with regard to Mexico and the Caribbean. One could go on and pick at random any foreign policy pursued by the United States from the beginning to 1919 and would hardly find a policy, with the exception perhaps of the War of 1812, which could not be made intelligible by reference to the national interest defined in terms of power—political, military, and economic—rather than by reference to the principle of the "coordinate state."³²

As if this is not enough, Morgenthau quotes, of all people, Princeton University Professor Woodrow Wilson writing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1901, that "when issues of our own interest arose, we have not been unselfish. We have shown ourselves kin to all the world, when it came to pushing our advantage." That whatever "stood in our way," Wilson writes, we have acted "no better than the aggressions of other nations that were strong and not to be gainsaid." He cites "the un pitying force with which we thrust the Indians to the wall." He cites Jefferson who "though he loved France and hated England," did not hesitate "to marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation" the moment "France takes possession of New Orleans," the "one single spot the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy."³³

Morgenthau concludes: “Nothing more needs to be said to demonstrate that facts do not support” Tannenbaum’s “revision of American diplomatic history” for it is “power politics and the balance of power,” which are the guiding principles of American foreign policy.” Indeed, as noted in the Preface, a future president of the Council published *Power Rules* in 2009, which corroborates Morgenthau in 1952. But for Morgenthau, the basic reason for writing this kind of article, as he points out, is to gain an understanding of what American foreign policy and “all politics” are about. Thus, on one level, it is to inform and instruct. On a personal level, it is an answer to Tannenbaum and like-minded scholars to explore and discuss questions of foreign policy “without resort to invective and with proper regard for established facts.”³⁴ Tannenbaum did not do this and Armstrong should have known better.

That Armstrong himself was not necessarily free from invective is revealed in a note Morgenthau sent to an Oberlin College professor in July 1972. Morgenthau tells Professor George Lanyi that many of his unsolicited submissions to *Foreign Affairs* “were rejected out of hand, and with insulting comments.” Lanyi had reviewed Armstrong’s memoirs and had commented on Armstrong’s fairness in publishing Morgenthau with whom he disagreed. Morgenthau told Lanyi “the appearance of fairness is deceptive.” It was not only the “insulting comments,” but Armstrong’s failure to give his work a hearing. In Morgenthau’s words, “During my whole career in this country, spanning 35 years, I was able to place exactly two articles in *Foreign Affairs*” and this, Morgenthau tells Lanyi, was because his fellowship and thereby his membership in the Council meant he could no longer be rejected.³⁵ Indeed, to refresh our memory, Morgenthau had published eleven articles in the *New York Times Magazine*, any one of which would certainly fit the subject matter and stylistic requirements of *Foreign Affairs*. There was never an open quarrel between Morgenthau and Armstrong, but clearly, Armstrong had no use for Morgenthau.

But there is additional and self-incriminating evidence of Armstrong hostility toward Morgenthau, which is not just a matter of disagreement over Vietnam but appears to be nothing more than a prejudice that grew into a heated animosity. Thus, writing to Council member Henry Wriston on May 26, 1965, just after Morgenthau’s appointment to the Council as senior fellow and following the nationally televised teach-in of May 15, Armstrong lets his rancorous prejudice spill out. Armstrong describes Morgenthau as “a self-pusher, a propagandist and a publicity seeker”; he tells Wriston that Morgenthau puts “forward his views in as spectacular a way as possible, arrogantly and in a controversial and sometimes strident manner.” None of this, as we have seen, is borne out by the facts. He accuses Morgenthau of being a “long-time isolationist” who “represents the contrary of what the

Council on Foreign Relations was founded to promote.” He complains that Morgenthau’s presentation at the Washington teach-in “was not what one would call an intellectual performance”; he says that it was “less effective than the indictment that more careful and accurate critics of the Johnson Administration could have made.” He does not identify those critics. He refers to Morgenthau and a fellow participant, the historian and biographer, Isaac Deutscher, as “another foreign-born critic,” derisively using the term, “performing” at the teach-in. He resents “the idea of seeing the words, ‘of the Council on Foreign Relations,’ after Morgenthau’s name” as he continues his opposition to the war. “It will be the first time the Council is brought into that sort of debate,” he adds. Armstrong concludes the paragraph by telling Wriston “that a man of Morgenthau’s views and manner of exposing them will stir up the animals; on the contrary,” he says, “I fear that his presence will inhibit debate.”³⁶ The metaphor, “the animals,” is curious to say the least. But that Morgenthau “will inhibit debate” is simply preposterous.

Of course, this is no more than a venomous diatribe and as such, it makes no sense. It is a private note that thus does not betray Armstrong the public face of a supposedly objective and critical editor. But it is the private face as disclosed in his letter to Wriston that exhibits a xenophobic tone and a shrill harshness that is surprising and revealing. Is this the real Armstrong? Is he, at bottom, an ideologue? a dogmatist? Or is he simply a confused observer of the times? Or a combination of all three? Armstrong then offers an explanation for writing his long letter to Wriston, which confirms his confusion. He adds: “I’ve written so fully because I don’t want you to think I’m interested in protecting the Establishment or in preventing criticism of Johnson or Rusk or anyone else.” But this is exactly what he has done.³⁷

Eighteen months later, on November 30, 1966, while Morgenthau continued his work at the Council, Armstrong wrote to his colleague, Frank Altschul. Altschul had instructed Armstrong to read Morgenthau’s latest article that appeared on November 26 in *TNR*. The article titled “Truth and Power: The Intellectuals and the Johnson Administration,” noted also in the previous chapter, made the distinction between the ethos and work of the intellectual whose supreme value is the pursuit of truth uninterested in positions of power and the intellectual who is appointed to power that he must serve at the expense of truth, which is a requirement of power. It was, as Armstrong grudgingly told Altschul, “quite brilliantly written” but then Armstrong added pejoratively: “what is he saying except that: ‘I have found truth’; and all who disagree with me have been corrupted.” Armstrong then quotes another colleague, unnamed, who said that Morgenthau’s “picture drawn of the American intellectual becomes terribly distorted.” As for Armstrong’s assessment of Morgenthau: “I resent his disregarding commitments and

agreements in writing as a Council Fellow, but his term will end in a month and it is too late (and in any case would not work) to try to keep him from using the Council as a rostrum.”³⁸ Morgenthau’s article is replete with criticisms of the war and the intellectuals in the Johnson Administration who had abandoned their earlier calling and were now leading the President further into the disaster of Vietnam. Armstrong missed the entire point and to the end never truly understood why the war was a mistake.

Armstrong died in April 1973, a year after he retired. In the July 1973 number of *Foreign Affairs*, Arthur Schlesinger, another Armstrong favorite published three times—in 1963, 1967 and 1972—had this to say about Armstrong: “His was an ideal way to contribute dangerous thoughts to the American establishment.” He adds that “Ham recognized that a rapidly changing international society required fresh assessments and fresh prescriptions.”³⁹ Of course, such tributes offered posthumously are pro forma and expected. They fudge the truth, but in this case, Schlesinger has overdone it. It is sheer hyperbole to write that Armstrong contributed or even advanced “dangerous thoughts” or sought “fresh prescriptions” and “fresh assessments.” But then again, Schlesinger is one of the boys who share the Establishment’s credo.

As Morgenthau told Lanyi in 1972, Armstrong had not only rejected his submissions, but did so with “insulting comments.” On February 26, 1952, Morgenthau wrote to Robert M. Hutchins, the former President of the University of Chicago and now the Associate Director of the Ford Foundation. As an official of a major grant institution, the appeal to fund and establish a journal of foreign policy information was the subject of Morgenthau’s letter. Here, Morgenthau complains about the monopoly of orthodox opinion contained in *Foreign Affairs*, the “unhealthy” conformity of “official standards”; he tells Hutchins “there is virtually no possibility for a friendly critic of American foreign policy, such as myself, to make his views heard by the educated American public.” He adds, “I can write for the scholarly journals, I can talk from time to time on the radio; I come closest to mass circulation when I write for the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*.” But, *Foreign Affairs*, Morgenthau writes, “is not open to me or to anybody else sharing my ideas.” And no matter Morgenthau’s credentials—*Politics Among Nations* had been noted under “recent publications” in the April, 1949 number of *Foreign Affairs*—he was simply ignored. What is “urgently needed,” Morgenthau tells Hutchins, is an independent journal whose purpose “would be to deal both critically and constructively” with the problems of foreign policy. It would also serve “to acquaint the general educated public with rational alternatives” to the policy “pursued by the party in power.”⁴⁰ Hutchins never pursued the proposal, and such an independent journal to compete with *Foreign Affairs* never materialized.

On February 23, 1965, Morgenthau received a letter from John J. McCloy, chairman of the Council's board of directors, who offered Morgenthau the senior fellowship for the following year.⁴¹ McCloy, one of Isaacson's and Thomas' original "Wise Men," was also an executive of the Chase Manhattan Bank and a former adviser to five Presidents. The appointment meant that Morgenthau would spend the year at the Council's headquarters in New York City and act as study director by presenting working papers in the form of drafts to a group of Council members for comment and criticism. The result would be, as with the 1956 study group presided over by Kissinger, the publication of a book with the acknowledgement that it was "published for the Council on Foreign Relations." With the completed manuscript, "the fellow would receive an author's fee of \$1000" if the Council approved of the final manuscript. There would be a stipend of "up to \$30,000" or an amount commensurate with his University of Chicago salary. Secretarial and research assistance and travel expenses, where appropriate, would be provided.⁴² For Morgenthau, it was an opportunity to test his ideas as in a seminar with a group of experts and then to publish another book.

The proposal of the general theme submitted by Morgenthau on March 31, 1965, for the study groups made no mention of Vietnam. What Morgenthau proposed was a re-evaluation of the policies achieved in "the famous fifteen weeks" of 1947 when "containment, the Truman Doctrine, and the Marshall Plan" achieved "outstanding success" but are now, in Morgenthau's view, "obsolete." What is needed and what Morgenthau wanted to examine is what he called a "renovation" of current policies to explore "our relations with our allies, our relations with the Communist world, our relations with the uncommitted third of the world, and our relations with nuclear power."⁴³ These words comprise the opening sentences on the opening page of the book that grew out of his Council fellowship. Published in 1969 under the title, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, this was the essence of the proposal Morgenthau submitted to George S. Franklin, the Executive Director of the Council, following a phone conversation in which Morgenthau provided the details. The same day, March 31, 1965, David W. MacEachron, the director of the study program, told Morgenthau they "all were delighted" to have him at the Council for the coming year.⁴⁴

Morgenthau's "Working Paper No. 1" was scheduled for February 16, 1966. A month earlier, Morgenthau and Executive Director George S. Franklin disagreed about the guidelines and prohibitions that governed Morgenthau's activities outside of his work at the Council. On January 15, Morgenthau told Franklin that he objected to "the prohibition of outside activities," which, he said, "cannot be literally and mechanically applied,"

and which “curtailed his rights and duties as a citizen.” Thus, it was admissible, as Morgenthau understood it, to have addressed faculty and graduate students at the State University of New York, to have advised two presidents of theological seminaries about a statement on Communism to be released by a group of religious leaders, and that he had agreed to speak at a dinner honoring Reinhold Niebuhr. What the guidelines prohibited, Morgenthau noted, was that his “outside activities must not interfere with his work at the Council,” and that his “outside activity must not involve him in partisan politics.” By “partisan politics” the Council meant Vietnam: they did not want him to participate in teach-ins or engage in any public forum in which Vietnam was the principal subject of discussion. Morgenthau said he had applied this rule and had “rejected scores of invitations to lecture” but he found nothing in the guidelines that would prevent him from participation in a television program sponsored by the Boston educational television network and presided over by a former U.S. ambassador. Nor did he think a lecture at a foreign university violates the guidelines though the subject at these events was Vietnam. Morgenthau had also received an invitation from the House Foreign Affairs Committee to testify on U.S. China policy. He had also received an invitation from the White House and the Vietnamese ambassador to visit Vietnam on a “semi-official visit,” which, he told Franklin, he would have accepted without hesitation but was now confronted with decisions the Council would not approve.⁴⁵

Indeed, as Morgenthau told friends, the Council made him a fellow in part to curb his anti-war activities.⁴⁶ Yet Morgenthau continued to publish articles while limiting his participation to previously scheduled public debates. But Council officials persisted. Thus, following a luncheon meeting in which these questions were discussed, Grayson Kirk, president of the Council and president of Columbia University, wrote to WGBH in Boston to cancel Morgenthau’s discussion on Vietnam. Kirk told WGBH that “Dr. Morgenthau does not want to back out of his engagements and is doing so only on my insistence.” Morgenthau was also scheduled to appear at a teach-in at Oslo in the spring about which, Kirk told Morgenthau, that the Committee “felt that both the WGBH program and the talk at Oslo are inconsistent with your work.”⁴⁷ More directly, Frank Altschul, vice president and a director of the Council told Morgenthau on April 7 that he was “exceedingly disturbed” that the meeting in Oslo was a teach-in on Vietnam. He said that while he shared “many of your misgivings about our Vietnamese policies,” he was concerned about what Morgenthau would say on Vietnam. He told Morgenthau that the “accepted amenities” of such an appearance “are violated when an American citizen at a time when we are at war—whether declared or not—attacks the policies of the United States before a foreign audience.”⁴⁸ Here was the voice of the Council,

ergo the Establishment, confirming Morgenthau's view that he had been appointed so that they could restrict his public opposition to the war.

When the Council issued its invitation of a senior fellowship in March 1965, Morgenthau had not yet embarked on his journey appearing at teach-ins and lectures around the country until after his two nationally televised appearances in May and June 1965. But he had published articles in *Commentary* and *TNR* and had laid out his most definitive statement against the war in *The New York Times Magazine* in April 1965 as U. S. involvement expanded. Thus, in February 1965, when Morgenthau received McCloy's letter of invitation, the United States had begun its sustained bombing of North Vietnam known as Operation Rolling Thunder. The arrival of officially designated combat troops began in early March. On April 3, the United States began the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. On April 6, Johnson authorized the Marines to begin offensive ground operations around the Danang airbase. A month earlier, on March 24, an all-night teach-in in which students and faculty listened to lectures and participated in seminars took place at the University of Michigan. Teach-ins at other universities followed. The extent of Council interest in Vietnam, however, consisted of a questionnaire submitted to 600 members in cities that had Council study committees. Thus, on February 4, 1965, the *New York Times* reported the results of a private poll of "prominent Americans" who were also members of the Council's committees in thirty-three states. The poll, conducted by the Council, revealed that while nearly "most approve" of U.S. policy, "90% think that U.S. policy there is failing."⁴⁹

The *Times* repeated the Council's mantra that it "takes no stand, as an organization, on United States policy" but the mantra bore no relationship to the facts. The Council did, in fact, stand with the government by the cast of speakers the Council hosted at various Council meetings. It was as if the Council was engaged in its own peculiar form of teach-ins, but the participants were all supporters of the war. Thus, on June 12, 1965, General Maxwell Taylor, shortly to leave his post as Ambassador to Vietnam and remain as Special Consultant to the President, spoke to the Council and also addressed a private group of business, banking, and brokerage leaders. A year later, on December 16, 1966, McGeorge Bundy told the Council what he had said in other venues: "The Communists" will "negotiate when they think it helps to achieve an objective, and up to now the clear Communist objective has been to take over South Vietnam." So the war will continue, Bundy noted, because "it is unlikely that the men in Hanoi will agree to negotiations until our purpose or theirs has changed." Months earlier, on May 24, 1966, Dean Rusk addressed a dinner meeting of the Council and said the war "boils down to this—when they keep coming at you, do you get out of the way or meet them?" His answer, as expected: "We shall meet them."⁵⁰

Moreover, as the Council stood with the government, it follows that so did its journal. From 1962 to 1969, Bundy contributed four articles to *Foreign Affairs*. Earlier, Armstrong published Bundy twice, in 1949 and 1952. Shortly after Bundy left the Johnson White House in February 1966, his name appeared as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board beginning in January 1968. In April, 1960, an article by Rusk on the Presidency was published. In January 1961, Armstrong published Maxwell Taylor on "Security Will Not Wait." In October 1964, Edward Lansdale who, as a CIA operative, installed Diem in power in 1956, wrote "Vietnam: Do We Understand Revolution?" Lansdale was again published by Armstrong in October 1968. Zbigniew Brzezinski, a stalwart cold-warrior, as we have seen, was published by Armstrong five times from April 1961 to October 1970. Schlesinger, as noted earlier, contributed three articles to Armstrong's journal. Other contributors as either policy-makers such as Rostow, or academics such as Scalapino, or former government officials such as Bill Moyers and Carl Kaysen, Clark Clifford and Adam Yarmolinsky, all found their way into Armstrong's journal. But not until 1967 was there any dissenting article on Vietnam.

As the Council listened to the evening addresses by Taylor, Bundy and Rusk, the members of the study group on Morgenthau's "Re-Examination of American Foreign Policy" met six times roughly every two months to discuss the six working papers submitted by Morgenthau; the first on February 16, 1966, and the last on September 26, 1967.⁵¹ The meetings were all held at the Harold Pratt House in New York, the Council's headquarters, and the participants for most of the meetings numbered about twenty to twenty-five. The most nationally prominent who participated at just one or two of the meetings included Senator Frank Church, Columbia University professors A. Doak Barnett and Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Harvard professors Stanley Hoffman and Robert Bowie. There were several long-term officials of the Council—Frank Altschul, George S. Franklin, Henry M. Wriston, David MacEachron—who attended five or all six of the meetings. Other Council members and staffers who participated in the study group included former Eisenhower aide, Andrew J. Goodpaster, Morgenthau's former student, Kenneth W. Thompson, John Stoessinger, Philip E. Mosely and Albert Wohlstetter. For each of the sessions, there was a chairman, Joseph E. Johnson, who would present a summary of Morgenthau's working papers before the question and answer period. On occasion, Morgenthau would begin with "opening remarks." The questions then would be directed to Morgenthau noted officially as the Study Director. The "Rapporteur" who took the minutes of all six meetings, which were titled "Digest[s] of Discussion," was another Council staffer, George Gilder. Operating under usual Council secrecy, the "Study Group Reports" were labeled "CONFIDENTIAL—Not

for publication.” Also included on the first page of the Reports were the words: “RESTRICTED TO GROUP MEMBERS ONLY—NOT TO BE QUOTED OR CITED.”

The six digest reports for each discussion meeting average twelve to fourteen double-spaced pages in length and those reports compiled prior to 1980 have now been opened to researchers. And while there is no descriptive record of the ambiance and general demeanor of the participants, the reports suggest a surface collegiality and a respectful academic decorum. Substantively, however, the reports read as a fundamental clash between Morgenthau and the Council members. Indeed, what becomes readily apparent in the reports is that most of the Council members raised unnecessary objections on points raised by Morgenthau that were well-founded. In many cases, their objections are trite and jejune: they had no substantive counter-arguments; they simply disagreed, while Morgenthau rejected their complaints though the surface and polite decorum continued. But it is this lack of considered and rational responses that reveal an underlying antipathy to Morgenthau. But why this antipathy? Why the quiet but discernible hostility?

As we have seen, it was Morgenthau's view that he had been appointed as a means to curb his anti-war criticism. As we have also seen, this is supported by the heavy-handed admonitions conveyed to Morgenthau by Altschul, Franklin and Kirk that his criticisms of the Vietnam policy are unpatriotic when the nation is at war. And then there is Armstrong's vituperative appraisal of Morgenthau as an opportunist and “self-promoter.” To delve further, there is the editorial assistance provided to the aforementioned Tannenbaum by the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Byron Dexter. Dexter tells Tannenbaum that Morgenthau's “contempt for the American tradition is unmitigated and his advice altogether untrustworthy.” For Dexter, Morgenthau is all wrong in his view of the origins of American foreign policy tradition and he is therefore all wrong in its application. For Dexter, “The great tradition of American foreign policy” is cooperation, not power, and not national interest. It was also Dexter's editorial suggestion “to mention” Morgenthau by name in his article.⁵²

Here then is the apparent source of Council hostility to Morgenthau: it is this fundamentally different appraisal of the American foreign policy tradition that is at the core of their differences. For Morgenthau, it is national interest defined in terms of power that must determine American foreign policy. For the Council, national interest defined in terms of power is un-American; rather, for the Council, it is universal goodness that is the basis of American policy. For Morgenthau, this is a fiction based on a complete misreading of American history that rejects power, power politics and balance of power. For Morgenthau, as we have seen, these are requisite components for a

successful foreign policy in a world of nation-states ungoverned by law. Years later, as we have also seen, a former president of the Council, Leslie H. Gelb, in 2009 confirms Morgenthau's judgment in his book *Power Rules*. For Gelb's precursors in the Council, the words "power," "balance of power," and "power relationships" are unmentionable unless they are associated with the causes of war and disaster. For Morgenthau, they are integral in the understanding of foreign policy. For the Council members, monumentally oblivious to history and national interest foreign policy, their antipathy to its chief spokesman followed stubbornly from their dogmatic preconceptions. Dogma, as we have seen, is an impediment to understanding. Twenty years earlier, a Council member rejected Morgenthau's request for grant money and the reason for that rejection as revealed in their correspondence betrays a similar lack of understanding rooted in dogmatic preconceptions.

Thus, in 1950, Morgenthau established the Center for the Study of American Foreign Policy at the University of Chicago, the announced purpose of which was to provide citizens and government officials with "a clear understanding" of American foreign policy through its publications and seminars. In order to fund the new Center, Morgenthau applied to several grant institutions one of which was The Overbrook Foundation established by Frank Altschul, also, as we know, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. In September 1953, Morgenthau wrote to Altschul asking for funds to help support his newly established Center, then three years old. Altschul refused to make a heavy contribution but sent Morgenthau \$250 as "a measure of good faith," which he noted was "quite inadequate." But he also told Morgenthau that he had consulted a few of his Council colleagues whose opinions about Morgenthau's Center did not reflect any approval or high regard. His Council colleagues, Altschul tells Morgenthau, felt that "the work of the Center was somewhat less than objective and that its research was to a degree colored by certain profoundly held preconceptions regarding American foreign policy."⁵³

Altschul did not offer specifics. He did not define what he meant by Morgenthau's "preconceptions." *Politics Among Nations* had been published two years earlier. *Politics* endorsed fact-finding objectivity in the study of foreign policy. Was Altschul familiar with *Politics*? What did Altschul mean that the work of Morgenthau's Center based largely on the principles developed in *Politics* was "colored with profoundly held preconceptions?" Or were the "preconceptions" largely in Altschul's mind?

Two days later, on September 18, 1953, Morgenthau answered Altschul. Morgenthau writes: The theory of international politics that underlies the work of the Center is "the leading one in the nation and the book incorporating it"—he does not refer to it by name but, it is *Politics Among Nations*—"is

being used for the education of our future leaders at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, West Point, the Air War Colleges and more than 200 other educational institutions.” Morgenthau then tells Altschul that if he wants “competent and non-partisan appraisals of our work,” he should contact Samuel Flagg Bemis, the noted historian of American diplomatic history, as well as George Kennan and Walter Lippmann. He then tells Altschul he is well aware that his work “has met violent opposition” particularly by the Council and that this opposition “has taken all kinds of forms,” including “legitimate academic debate to personal vilification.” He says the Council has the right to condemn the Center’s work as inferior, but “only if they could point to some work superior to ours.”⁵⁴

Four days later, on September 22, Altschul answers Morgenthau and claims surprise. He tells Morgenthau that in the entire course of his intimate association with the Council, he has never heard of any “personal vilification” directed toward Morgenthau, which he says is thus unfounded and perhaps due to statements taken “out of context.” But then he gives it all away. He writes, that “at the very most,” it is Morgenthau’s “interpretation of the national interest that has raised questions among the Council members.”⁵⁵

Indeed, we have been here before. Put simply, the Council members could not abide the notion that explained the foundation of American foreign policy as anything but inherently good and virtuous. The Council members, supposedly experts in foreign policy, could simply not grasp the importance of power relationships and competing interests among the nations of the world as staples of international politics. As Bundy told Morgenthau, there has to be something more than mere national interest in making foreign policy. Sadly and tragically, Bundy did not understand. Armstrong, Tannenbaum, Dexter, Altschul, Wriston and other Council members did not understand. And during the Vietnam era, they still did not understand and thus, by neglecting national interest, they failed to understand that Vietnam was not vital to American security interests. And while the issue of Vietnam did not surface as a special issue until Morgenthau’s presentation on intervention or non-intervention on November 28, the minutes of the several discussions group meetings suggest an undercurrent of antipathy that appears to be more pronounced when the question of intervention is addressed to Vietnam.

On February 16, 1966, Morgenthau presented his first working paper. Its subject was Morgenthau’s central thesis: that the policies of containment, the Marshall Plan, and the Truman Doctrine, all outstandingly successful during the “famous fifteen weeks of 1947,” were now obsolete because they were no longer adequate to meet the new conditions in a world drastically different from that of 1947. Indeed, this was not an outlandish proposition.

Thus, nearly twenty years later, could there be any rational objection to this judgment? Could containment, which was successful as a military deterrent to the Soviet Union in Europe, work in Asia to curb the expansionist ambition of China? Could the Truman Doctrine as a reply to monolithic Communism apply to Southeast Asia at a time when the monolith had become fragmented? Was there a need in Asia for a Marshall Plan to rebuild an area that had not been devastated as experienced in Europe during World War II? Though there was little reason to continue cherishing these outworn policies, nearly every Council member took issue with parts of Morgenthau's thesis.

From the abbreviated digest of notes, the following is a summary of reactions to portions of Morgenthau's presentation.

Thus, Henry Wriston claims—it is February 1966—that the Marshall Plan is alive and well and could be our attempt “to build ‘economic’ bridges to the East.” Wriston also claims the Marshall Plan and containment were “conceptually” not “unique” because they “originated long before” 1947.” He does not, however, substantiate these claims. Moreover, this is the same Henry Wriston to whom Armstrong, in a private letter, as noted above, unleashed his vituperative assault on Morgenthau, deploring the fact that he was now a member of the Council by virtue of his appointment as a senior fellow. Other members questioned what they called Morgenthau's “sweeping historical judgments” though these are not specified. Others questioned what they called Morgenthau's “excessive emphasis on simplistic public pronouncements,” also not specified. Council member Wohlstetter said he “did not want to defend imprecision” but then he proceeded to defend imprecision by noting that “in foreign policy formulation rigorous doctrines are never sweepingly applied.” This, of course, serves to defend muscular doctrines reminiscent of the Dulles' pronouncements that cannot be applied because their application invites excessive military involvement and the probability of baneful consequences.

Brzezinski, unsurprisingly, “attacked the whole notion,” implicit in the Morgenthau paper that our policies are obsolete. In his view, “American foreign policy is not succeeding because it is not fulfilling its own expressed criteria.” Brzezinski's meaning perhaps, is that American policy such as the expressed notion to contain Chinese expansion does not go far enough to satisfy its stated purposes. As for Morgenthau's view that current U.S. policy has failed, Brzezinski said: “In the view of history, this may be regarded as a triumphal period for this country.” To call American policy “triumphal” while the Vietnam war rages is a bizarre conclusion. Wohlstetter again jumped in noting that “American policy has usually been more flexible and realistic than the doctrinal proclamations emphasized by Mr. Morgenthau.” The members also argued about whether “the essential truth of the anti-Communist motives

of the Marshall Plan did or did not include “positive” and “humanitarian purposes.” They argued also about the tangential “stupidity” factor in Stalin’s rejection of American aid in Eastern Europe.⁵⁶

The digest of Morgenthau’s first discussion meeting tells us that Morgenthau “was dubious of the view of several members.” He replied that he had not been misled “by the public rationales and doctrinal expositions of American foreign policy”; he said that he had not overlooked what were pragmatic and flexible and responsive calculations behind the old policies but he also noted how “these derivative concepts,” such as monolithic Communism, “have a life of their own and influence future policy.” Here he was supported by Congressman Mathias who said that “every overture toward a Communist state still has to be especially explained as an ‘exception’ to a general ‘policy of monolithic opposition.’”

Overall, Morgenthau told the study group that he stood with his original thesis: that “the period in 1947 did, in fact, represent ‘a radical break’ from traditional American foreign policy,” which now required a re-evaluation. He also rejected “the evident assumption of some of the members” that an American statesman could be “pragmatic” while holding a “doctrinal” open mind “to his consideration of international reality.” He did not deny that “every policy maker brings certain preconceptions” to the questions he faces. But he also said that many of these “preconceptions” held by “present policy makers” “are obsolescent despite a professed intellectual recognition of the revolutionary changes proceeding in the world.” The evening discussion ended as the Rapporteur noted that many of the issues raised by Morgenthau had not been fully discussed and would be considered in future meetings.⁵⁷

The subject of the second Morgenthau presentation on April 19, 1966, was China, which paralleled America’s growing involvement in Southeast Asia. As America escalated the war in Vietnam, the question of a Chinese reaction became a dominant element of America’s foreign policy thinkers. Thus, China was the subject of two Congressional committee hearings in which Morgenthau was called to testify at the same time that he was preparing his study group presentations. Thus, in early February 1966, Morgenthau appeared before the House subcommittee on the Far East chaired by Representative Clement Zablocki of Wisconsin. Two weeks later, on March 30, Morgenthau testified at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings chaired by Senator Fulbright. Both appearances before the committees had been cleared by the Council’s directors and took place concurrently with Morgenthau’s work as Senior Fellow.

Morgenthau’s April 1966 presentation to the Council was a distillation of previous Morgenthau articles on China notably in the *Washington Post* on March 15, 1964, and in two *New Republic* articles on March 15 and

April 3, 1965. The gist of these articles summed up in the March 15 article, titled “Attack Hanoi, Rile Peking,” concerned the possible Chinese reaction to the American bombing of North Vietnam. Sub-titled “The Case Against Greater U.S. Involvement in Vietnam,” Morgenthau’s central point is that such increased involvement could draw the United States into a war with China. In Morgenthau’s words, it is “inconceivable” that the Chinese, “in view of its national interest, confirmed by 200 years of its history, and the recent experience of Korea and Laos,” would not react militarily as the United States went after targets in North Vietnam. He further argued, as he did at the National Teach-In on May 15 and on *Meet the Press* the next day, that the war in Vietnam was not “being planned, directed and supported by China,” but that China would be forced to intercede militarily to defend an area it regarded as part of its traditional sphere of influence. He also pointed out to his study group as he did repeatedly in other venues, that the conflict in South Vietnamese was “a civil war, aided and abetted by the North Vietnamese government, but neither created nor sustained by it.” He also warned that a conflict between the United States and China is “likely to restore the unity of the Communist camp” and “could involve the United States in a war it could not win and could not afford to lose, which would render irrevocable harm to American democracy.”⁵⁸

In his presentation on China, Morgenthau broke down his “working paper” into three parts: “The interests and policies of China; the interests and policies of the United States; and a new China policy for the United States.” In brief summary form, Morgenthau told the Council what he told Bundy and others on June 21, 1965: that Chinese power differs from the military power posed by the Soviet Union after World War II; that the Soviet threat was military in which two armies faced each other across clear lines of demarcation where the policy of containment was “eminently successful”; in Asia, the threat is political in which weak governments exposed to Chinese subversion may not be an extension of Chinese power; that Chinese power, in Morgenthau’s words, is exerted on its “neighbors in a subtle and complex way, involving political and cultural magnetism derived from centuries of tributary subordination without military control”; that consequently, “it is futile to think one can contain” Chinese prominence “by militarily defending Vietnam or Thailand”; that while China seeks to re-establish its traditional sphere of influence in Southeast Asia, its “verbal expression” is tough, though its behavior is tempered by “pragmatic consideration[s]”; that Chinese national interests cannot be thwarted short of war; that “any U.S. military bastion on the border of China would ultimately enhance the likelihood of war.”⁵⁹

The reaction of the Council members, as expected, was highly contentious. Moreover, the members, like ordinary Americans, had been nurtured by the

doctrinal proclamations proffered by American officials for over a decade that China was an enemy of the United States. As we have seen in chapter 3, since the Dulles era and throughout the Kennedy and Johnson years, American policy makers created a public phobia about Communist China, its vastness, and potential as a military threat. Thus, Kennedy, Johnson, McNamara, Rusk, and Goldberg warned of the threat of Asian Communism. Indeed, McNamara had likened the statement of Defense Minister Lin Piao to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Six years later, Nixon visited China and began the normalization of relations between the United States and China.

No one could have foreseen this dramatic reversal of a U.S.-Chinese rapprochement, but it was Morgenthau who told the Council on April 19, 1966, that "it is essential for the United States to project its understanding 10 to 20 years ahead." That "when and if 800 million Chinese acquire an industrial establishment, China will be one of the strongest nations in the world, if not the strongest." As I write these words, a front page *New York Times* story on January 12, 2010, reports that China, "the world's fifth largest economy four years ago—will shortly overtake Japan to claim the No. 2 spot." That China today has surpassed Germany "as the biggest exporter of manufactured goods" and has "become the world's largest automobile market."⁶⁰

On April 19, 1966, it was Morgenthau who stood alone on the question of China. To my knowledge, only on one occasion did an administration spokesman temper his views on China as an aggressor nation unworthy of diplomatic recognition. Thus, on April 16, 1966, three days before Morgenthau's presentation on China, Secretary of State Rusk told the Zablocki committee that Americans "must avoid assuming the existence of an unending and inevitable state of hostility" between the United States and China. Eighteen months later, however, on October 12, 1967, Rusk returned to form. He said he was "not picking out Peking as some sort of special enemy," for it is Peking that "has nominated itself by proclaiming a militant doctrine of world revolution and [is] doing something about it." Three days later, Vice President Humphrey said, "The threat to world peace is militant aggressive Asian Communism." The warning was repeated by Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach who remarked that Asians were "deeply concerned about their long-term security in the face of militant, hostile, rigidly ideological Communist China."⁶¹

In his article in *TNR* as in many of his writings on China, Morgenthau pointed to the implications of our present policy where there is no distinction made between "a rational, discriminating understanding of the hierarchy of national interests and the power available for their support, and a doctrinaire emotionalism that drowns all vital distinctions in the fervor of

the anti-Communist crusade.” It was the difference between “prudence and recklessness,”⁶² he wrote. On April 19, 1966, the members of Morgenthau’s study group were largely unaffected by this distinction. It appears, in the absence of any real substantive grounds to their objections, that doctrinaire emotionalism and a staunch anti-Communism did indeed serve as the basis for their reactions to Morgenthau’s arguments.

Thus, one member said the new Chinese imperialism “poses a threat more brutal and immediate than its diminishing cultural and political appeal.” A. Doak Barnett, the acting director of Columbia University’s Research Institute on Communist Affairs, rejected Morgenthau’s view that China and the Soviet Union have spheres of influence. But then he said that Chinese hegemony is not “inevitable” and “to leave Southeast Asia as an unchallenged sphere of influence will encourage the most far reaching of Chinese aims.” Robert Bowie rejected the inevitability of China’s effort to establish its dominance in the area and said “U.S. power in the region” offsets such ambitions. George Franklin remarked “that the present unlikelihood of massive Chinese aggression depends on U.S. willingness to oppose China on the ground.” [Three days earlier, on April 13, the *Times* reported that China had announced “it had a militia of about 100 million men and women.” As noted in an earlier chapter, Morgenthau told Lawrence Spivak on *Meet the Press* on May 16, 1965, that Generals Eisenhower and MacArthur had warned against a land war in Asia.] Former Eisenhower aide, General Andrew Goodpaster, wanted the United States to resist any “Chinese expansion” and said the United States would suffer “a loss of prestige” in “the rest of the world” if it withdrew from Asia. On the subject of Taiwan as a “nationalist Chinese enclave,” which remains today a basis of contention between China and the United States, Goodpaster indicated he did not oppose “the military risks and damages,” which, he said, “are part of any realistic calculus of national interests.” Morgenthau replied that he would “consider the risk to world peace before deciding to defend Taiwan,” which anticipates American policy a full half century later.⁶³

In replying to questions, Morgenthau told the study group that the restoration of China’s sphere of influence dating back a century would not adversely affect America’s national interest. Thailand, also, Morgenthau pointed out, was not a matter of American national interest. Neither was Vietnam, which Morgenthau had argued from day one.

Morgenthau’s third meeting on June 20, 1966, on the relationship of foreign and domestic policies ranged over a wide variety of issues, including Johnson’s treatment of dissenters. Morgenthau remarked that Johnson relegated “dissenters beyond the pale of respectability and patriotism” to which there was both agreement and disagreement; two defenders of the President, Barnett and Goodpaster, took exception to the contention that the

President “is uniquely negative” toward dissenters. Congressman Mathias agreed with Morgenthau: the President tries “to make the dissenter ashamed of himself, as if it were unpatriotic or un-American.”

Morgenthau took issue with Great Society rhetoric as a form of administrative ideology that cannot serve as a “guide and standard of evaluation for policy” to which Wohlstetter rightly pointed out that it was not all rhetoric since, “in fact it had achieved an impressive legislative record.” Morgenthau’s claim that major reform could not be carried out without considerable social unrest was disputed by several who pointed to previous periods of reform to which Morgenthau noted “that his statement was made as a corrective for the expectation of “frictionless achievement” as part of “the professed goals of the Great Society.” He also pointed to what he called “the Wilsonian pattern” that “informs the Johnsonian projection of the Great Society into the international arena.” This, of course, is a reference to Johnson’s speech at Johns Hopkins University a year earlier offering to transform the Mekong Valley into a Vietnamese Tennessee Valley. In sum, what Morgenthau objected to was foreign policy based on “bluster”; foreign policy based on the agenda of domestic policy that employs Great Society rhetoric; foreign policy “informed by American ideology.”⁶⁴ In other words, it was foreign policy based on cliché or slogan or sweeping generalizations that had no concrete meaning. And, given the geopolitical complexities in which the central obstacle was the unwillingness of the North Vietnamese to be seduced by a bribe to abandon their struggle to achieve an independent and united country, it was, as Morgenthau noted, all “bluster.” Offering the Vietnamese an Asian Great Society had no basis in reality.

Morgenthau’s fifth study group meeting on November 28 on the subject of intervention or non-intervention is significant because of its application to Vietnam, which elicited both the Council’s strong opposition to national interest foreign policy, the basis of Morgenthau’s opposition to the war, and the personal antipathy toward Morgenthau, which flowed from this disagreement. As we have seen, this antipathy is reflected in the personal and private communications of Armstrong, Altschul, Dexter, and Franklin: Morgenthau, the theorist of power who proclaimed the centrality of “a hierarchy of interests and the power available for their support,” and the Council’s steadfast opposition to criticism of the war based on—there are no better words for it—“doctrinaire” and reflexive “emotionalism.”

Morgenthau began his presentation by noting that his approach to intervention “is based on practical judgment of the distribution of interests and power in each individual case.” He said that “any attempt to prescribe universal rules for intervention or non-intervention is futile.” He added, in

what appeared to be an aside, that even great minds, such as John Stuart Mill, can be driven into “self-contradictions and inanities” in trying to understand the subject of intervention. I make special note of this because even this, as an aside, elicited Wriston’s criticism that Morgenthau ought to provide more examples from American history since the study group is “re-examining American foreign policy.” This is petty and trite. Moments later, Nielson, also, in the context of discussing “broad general principles,” had asked, “Is Mr. Morgenthau pulling a John Stuart Mill?”⁶⁵

Morgenthau continued his presentation, noting that “since World War II the emergence of weak and volatile new nations—many with revolutionary potentialities—and the development of Cold War hostility between the superpowers have created powerful incentives for intervention.” He added: “These incentives have been enhanced by intense ideological competition” while “at the same time, however, intervention has been discouraged by the danger of nuclear war and the acute sensitivity of many of the new states to any implications of foreign control.” The Rapporteur then moves to Morgenthau’s conclusion and the “four general points regarding American policies of intervention” that are also the foundation of Morgenthau’s April 1967 article in *Foreign Affairs* titled “To Intervene Or Not To Intervene.” For his study group, however, Morgenthau outlined his four points as follows:

1. The desire to intervene nicely and surreptitiously, as at the Bay of Pigs when we were excessively constrained by legal and moral considerations, should be subordinated to the needs of success. Hungary is still in the Soviet orbit and so is Cuba.
2. Anti-Communist interventions *per se* do not necessarily advance American interests which should not be defined in ideological terms.
3. Anti-revolutionary interventions are also inadvisable. The issue in many underdeveloped countries is not whether to have a revolution or not, but whether their inevitable revolutions will occur under Communist or non-Communist auspices. Moreover, since all revolutions, even when essentially democratic, are likely to contain a Communist component, the United States should be extremely cautious before deciding a particular revolution is Communist.
4. The United States must obviously follow a course of prudence, based on recognition of the limitations of our power in a foreign situation. The massiveness of our over-all strength invites us to exaggerate our capability to shape the world in our own image and has engendered presumptuous expectations for both our foreign, economic and military assistance efforts, particularly where they are oriented toward ‘nation-building’ when no nation truly exists.⁶⁶

He summarized these “four basic conclusions” in his *Foreign Affairs* article by pointing out the “futility” of “abstract principles” in the making of foreign policy, “the error” to intervene simply to oppose communism, “the self-defeating character of anti-revolutionary intervention *per se*,” and “the requirement of prudence” to avoid recklessness. He concludes with this paragraph, which summarily repeats the core of his advice:

Intervene we must where our national interest requires it and where our power gives us a chance to succeed. The choice of these actions will be determined not by sweeping ideological commitments nor by blind reliance upon American power but by a careful calculation of the interests involved and the power available. If the United States applies this standard, it will intervene less and succeed more.⁶⁷

To return to Morgenthau’s study group, the replies of the Council members show the sharp discrepancy of foreign policy theory as applied to the world of 1966 between Morgenthau, well versed in history and highly accomplished, and the members of his study group, familiar with current affairs but deficient in knowledge and protective of the status quo. Their replies lack substance. Thus, George S. Franklin, who had earlier quarreled with Morgenthau about the Council’s restrictive rules on outside political activities, rejected Morgenthau’s analysis on intervention because he said it “was too categorical”; that intervention “rarely presents itself in either/or categories”; that “we should not restrict our view to blacks and whites” though, as Morgenthau replied, “there are blacks and whites,” that there are clear cases where there should be no intervention. Franklin defended intervention by admitting that “American policy” tends toward “excessive anti-communism and toward exaggerated fear of revolutions,” but it was not, he said, “the whole of American foreign behavior.” Others, such as Kaufman and Johnson wanted a “sharper definition of the concept of intervention.” Arthur Dean objected to what he called the “tendency of the paper to equate American and Soviet policies of intervention” as similar in goals and method. MacEachron, similarly rejected any equivalency though more emphatically: the United States, he said, refrains from mischief that is “technically feasible but morally repellent” while the Soviets do not abjure the more morally repellent. MacEachron’s solution: the United States should “impose on the Soviet Union the restraints we observe” but he did not say how. He also wanted the United States to “keep moral considerations in the forefront” of our policies, but he offered no details as to how this would make American policies more effective.⁶⁸

Nielson objected to Morgenthau’s denial of the importance of “world public opinion.” Morgenthau responded that world public opinion is actually “the

aggregate opinions of individual national entities reacting separately in terms of their own interests.” It is not the opinion of “an integrated world society.” Yost and Altschul noted that while there was no unanimous world opinion, “there is a majority opinion which has a palpable impact.” Kaufman did not like Morgenthau’s four conclusions or rules for intervening or not intervening. “Three,” he pointed out “were negatives” He then ridiculed Morgenthau’s advice about prudence: the “injunction to prudence,” he said, “could just as well be replaced with an encomium to motherhood.”⁶⁹

The most interesting part of the debate occurred when Nielson objected to “Morgenthau’s exclusive reliance on national self-interest and when Marion Camps raised the question of whether morality played any part in Morgenthau’s four rules. Then, related to this, was the absurd comment by Altschul “that the concept of national interest is no more definite than the concept of intervention.” Nielson, too, objected to Morgenthau’s “exclusive reliance on national self-interest, however enlightened, to govern international politics”; he added that “Morgenthau’s emphasis on sovereign states and their self-interests is anachronistic at a time when increasing international interdependence and intercommunication are rapidly reducing national differences and vitiating national sovereignty.” Of all the gross misunderstandings among the many gross misunderstandings displayed by the Council study group members, this looms the largest. Nielson also “denied that American interventionist policy is so ideological, so abstract, or so unsuccessful as Mr. Morgenthau describes it.” Morgenthau’s reply to Nielson on the subject of national interest: “For the moment the nation-state is all we have” and “it is only by the prudent pursuit of national interests, by the exploitation and use of the national system that international order can be maintained.” He added: “Any legal system that denies the reality of the nation-state will fail until a world authority, vested with substantial power, can be created.” And this is as true today as it was in 1966 when Morgenthau spoke these words.⁷⁰

At one point, Harry Boardman asked “why have we intervened in Vietnam where the moral and political case for intervention is ambiguous ...?” Nielson, though not an advocate of national interest as noted above, added that the United States in Vietnam is “flouting world public opinion” and posing “a hazard to ourselves as well as to the world.” “If we are going to be saved, he added, “it will be by outside pressures,” meaning the pressure of world opinion. Arthur Dean then emerged to defend U.S. war policy. He said that “Vietnam is more important than Latin America to the United States, because the loss of Vietnam would jeopardize all of Asia”; that “if all of Asia is not to fall, we must maintain our engagement in Vietnam.” Following several other comments, Morgenthau reiterated that “America’s vital interests

are not involved in Vietnam.” That “once we conclude that our vital interests are at stake we should act decisively.” But “prudence should come first—in appraising one’s national interest.”⁷¹

When Marion Camps observed that Morgenthau had said earlier that “national interest contains a moral element” and asked “Is it a national interest to maintain the observance of moral principles?” Morgenthau replied that he agreed. He repeated what he had said earlier: that “moral principles are ascertained by the nation,” that the nation-state, at the moment is all we have, and that power, constrained by the calculation of interests, determines the only kind of morality available among sovereign nation-states each acting independently and ungoverned by law.⁷² This, as we have seen in the Preface, is clearly developed in Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations*. What is also clear is that Camps and her colleagues did not prepare well for their study group meetings. Their questions reflect no background reading of Morgenthau’s basic texts on foreign affairs. But then again, their purpose in having him in New York working at the Council’s headquarters was to deflect his public criticism of the war, which did not succeed entirely.

In the summer of 1966, as Morgenthau prepared his drafts for presentation to the Council, the administration decided to expand the war and embarked on a new tactic, the bombing of oil and petroleum depots on the edges of crowded urban areas in North Vietnam. Up to this point, the United States had bombed North Vietnam but had refrained from targets close to the principal cities of Haiphong, which is the port of delivery for Hanoi. Thus, a new acronym was born: POL, which stood for petroleum, oil and lubricants that fueled the transport of rice, weapons and supplies that moved from North to South Vietnam. U.S. intelligence reports indicated that by the spring of 1966, the North Vietnamese had increased and dispersed their POL supply centers while their POL imports had doubled. The reports also noted that about 1,500 trucks carrying supplies and material through the northeastern part of Laos for use in South Vietnam had also moved some 10,000 North Vietnamese soldiers to the South. Thus, in addition to the air war that began in February 1965 known as Operation Rolling Thunder, which continued throughout the Johnson Presidency, the new bombing now included, as of late June 1966, a number of POL targets close to North Vietnam’s major cities.⁷³ Whether a shortage of petroleum products would force the North Vietnamese to negotiate is problematical. Whether the lack of gasoline would hamper the North Vietnamese military is also problematical. But the administration was determined and the new strategy was adopted but there was also a collateral objective.

As McNamara put it to the President in an early morning telephone call on June 28, 1966, the new strategy was designed to break the “morale” of

the North Vietnamese: to convince them they cannot win. Thus, McNamara tells Johnson that he wants “to hurt them enough” and get them to realize “their chances of living are small.” “I, myself, believe,” McNamara tells Johnson, “that’s the only chance we have of winning this thing. And that’s one reason I’m in favor of the POL bombing.” In the same phone conversation, McNamara repeats this: “And to me that’s the only way to win. Because we’re not killing enough of them to make it impossible for the North to continue the fight. But we are killing enough to destroy the morale of those people down there if they think this is gonna have to go on forever.”⁷⁴

In the summer of 1966, the ground war also expanded. By August, more than 6,000 troops arrived in Vietnam, raising the total of American forces to about 292,000 men. By year’s end, more than 385,000 American troops were in South Vietnam and more than 5,000 Americans were killed in combat. As the ground war continued, the new aerial bombardment, which began in mid-summer, escalated massively by late summer. Thus, on August 11, 1966, U. S. jets flew 118 missions in North Vietnam hitting their strategic targets, which included a power plant, several oil depots and other oil storage areas. On August 12, U.S. Navy, Air Force, and Marine planes hit a large number of petroleum and oil dumps. Another massive assault the same day included 121 multiple plane missions that destroyed barges, trucks and bridges while Rolling Thunder bombing continued to inflict heavy civilian casualties. On August 9, it was reported that two U.S. Super Sabre jets attacked three village provinces 80 miles southwest of Saigon that killed at least 26 persons and wounded about 114. Throughout this period, however, the United States did not go without heavy losses: in one week, thirteen American planes were shot down over North Vietnam, the highest plane loss suffered by the United States in any seven-day period of the war. In fact, McNamara, on June 17, projected the loss of twenty to twenty-five American planes on each of the bombing missions. On June 22, the President authorized the air strikes.⁷⁵

On August 14, 1966, after talking to General Westmoreland, the President met with newsmen and expressed optimism about the war. He said that after his meeting with his top commander in Vietnam, he was convinced that “a Communist military take-over in South Vietnam is no longer just improbable ... it is impossible.” Johnson added: “The single most important factor now is our willingness to prosecute the war until the Communists ... either end the fighting or seek a peaceful solution.” On August 22, addressing the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Secretary of State Rusk warned of the “great catastrophe that awaits the U. S. if American forces withdraw from South Vietnam.” Two weeks earlier, on August 8, at the end of a three-day tour of South Vietnam, Richard Nixon in Saigon proposed an increase in the number of American military forces raising the total to 500,000. He said this would reduce

American and South Vietnamese casualties. He also urged an extension of American air strikes in the North. He also wanted to curb "further discussions of a negotiated settlement," which, he said, "delays the end of the war by simply encouraging the enemy that we are begging for peace."⁷⁶

Two months earlier, on July 7, Under Secretary of State Rostow urged the President to send out his chief advisers to repeat the themes of Johnson's recent speech in Omaha, Nebraska, to the effect that "we are fighting aggression" in Vietnam; that "peace" lies ahead "if we see it through but only trouble and more war if we bug out."⁷⁷

Johnson was further buoyed on August 10 by Ambassador Lodge in his most recent weekly report. Of all the documents by the President's advisers, this, in many ways, is the strangest, beginning with what Lodge calls his "Smell of Victory." He tells Johnson that "we are not losing," that "we cannot lose in the normal sense of the word," that "never have things been going so well." He says "we are on the right 'track' with almost every aspect of the war and we are winning in several." But this is still not "victory," he notes, and "in truth, we do not need to define 'victory' and then go ahead and achieve it 100 percent." He then adds: "If it becomes generally believed that we are sure to win (just as it is now generally believed that we cannot lose) all else will be a mopping up." At this point, however, he qualifies his earlier "smell of victory" with a qualified "if"; "if there is the 'smell of victory,'" he says, "we will be coasting." Lodge then applauds Johnson's leadership. "All of this is a great tribute to the excellence of your policies and to the courage with which you have made your decisions." He adds it is also "a tribute to those who execute the policies, notably our magnificent military men." "Let us, therefore, by all means rejoice in the good news that ... a successful Communist takeover of the government seems now improbable."⁷⁸

Lodge is exuberantly optimistic. "We have been winning" victories in the field. He tells Johnson that we are "inflicting" "casualties" at the rate of "10 to 1." He cites the success of the pacification program whereby 50 per cent of the population has moved from Saigon to the provinces so that it is now possible to drive securely from one region of the country to another. He expresses a momentary doubt when he asks whether the Vietnamese can "keep on going as they have been" and "maybe, if "the Vietnamese can last indefinitely." The doubts continue: "Time is not necessarily on our side," he says. He hopes for "a quick victory [that] would be of immense value" to both the Vietnamese and the United States. He scattershots a number of almost random points and then after nineteen paragraphs he writes: "In a war like this, in spite of everything, there is something tremendously effective about sheer mass." As he looks out from the fifth floor of the American Embassy, Lodge describes for the President

the port of Saigon, thick with shipping and in the green flat fields through which the Saigon River winds, I see more ships constantly making the sixty mile trip to and from the open sea. When I flew over Vung Tau last week, I counted eighteen ships anchored there. There are undoubtedly more in the Philippines and elsewhere. This is American mass which none can produce as we can.⁷⁹

This is the voice of Henry Cabot Lodge, our Ambassador in Vietnam. His advice to the President is to send in more military hardware and to engage in further escalation. "The more we bring in" and "the sooner we do it ... the sooner the war will be over and the fewer will be the casualties." He then repeats what Johnson and his spokesmen have said about the war: Could the American public "be made to understand that something is being asked of them now so as to avoid much greater suffering later?"⁸⁰

On August 9, 1966, as Morgenthau begins the second part of his year at the Council, *Look* magazine published five articles in which five "experts" were commissioned to advise the President on "What Should We Do Now?" in Vietnam. The "experts" included Morgenthau, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Herman Kahn, Director of the Hudson Institute, a think tank for national security and international issues, and Hanson W. Baldwin, the military editor of the *New York Times*. *Look* magazine, with a circulation in the millions, thus provided the venue for another debate on Vietnam in which, as will be seen, there was only one minority view, which was to liquidate the war, while Kissinger, Schlesinger, Kahn, and Baldwin told the President that he must continue the war.

The debate took place against the background of the new bombing strategy and the escalation of the ground war while Morgenthau remained in New York and continued his work with the Council study groups. It may be reasonably assumed that the Council members, as formidable experts in the field of foreign affairs, could not have escaped the statements of the five "experts," all of whom, now including Morgenthau, were all members of the Council. In retrospect, judging from Morgenthau's study group meeting on Vietnam three months later on November 28, 1966, it may also be reasonably assumed that the Council members were unaffected by the *Look* magazine debate on Vietnam, at least, almost totally unaffected by Morgenthau's appraisal of what to do. So what is the significance of *Look* magazine's publication of another debate on Vietnam? It enshrines another contribution by Morgenthau to halt the drift into the disaster of Vietnam and places him in a class by himself of those who saw clearly the geopolitical facts that warranted American withdrawal. As for the four other "experts," it is not so much that they erred egregiously, which they did, but that history

has ignored their error as a way to understand what went wrong and to possibly avoid such mistaken interventions in the future.

The lead article on August 9 was Morgenthau's who presented a two-point plan, one military, the other political, by which to get out of Vietnam with the national dignity remaining intact. He is original in how he addresses the issue. The editors had framed the question: "Suppose the President asked you What Should We Do Now?" And Morgenthau proceeds by addressing Lyndon Johnson as Mr. President throughout the article as he offers his advice. He begins by telling the President that he has been "a consistent critic of our Vietnam policies for more than four years"; that he has tried to answer that question—"What would you do if you were in my place"—and he answers that "he is glad to do so again." "Mr. President," Morgenthau continues, "I would say, you must choose between two alternative policies"; that if you believe that "the credibility of the United States and its prestige as a great power are irrevocably engaged," that "the fate of Asia" and perhaps "the non-Communist world at large might be decided" by what happens in Vietnam, that "if you believe this, then you must see the war through to victory." He reminds the President that this is "the policy the Joint Chiefs have been advocating" and which "you have pursued since February 1965." And while you, the President, have not escalated the war as fast as would suit the Joint Chiefs, "escalate you did," Morgenthau writes, "and you will continue escalating because the assumptions from which you have started leave you no choice." Morgenthau then outlines the geopolitical facts that demonstrate the errors in these assumptions as he presents the alternative.⁸¹

"There is another policy, Mr. President, which you could ... and should have pursued," Morgenthau writes. And here, he repeats much of what we have seen in previous chapters: "the war is primarily a civil war"; "its global significance is remote"; "that far from containing China and Communism, it opens the gates to both by destroying Vietnamese nationalism, which is implacably hostile to China"; that "the risks we are taking in pursuit of victory are out of all proportion to the interests at stake." He then continues: "We should never have gotten involved in this war," and because "we are deeply involved in it," we must "avoid getting more deeply involved" as we try to "to extricate ourselves from it while minimizing our losses."⁸²

He then points out the "two main arguments that have been used to justify our involvement": that "we have a commitment to the government of Vietnam" and that "the people of South Vietnam want to be saved by us from the Vietcong." Both arguments, Morgenthau writes, "have been demolished." There is no government in South Vietnam "worthy of the name," while the "great mass" of South Vietnamese people want an "end

to the war rather than a fight to the finish with the Vietcong.” He notes that elections soon to be held in South Vietnam “provides us with the chance to use these new facts for the initiation of a new policy of disengagement.” To achieve the ultimate goal, which is “the withdrawal of our armed forces from South Vietnam,” Morgenthau advises the President to work for the “achievement” of four objectives, the first of which is “the establishment of a broadly based government” in which those who want to end the war “would have decisive influence” in organizing elections for a “constituent assembly and a legislature.” He acknowledges that “such elections will neither be representative nor ‘free,’” but this is understandable given the nature of Vietnamese politics that produced Diem followed by eight consecutive governments in 1964 established by eight successive takeovers. But what is of “crucial importance,” Morgenthau writes, “is the composition of the government presiding over the elections,” and while he does not specifically say how this will be done, the presumption is through the influence of the various U.S. agencies in Saigon, especially the American Embassy and its contacts with Vietnamese politicians who want an end to the war.⁸³

The second goal is to make sure that “the government that emerges from these elections will negotiate with the Vietcong.” Should the Vietcong representatives win, Morgenthau says he can envision “a coalition government in which different sections of the country ... would be governed by different factions”; he can also envision, Morgenthau writes, “a South Vietnamese government that would be anxious to maintain its independence *vis-à-vis* the North.” Thirdly, Morgenthau advises putting “U.S. military forces stationed in South Vietnam at the disposal of the government that emerges from the elections to be used as bargaining counters in the negotiations with the Vietcong.” This, Morgenthau writes, “would honor commitments and would leave to the South Vietnamese government to interpret them—in order to bring the war to an end.” The fourth and “our ultimate goal would be the withdrawal of our armed forces from South Vietnam.” The “withdrawal would be coordinated with the progress of negotiations between the government of South Vietnam and the Vietcong” while U.S. forces “would be gradually withdrawn.”⁸⁴

Morgenthau then outlined a “three-part” military policy known as the enclave strategy by which the United States would stop the bombings of North Vietnam, halt the search-and-destroy missions in the South while holding the cities and coastal enclaves that the United States and the South Vietnamese now control. The Vietcong would then be asked to reciprocate by ceasing their attacks on our positions. Morgenthau concludes:

You, Mr. President, will have to decide whether the present policy—morally dubious, militarily hopeless and risky, politically aimless and counterproductive—

shall be continued or whether a better policy shall take its place. You aspire to be a great President. Whether you remain the prisoner of past mistakes or have the courage to correct them will be the test of your greatness.”⁸⁵

Thus, Morgenthau not only repeats his criticism of the current policy, but it is noteworthy that he presents a plan to extricate the United States from Vietnam, a plan problematical and complex, but a plan nonetheless. None of the other “experts” wanted an end to the war except through capitulation of the North Vietnamese through military victory. Each, in his own inimitable way, offered only more of the status quo as they demonstrated advocacy of the current policy. Thus, they wanted more war.

Schlesinger’s article appeared as the last of the contributions and was a distillation of previous Schlesinger statements, those he made at the 1965 teach-in and in articles that he later included in his 1966 book, *The Bitter Heritage*. As we have seen, Schlesinger’s verbal legerdemain makes it appear that he is a critic of the war when, in fact, he is a supporter of the war. As he said in *The Bitter Heritage*, that we should not “Americanize the war” by “increasing our military presence” in Vietnam, but we should also “hold the line in Vietnam,” which he inserts in his *Look* article. Again, he repeats that “Hanoi and the Vietcong will not negotiate so long as they think they can win.” That while he says we should not increase our military presence, he also writes that “we must have enough ground forces in South Vietnam to demonstrate that our adversaries cannot hope for military victory.” Yet he is not sure about how many ground troops are needed: “I believe that we have more than enough troops and installations there now to make this point,” he writes. There is also the obligatory reference to President Kennedy, paraphrasing the late president’s remark on national television that the United States can help by giving the South Vietnamese equipment and sending them advisers, but it is a war the Vietnamese can win only by themselves.⁸⁶ He conveniently omits that Kennedy also said that we are in Vietnam to prevent the Chinese from becoming the wave of the future. Schlesinger, thus, has added nothing new to the Vietnam debate.

And neither did Herman Kahn of the Rand Institute, a nuclear strategist, a physicist and mathematician given to playing with numbers, charts, tables, graphs, systems analysis techniques, and especially, projected scenarios of war games. He was a numbers and computer specialist but not a foreign policy “expert,” and his work suggests he was willing to risk global annihilation because his numbers indicated some would survive. Thus, he closely resembles the Peter Sellers character in Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 movie, “Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Love the Bomb” because for Kahn and the Strangelove character, a thermonuclear war did not mean the end of civilization. Thus, on July 1, 1958, in a Rand Corporation Study

of Nonmilitary Defense titled “How Many Can Be Saved?” Kahn writes: “The general belief persists today that an all-out thermonuclear war would inevitably result in mutual annihilation, and that nothing can be done to make it otherwise.” He adds to the scenario: “Even those who do not believe in total annihilation often do believe that the shock effect of the casualties, the immediate destruction of wealth and the long-term deleterious effects of fallout would inevitably jeopardize the survival of civilization.” What is Kahn’s answer to the problem? He admits “a thermonuclear war would be a catastrophe—in some ways an unprecedented catastrophe,” but with proper defense measures, “military and nonmilitary” to be taken in “the next ten or fifteen years,” the “catastrophe,” could be a “limited catastrophe.”⁸⁷ Thus, incredulously, Kahn goes from “a catastrophe,” to an “unprecedented catastrophe” and then to a “limited catastrophe” as a general prognosis of what an all-out thermonuclear war would produce.

In 1960, Kahn published *On Thermonuclear War*. In 1962, he published *Thinking about the Unthinkable*. Both books posited the belief that “a majority of survivors and their descendants” could continue to lead “normal and happy lives” after a thermonuclear war.⁸⁸ Thus, it becomes readily apparent that the Kahn mentality is unsuited to the study of geopolitical nuances by which diplomacy might be employed to avoid military catastrophes. And so it is unsurprising that his advice to the president was simply to continue the war. In *Look*, Kahn writes: “Our cause in South Vietnam is not immoral”; “our present policy is the only realistic alternative the U.S. has”; he had “yet to hear,” he writes, “of an alternative that is not likely to involve costs far greater, far more deplorable, far more inhumane”; South Vietnam, he says, must not “fall into the hands of the National Liberation Front”; and he fears “the political and moral repercussions within the U.S. if American forces were to withdraw from South Vietnam.”⁸⁹

It so happens that a year earlier, on June 20, 1965, Morgenthau reviewed Kahn’s latest book titled *On Escalation, Metaphors and Scenarios* in the “Book Week” section of *The Washington Post*. In this book, Morgenthau writes, Kahn has surpassed what he wrote in *On Thermonuclear War*, the book that concludes that nuclear war does not mean “an unmitigated catastrophe and that therefore nuclear war can serve as an instrument of national policies in the traditional manner.” Morgenthau writes that Kahn could “arrive at this conclusion only by disregarding the psychological effects upon the survivors of the massive human and material losses, which he too assumes to be the inevitable result of nuclear war.” For Morgenthau, Kahn’s latest book has a “basic defect” that “tries to transform foreign and military policy into something approaching an exact science, endowed with exactly defined concepts, rigorous analysis, and quantitatively distinguishable models.”⁹⁰ That

Morgenthau has no use for what “has been aptly called ‘a new scholasticism,’ an intellectual exercise of astounding sophistication but of very limited cognitive value and practical use” is made clear in the witty fashion by which he disposes of Kahn’s work. Morgenthau concludes his review as follows:

Mr. Kahn himself refers to ‘the seeming artificiality and abstractness of his book,’ and he admits that he will “tend toward discussion of possibilities *as* possibilities, without giving full attention to their credibility or likelihood.” The result is “an escalation ladder” consisting of seven general phases called “subcrisis maneuvering, traditional crises, intense crises, bizarre crises, exemplary central attacks, military central wars, civilian central wars.” These phases are broken down into forty-four “rungs,” starting with “ostensible crisis, political, economic and diplomatic gestures, solemn and formal declarations” and ending with “slow-motion countercity war, countervalue salvo, augmented disarming attack, civilian devastation attack, some other kinds of controlled general war, spasm or insensate war.” This scheme is supplemented by another one which, I must admit, I am unable to understand. It is called “varying degrees of skill on different rungs,” subdivided into “current situation, feared situation, more likely, possible.” Each subdivision consists of a series of numbers from one to eleven of different sizes and expansions. Looking at this scheme, I feel as I do when I look at modern art: I admire the ingenuity, wonder what it is all about, and ask myself, is this really necessary? As concerns foreign and military policy, I am emphatic in asserting that it is not.”⁹¹

To return to *Look* magazine, August 1966, Hanson W. Baldwin, the military editor of *The New York Times*, like Harman Kahn, wanted nothing short of complete victory. “If we lose,” Baldwin writes, “our children and grandchildren will face tomorrow a far worse problem than we face today.” His “strategy for victory,” what he calls “a Governmental and national determination to win,” includes an increase in troop levels to 500,000 to 700,000 men, an “interdiction” of supply routes, land and sea, “by mining, bombing, naval gunfire”; by bombing “all the fuel-oil supplies,” the “depots,” “the electric power plants”; an “interdiction of the many branches of the Ho Chi Minh trail” by “air cavalry raids” using “helicopters”; by employing “the doctrine of ‘hot pursuit’” against “any guerrilla forces that use Cambodia as a sanctuary”; an increase in “air and small-craft bases in South Vietnam and Thailand” to strike North Vietnamese “junks and sampans”; “search-and-destroy” operations by “American and South Vietnamese forces” and “search-and-clear operations” by “only specially trained South Vietnamese” forces “to hold the areas that are cleared.” In short, Baldwin of the *New York Times* advocates overwhelming military power to achieve the “victory” that he says “will be long and hard and bloody.”⁹²

Unsurprisingly, since Kissinger's voice has not been raised in opposition to the war throughout the Vietnam policy debate, his advice to the President is to continue the war. He tells us first that "withdrawal" is out of the question and would be "disastrous" though nobody is advocating withdrawal without conditions. He says "negotiations are inevitable," which begs the question: When does he think negotiations will begin? His response is a typical Dean Rusk as well as a Schlesinger reply: Only when the enemy knows it cannot win. In Kissinger's words: it is only when "Hanoi realizes that its forces in the 'countryside are being systematically reduced and that this process will accelerate the longer the war lasts.'" Thus, for Kissinger, there is no time limit: the South Vietnamese and the American forces must continue the onslaught until Hanoi is ready to capitulate. Thus, Kissinger, like Baldwin and Kahn, wants total victory no matter how long it takes. He opposes the enclave strategy as a means to begin negotiations because he says it is "static," meaning that it would require us to "write off all the territory that we cannot securely control" while not going after more territory and killing more enemy forces in the process. Kissinger puts it this way: he wants to maintain the military capacity to prevent any "further consolidation of Communist control even in areas that we do not control."⁹³

Behind his desire to win is his view that North Vietnam cannot stand up to American military might. Again, in Kissinger's words, North Vietnam is "a third-class Communist peasant state," which, as a "third-class" state, has no business standing up to the United States. There is also another reason Kissinger offers for his hard-line stance, which is that "victory over the United States" would "strengthen" the various "bellicose factions" in the several "Communist struggles around the world." Here, he hints at the domino theory: a victory by North Vietnam "would demoralize those [surrounding] countries—especially Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand—that have supported our effort." And then he invokes the false credibility factor: the United States must not give up or withdraw for then "its willingness and ability to honor its commitments" would be open to question.⁹⁴

Kissinger is also immune to the cruelty of the war. "We must have compassion" for a society "wracked by war," Kissinger writes, but we should "not use its agony as an alibi for failing in our duty." And what is our duty? Is it to ourselves? To the Vietnamese? As the consummate ideologue fighting Communism, the United States, Kissinger writes, is "no longer fighting in Vietnam only for the Vietnamese. We are also fighting for ourselves and for international stability." Earlier, he noted, we were fighting a "third class Communist peasant state" opposing the military might of the United States. Now, he writes, we are fighting in Vietnam "for ourselves" and for global security. But there are other reasons to continue the war: to withdraw would

reveal “American impotence” that would “lessen the credibility of American pledges in other fields.” “The war is also a crucial test of American maturity,” he writes, though he does not define maturity. He says the conflict is not a civil war, though he acknowledges there are “pressures of a civil war.” He sees the United States engaged in nation-building in Vietnam: “the transformation of an essentially feudal structure into a modern state, a process,” he writes, “that took centuries in the West.”⁹⁵

This is very muddled reasoning. We are fighting a third-rate peasant state on behalf of the Vietnamese and ourselves as a sign of our maturity to achieve global security and remain loyal to our pledges while awaiting the transformation of Vietnam into a modern state that, using the example of Western feudalism, took centuries. It is astonishing that Kissinger, the “expert” from Harvard, could put together such an outrageously illogical defense of the war.

He concludes his article with a paragraph that is an obtuse diversion into an unexplained morality. Kissinger tells his readers: “We do not have the privilege of deciding to meet those challenges that must flatter our moral preconceptions” because we must fight, not where we choose to fight, but “in places chosen by [our] opponents for their difficulty and ambiguity.”

His next and last sentence has nothing to do with either the morality of our involvement or the false moral imperative to fight no matter where we must fight so long as we fight. Kissinger writes: “If we cannot deal with political, economic and military problems as an integrated whole, we will not be able to deal with them individually,”⁹⁶ a sentence, to repeat, that has nothing to do with either the geopolitics or the morality of the war.

Years later, in an interview published in *TNR*, Kissinger, as we have seen, admitted he had always been a supporter of the war. Before his *Look* article appeared, Kissinger had been in the employ of the Johnson government acting as a State Department consultant at the request of Ambassador Lodge. On August 2, 1966, just days before the appearance of his *Look* article, Kissinger met with Ambassador-at-large Averell Harriman and two assistants following Kissinger’s two fact-finding missions to South Vietnam. Kissinger reported his findings and advised a stepped-up military strategy to win in Vietnam.⁹⁷

For most of 1961, Kissinger was the European specialist as a part-time consultant to Bundy in the Kennedy Administration. By 1965, Kissinger’s new specialty was Asia and Vietnam. Years later, he explains his new interest: “I slipped into a negotiation, almost by accident.” It had not been, in his words, his “destiny to be involved in Vietnam.” Rusk and McNamara, Kissinger tells us, asked him to act in third party discussions with Ho Chi Minh.⁹⁸ What is incidentally remarkable about Kissinger is that he is not only disingenuous, but that he is imaginatively disingenuous. He invokes his

“destiny” thesis as an accident of history as a means to exonerate his role as a major director of the government’s war policy during the six years he served in the Nixon and then the Ford Administrations while during the preceding years he carefully stays out of the public debate on Vietnam. On the eve of the 1968 presidential campaigns, Kissinger is writing speeches for his long-time patron, Nelson Rockefeller, is advising both the Humphrey and Nixon campaigns, and is thereby positioning himself to achieve his lifetime goal of achieving national office no matter who is elected President.⁹⁹

In a lengthy “Evaluation” of Kissinger that appeared in *The New Leader* in 1974, Morgenthau explained Kissinger’s “priceless asset” as a particular ability “so rare and so extraordinarily perfected in him,” which is the quality of “many-sidedness” or “of many appearances.” It is the quality by which Kissinger can hold and disseminate “divergent and even incompatible views” that masks “deception and dissimulation” and appears as “sincerity.” For Morgenthau, Kissinger is the consummate actor because he “does not *play* the role of Hamlet today, or of Caesar tomorrow,” he “*is* Hamlet today and Caesar tomorrow.” It is the ability, Morgenthau writes, of “transformation” where “pretence and reality have become one,” whereby “the mask has melted into the face.” So that when Kissinger is in Egypt, Sadat calls him “not only my friend but my brother” because this is what Kissinger “chooses to be” when he is in Egypt. To King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Kissinger’s “sincerity” is unquestioned when in the presence of the King of Saudi Arabia. In Israel, Kissinger is heralded as the one who may bring peace without endangering the existence of Israel because this is what he conveys when he is in Israel. Thus, Morgenthau writes, “instead of being rejected by all because, disingenuously, he tells everybody what he wants to hear,” he “is hailed as the ‘miracle worker’ who satisfies the interests of all within limits tolerable for all concerned...”¹⁰⁰ On November 20, 1968, Richard Nixon announced the appointment of Kissinger as his national security adviser.

Between October 29 and December 1, 1967, the United States and the North Vietnamese fought a series of battles in the Central Highlands near Dak To. Nearly 300 Americans and at least 1,000 North Vietnamese were killed. On November 21, in a speech given in Washington, General Westmoreland proclaims that “the end begins to come into view” as “the enemy’s hopes are bankrupt.” At the end of 1967, there are 485,000 American personnel in Vietnam and by year’s end, “more than 9,300 Americans are killed in combat during 1967.”¹⁰¹

There are two days of strategy meetings at the White House and on November 1, General Taylor urges a new public relations campaign. He tells the group “that he has made more speeches than anyone, having completed

his 126th last night” and suggests “a nationwide campaign” using television as “our best weapon” that will be “continuous,” week after week, so the public will be told “all the facts on Vietnam.” Months earlier, in April 1967, Taylor published in *Fortune* magazine “The War We’ve Won.” The General wrote “the United States has driven the main enemy to the brink of defeat. Never in modern times has there been a smoother, surer, swifter reversal in the tide of a ... struggle.” The President commented that “the opposition exists in only a small group of the community, primarily the intellectuals or so-called intellectuals and the press.” Clark Clifford remarked that Kennedy and Johnson “didn’t wait for public opinion to catch up with them. They went ahead with what was right, and because of that the war is a success today.” McNamara, who would leave the Johnson White House two months later in February 1968, spoke about a barrier of “seismic sensors on the ground” and “acoustical sensors in the trees to detect” the movement of “equipment and men.” He said the “operation against vehicles” begins on December 1 and the “operation against men on January 1.” McNamara then proceeded, with his usual certitude, to provide the numbers: “captured documents showed about 20% of those who leave the North do not reach the South”; that “about 2% of these” are the result of “air casualties”; “our scientists and engineers,” he continued, “hope this new system will increase the air casualties by 15 fold, in other words, up to 30%”; “the destruction of the trucks by air casualties will increase 200–300%.”¹⁰²

As McNamara reported his plan to interdict men and material, General Giap, the commander of North Vietnamese forces, began the series of major battles that would culminate in the Tet offensive that began in January 1968. McNamara’s estimates became meaningless as the North Vietnamese directed their attacks at over one hundred cities including provincial and district capitals and military bases. In the Saigon area, the Vietcong attacked a number of important installations including the presidential palace, the government radio station, the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff headquarters, the Bien Hoa airbase, the U.S. army base at Long Binh, and the Tan Son Nhut airbase. The Vietcong held the American Embassy in Saigon for six hours before they were repulsed by American military forces and held the city of Hue for twenty-two days before it was recaptured.¹⁰³

Newspaper and television reports tell only part of the brutal combat that took place for three weeks in the city of Hue. John Laurence, a CBS television journalist, records in his book, *The Cat From Hue*, what he saw as he and his cameraman dispatched their combat film for Walter Cronkite’s “The Evening News.” The fighting in Hue, Laurence writes, was “at its most ferocious.” He calls it “an urban brawl between two armed and largely adolescent tribes” where “there were no rules,” “a street fight of fast action and merciless

bloodletting.” Marines, ordered “to apply the force, ran forward,” he writes, “one or two at a time,” trying to “take cover without being hit.” “When someone was hit, two other Marines ran forward, tried to suppress the fire, and pulled the wounded man back.” “Each day, the Marines advanced a few more meters across the burned ground, and each day the two sides sent back another load of battle dead. Thousands of people had been killed.” By the third week of the battle of Hue, “all anyone could think about was staying alive.” The Captain of Delta Company, “the only officer in the company who had not been killed or wounded,” had taken his company of one hundred and twenty Marines into the battle of Hue, and after the fighting, only “thirty” survived. Laurence describes “the noise of battle” and the “foul-smelling smoke” from burning houses, buildings and garbage. There was everywhere the sound of incessant “artillery shells, mortars, rifle bullets, machinegun tracers, tank, cannon, hand grenades, rocket-propelled grenades, rocket artillery, recoilless rifles.” “Much of the city was demolished,” Laurence writes, where “dead bodies lay in the streets.” In contrast to McNamara’s optimistic numbers, Laurence writes that after twenty-six days of combat, the reports noted “ten thousand dead,” which included U.S. and South Vietnamese forces and civilians; that “when the wounded were added, the overall number of victims was much greater,” which included “far more civilians than combatants killed”; that even though the North was forced to withdraw from Hue with terrible losses, they inflicted “the heaviest toll of dead and wounded” on the United States and South Vietnam. By the end of February 17, 1968, almost three weeks after Hue was attacked on January 31, Laurence writes: “the number of American dead was reported as 543; the number of wounded 2,547.” He adds: “For those who were there it was evident that nobody won.”¹⁰⁴

For the stalwart hawks at home, such as Joseph Alsop in his February 28 column, nothing had changed; the United States was still winning. Alsop wrote “As the captured documents continue to pour in, it becomes ... clearer and clearer that the Tet-period attacks on the cities were a major disaster for Gen. Giap.... The Hanoi war-planners ... have experienced a grave setback.” Jim Lucas, the Scripps-Howard correspondent told the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 14, “Hue is not really as badly shattered as we are led to believe. It is humiliating that we could be caught off guard; that this thing could happen. But there are pluses.... They cannot take the losses they have taken in this war of attrition over the years.” And then there was *Time* magazine on March 15 quoting an unnamed U.S. official: “My heart went up into my throat when the Tet offensive came. But now it appears that we did not get hurt as badly as we first thought.” *Time* then rendered its own verdict: “There is firm evidence that if the government reacts promptly enough, it may be able to recoup practically all the losses sustained at Tet.”¹⁰⁵

Other commentators were not so sanguine. I. F. Stone, on February 19, noted “we still don’t know what hit us. The debris is not all in Saigon and Hue.” Four days later, even *The Wall Street Journal* advised the American people to accept the prospect that the whole Vietnam effort may be lost. A week later, on March 10, NBC commentator Frank McGhee, in a special television report, said the United States was losing the war. A day later, on March 11, *Newsweek* reported that the “communists had seized the battlefield initiative,” which “raised serious doubts in the minds of millions of Americans at home about the future course of the war.” Earlier, Walter Cronkite, regarded as the most trusted television journalist, on February 27, asked, “How could the Vietnamese communists have mounted this offensive with such complete surprise?” He repeated what John Laurence said that “the destruction” in the city of Hue “was almost total.” He added, “There is scarcely an inhabitable building” in Hue. The fighting, he said, was fierce, “house-to-house, door-to-door, room- to-room.” To his television audience, Cronkite said the nation could no longer have faith in the “optimism” of America’s leaders. We could no longer believe the optimists who have been wrong in the past. “We are mired in a stalemate,” he said, and the “only rational way out” is to negotiate, “not as victors but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge ... and did the best they could.”¹⁰⁶

At his news conference on February 2, two days after the Tet assault began, the President was asked, “Are we still winning the war?” Johnson replied that he saw nothing in the reports that would change his mind. In his opening statement he repeated Westmoreland’s estimates of 10,000 North Vietnamese killed and U.S. dead at 249. The South Vietnamese, he said, “bore the brunt of the fighting in the cities” and “lost 553 killed.” In answer to a later question, he said the numbers did not suggest “a Communist victory.” In the judgment of Westmoreland and the Joint Chiefs, the President noted, the North did not achieve “a military success” and added “We do not believe that we should help them in making it a psychological success either.” When asked whether these developments in the attacks “causes you to think to re-evaluate some of the assumptions” of our policy and strategy, Johnson replied “We do that every week.” He also said he “did not want to be interpreted as unduly optimistic.” In fact, as he admitted, it was a moment of “tension and trial,” while he awaited more information, so he would “let the facts speak for themselves.”¹⁰⁷

In January 1968, another Morgenthau article appeared in the journal *Current History*, which repeats the central thesis of his opposition to the war. “Why,” he asks, “is the United States evidently resolved to continue

fighting a war that appears politically aimless, militarily unpromising and morally dubious?" He answers: "The policies the United States is pursuing in Vietnam do not serve the interests of the United States; they run counter to American interests; and the United States objectives are not attainable, if they are attainable at all, without unreasonable moral liabilities and military risks." He is still trying to influence administration policy, and what is new in this essay is his argument that "counter-insurgency" in Vietnam is futile. It is futile because there is a basic "difference between the motivation of the guerrillas" and the motivation of "the professional army fighting them." The evidence of the difference comes from American military leaders who have said this repeatedly since early 1965.¹⁰⁸

Four months earlier, on August 7, 1967, the *New York Times* noted the futility of a vastly superior military force unable to quell a peasant guerrilla insurgency in which "the enemy's tenacity defies [an] awesome U.S. effort." Indeed, the *Times* reported the U.S. was throwing everything it had against the enemy, and the result suggested "a stalemate." The American military had expended, as noted in the *Times*, "millions of artillery shells and billions of rifle bullets" while "833 [American] airplanes" had been shot down in the air near Hanoi. As of the previous weekend, "12,289 Americans had been listed as killed and 74,818 as injured." The *Times* quoted senior U.S. General Frederick Weyand who said "I've destroyed a single division three times; I've chased main-force units all over the country and the impact was still zilch." Privately, the general told an interviewer that the war was "unwinnable"; that "the war appears likely to go on until someone get tired or quits, which could take generations."¹⁰⁹

As Morgenthau put it, the testimony from America's military leaders affirms that "no professional army could have withstood the punishment Americans have inflicted on the South Vietnamese guerrillas." And because the punishment has been severe and plentiful, the same military leaders have said that the Vietcong "were on the verge of collapse," again and again, "as they would have been were they professional soldiers." But the guerrilla forces do not collapse. They do not relent. In Morgenthau's view, they persist because they have a cause that they believe is worth fighting for, which is far different from the motivation among professional soldiers in a foreign environment. Moreover, the guerrillas do not act as professional soldiers because it is in the nature of a guerrilla war that "the guerrillas are supported by the indigenous population," that the guerrilla is "indistinguishable from the rest of the population" where "the guerrilla is an organic element of the social and political structure." That in such a world, Morgenthau writes, "everyone is in a sense a potential guerrilla" where "the whole population is composed of full-time guerrillas, part-time guerrillas, auxiliaries who feed,

clothe and hide . . . make arms, build hide-outs and carry ammunition.” What the United States faces in South Vietnam, Morgenthau notes, is a people willing to fight and die for their cause, “a primitive nation-in-arms,” which can be defeated by nothing short of “the physical destruction” of their country and its population. Thus, Morgenthau concludes, there is “no plausible military or political benefit” for what the U. S. is doing in Vietnam. It is just “killing for killing’s sake.”¹¹⁰

Finally, sometime during the Tet offensive, Hamilton Fish Armstrong woke up from his long slumber on Vietnam. He had published, as noted above, two articles on Vietnam in April and October 1966. He published Morgenthau in April 1967. In April 1968, the four lead articles all dealt with the problem of Vietnam: the first, by Roger Hilsman, is titled “Must We Invade the North?” in which Hilsman concludes that an invasion would not work because it would provoke China; the second article titled “Squaring the Error,” by Sir Robert Thompson, who became known as a specialist on counterinsurgency for extricating Britain from Malaysia and who also became an unofficial adviser to Richard Nixon, not unsurprisingly advocated an increased and long-range effort to make South Vietnam stable and secure; the third article titled “The Complexities of Negotiation,” written by Chester L. Cooper, formerly a national security staffer, advocated contact with Hanoi as a preliminary measure before moving to negotiations. Overall, these proposals are far removed from what the war in 1968 required of American foreign policy. But then again, Hilsman, Thompson, and Cooper are not moved by national interest politics. And the fourth article, titled “Power in a Sieve,” written by Armstrong, similarly misses the crucial point though, as the following lines indicate, the cruelty and the destruction of the war have finally been recognized by Armstrong. He writes:

Too many of us are horrified by the suffering and sorrow we are causing, the wiping out of villages and devastation of cities in South as well as North Vietnam, the relentless recitation of body-counts, the herding hither and yon of pitiful refugees now numbered in the millions, and the admission that (as many have known from the start) any bombing from great heights cannot be pinpointed, will cause indiscriminate and must kill numbers of civilians.¹¹¹

From one who avoided Vietnam and who thereby supported the government, these are strong words. But they do not go far enough. Armstrong did not become a dissenter. He put forward no plan to end the war. And he did not endorse any plan to end the war though the enclave strategy, as will be seen in the next chapter, had been given broad coverage in the press. His only

suggestion to the Administration was to embark on a new plan to somehow change the course of America in Vietnam. But what is of significance is that Armstrong finally admitted that he had great misgivings about the war about which one may only ask: what took him so long?

And how did Armstrong explain his misgivings? He writes that he still believes that our original “enterprise ... was designed to help a people to freedom and prosperity” but now, he says, those efforts are “destroying them.” He repeats that “we can assert with proper pride that our motives in first intervening in Vietnam were of the best” but that now “circumstances have changed and our policies must change to accord with them.” He does not want “to recapitulate how step by step we have stumbled into a situation”; that “Looking back, we see that our grossest miscalculation was not military” but rather “in failing to understand the people and society we were setting out to help.” He looks back at 1965 as the time when “we found ourselves forced either to admit that our intervention had been a mistake” or that we had decided “to save the South Vietnamese army from dissolution and defeat by taking over most of the fighting.” But we failed then to make the necessary reappraisals of where “each new political and military step would lead and what problems we would face in consequence.” “Since then,” he adds, “it has become plain that we probably cannot be defeated militarily,” but “neither can we win.” That while Armstrong does not explore in detail how a modern army cannot defeat a guerrilla force, he comes close to Morgenthau’s January 1968 article when he says that the United States “did not foresee that a mainly military effort, no matter how massive,” would not sustain the confidence of the South Vietnamese people “through a long nightmare of guerrilla savagery.” He now advocates talks with the Vietcong and the National Liberation Front. “It was a mistake,” he now admits, “to have ruled out the enemy with whom we were most directly engaged from participating in talks to end the fighting.” And who first suggested that the United States had to negotiate with the Vietcong?¹¹²

In his concluding paragraph, Armstrong raises the question of national “prestige.” He writes that as both Washington and Saigon “seem almost in a state of shock,” it is necessary to express “profound concern, to press for a fresh look, a willingness to break out of frozen attitudes.” He then adds:

Fear of losing prestige should not be a factor in determining our course. In the final counting, the United States will be judged by its behavior when the fighting is over. We are strong enough to do what we think is right, and praise will come to us for doing right and fearing no man.¹¹³

In October 1972, in his farewell essay on the eve of his retirement, Armstrong had this to say about Vietnam:

The war in Vietnam has been the longest and in some respects the most calamitous war in our history. It has rent the American people apart, spiritually and politically. It is a war that had not been and could not be won, a war that was pushed from small beginnings to an appalling multitude of horrors, many of which we have become conscious of only by degrees. The method we have used in fighting the war have scandalized and disgusted public opinion in almost all foreign countries.¹¹⁴

To return for a moment to the subject of national prestige, as Armstrong writes, the United States “is strong enough” to do what is right and need not fear the loss of “prestige,” again, it is Morgenthau who is the originator of these words. “A great nation such as the United States,” Morgenthau writes, “can admit and liquidate its mistakes and regain the prestige lost in its Vietnam enterprise.”¹¹⁵ And when Armstrong affirms that the war could not be won, that our intervention was a mistake from the start, that we should negotiate with the Vietcong, that a massive military onslaught only increases “guerrilla savagery,” it becomes readily apparent that the editor who rejected Morgenthau has no aversion to borrow from him and always without attribution.

Thus, it is the curious irony that the man Armstrong detested as an agitator and self-promoter might well be the source for Armstrong’s belated misgivings about Vietnam as revealed posthumously by Armstrong in the collection of his papers at Princeton University. For Armstrong kept a Morgenthau file that contains copies of several Morgenthau articles that include: Morgenthau’s “Russia, the U.S. and Vietnam,” in *TNR*, May 1, 1965; another *TNR* piece titled “Globalism—Johnson’s Moral Crusade, November 7, 1965; the complete transcript of the June 21, 1965, Morgenthau debate with Bundy on CBS; a clipping from the *New York Times* dated June 9, 1965 titled “Vietnam Policy of U. S. Assailed at Garden Rally”; and a *Book Week* review of Morgenthau’s *Vietnam and the United States* on November 7, 1965.¹¹⁶ Therefore, it appears highly probable that what Armstrong wrote under his by-line in *Foreign Affairs* in 1968 are snippets from Morgenthau’s arguments, which appeared in 1965, the year of the teach-ins and the beginning of the military escalation of the war. As such, the Armstrong episode in the historic course of the Vietnam war debate is another example of an opportunity lost: an opportunity to enlighten the readership of *Foreign Affairs* that the war, well before the Tet offensive of 1968, was already a political and moral calamity.

When Morgenthau completed his fellowship, he received several letters of appreciation from Council officials. John J. McCloy, Chairman of the Board, wrote Morgenthau on January 4, 1967: “I have been told by several

of our colleagues what a real contribution you have made to the Council this past year” participating “in a great many meetings in addition to those of your own group.” He adds: “you have added greatly to the interest and freshness of the discussions and I just want to tell you of my appreciation for what you have done for the Council.”¹¹⁷ From the Executive Director, George S. Franklin, Morgenthau was told: “You know what your year at the Council meant to us ... but you might nevertheless be interested to know that several members of the group—which is quite unusual—called to say how interesting the meetings had been and to express the hope that there might be still another one to discuss your final foreign policy conclusions.”¹¹⁸ From David W. MacEachron, another of Morgenthau’s study group members, writing on March 3, 1967: “We miss you here, and so I am writing to see whether or not we can arrange a time when you will be back to see us.”¹¹⁹

The critics, however, far outnumbered the friendly voices. And when it came time to publish *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, the book that grew out of Morgenthau’s preliminary drafts presented to the Council, there was some disagreement, and Morgenthau “published his book outside the jurisdiction of the Council” by the Praeger publishing house in 1969. In his Preface, Morgenthau writes that “he profited greatly from the discussions of the study group” and he expressed his gratitude to the research and secretarial staffs for their help and advice. In his Preface, Morgenthau writes that “the deficiencies of American foreign policy, epitomized by Vietnam but evident in events in many parts of the world, result from faulty modes of thought...” He adds: “It is with the basic assumptions and principles of American foreign policy ... that this book is concerned.” He makes reference again to Vietnam as he writes:

It is now generally admitted that our Vietnam policy has failed, but, if we were to let it go at that, we would risk applying the same faulty assumptions and principles that have brought the Vietnam disaster upon us to other situations with similarly disastrous results. Instead, we must ask what accounts for that failure and how its repetition can be avoided. These questions can be answered only through an understanding of the world as it actually is through a return to the first principles that ought to have guided the foreign policy of the United States in the past and ought to guide it in the future.”¹²⁰

In 1969, after eight years of American military involvement in Vietnam and with no end in sight, Morgenthau’s *New Foreign Policy for the United States* contains a plaintive exposition of what had gone wrong and how American policy may be rectified. In his closing chapter, Morgenthau explores the seven principles of American foreign policy, which, in some ways, recapitulates

principles contained in Morgenthau's previous works but which are explored in the context of more recent events. Of the seven principles, it is No. 4, which has the greatest relevance to Morgenthau's year debating the members of his Council study groups. Thus, principle No. 4 affirms that it is

The ideological decontamination of conventional foreign policy is a precondition of an American foreign policy that is both peaceful and successful. This has always been so; for accommodation and compromise, which are the aims of diplomacy, are incompatible with the contest of political ideologies, each claiming a monopoly of wisdom and virtue and trying to transform the world in its image. Foreign policies seeking the triumph of one political ideology at the expense of another have always issued in particularly fanatical and bloody wars, which have been inconclusive to boot unless they physically eliminated the supporters of one ideology altogether.¹²¹

On January 21, 1969, following his inaugural, President Nixon met with his national security advisers and toward the close of the meeting, Kissinger, the President's assistant for national security, told the group that the [security] council, at the next meeting, would address "the situation in Vietnam" and "alternative courses of action open to us." Kissinger also "stated that the most difficult problem on Vietnam can be traced to fundamental disagreements on facts and that is why we are inventorying the facts to insure that we have them in hand before considering our basic objectives . . ."¹²²

On January 24,, 1969, Kissinger sent Nixon his first memo and laid out a five-page summary of "Vietnam policy alternatives." It is January 1969 and the essential fact is that over 30,000 Americans and countless Vietnamese have been killed and the war goes on. A reading of the Kissinger policy alternatives in Vietnam reveal no fundamental change of policy and no serious interest in the facts. Thus, the Kissinger objectives, veiled in the form of questions, affirm that "the United States would seek to bring all of South Vietnam under complete control and assured GVN" [Government of South Vietnam] control, meaning the elimination of the Vietcong guerrilla forces. Kissinger makes this explicit when he adds that the U. S. would remain until the North and the Vietcong were "eliminated, or until Hanoi had negotiated a settlement" to insure GVN control. And while "a substantial number of U.S. forces would be withdrawn" year-by-year "to reduce costs and fatalities," the United States would remain "as long as necessary." Six days later, on January 30, 1969, Kissinger called for "stepped up B-52 air strikes" though General Wheeler told him that "we have been running [air strikes] at a rate of 60 sorties a day."¹²³

To compel Hanoi to the negotiating table by way of total military capitulation, the Nixon Administration, from its earliest days, resorted to the

strategy of relentless bombing. “Between Nixon’s accession to office and November 1, 1971, North Vietnam has been officially bombed 186 times.” On January 2, 1971, it was reported that “The 350 planes that flew 24-hour multiple sorties” were “as heavy as any ever launched against the North” in what appears to be an attempt “to level Hanoi and Haiphong.” Targets of the massive strikes “included troop concentrations, fuel and petroleum dumps and airfields.”¹²⁴ But this was not all. As the report noted, “the bombing is serious, dangerous, and is causing heavy civilian casualties in North Vietnam while not providing security in the South.” What then becomes horrendously telling is the nature of the bombs rained down on the civilian population of North Vietnam since 1968. Thus, the director of “Project Air War,” a research organization in Washington, the project director, Fred Branfman writes:

Our interviews with pilots who bombed the north indicate that the majority of ordinance dropped back in 1968 were antipersonnel bombs. These are bombs that cannot destroy a truck, bridge or even a tiny shelter erected in the forest; they are only designed for human beings. They include the pineapple bombs, which send 250,000 steel pellets per sortie spewing over an area the size of four football fields; the flechette bombs, which consist of tiny barbed pellets that enlarge the wounds they enter the body; and guava bombs, which explode in the air and send their pellets down diagonally to enter holes where their targets may be hiding.”¹²⁵

The report notes that “all official analyses deemed the 1965–1968 bombing of the North a failure”; that “the bombing had no measurable effect on Hanoi’s ability to mount and support military operations in South Vietnam.”¹²⁶ Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the increased bombing during the Nixon years similarly had no appreciable effect except to kill and maim civilians.

Meanwhile, back at the Council on Foreign Relations, in the January 1969 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Armstrong’s lead article is titled “The Vietnam Negotiations.” The author is Henry Kissinger. Another curious irony: the ostensible objective is negotiation at the conference table; the reality is the relentless bombing to secure a military victory. Nothing has changed.

NOTES

1. Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *Peace & Counter-Peace from Wilson to Hitler, Memoirs of Hamilton Fish Armstrong* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1971), 181–82.

2. Armstrong, *Peace & Counter-Peace*, 222.

3. Walter Isaacson & Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 19.
4. Godfrey Hodgson, "The Establishment," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1973, 13.
5. Isaacson & Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 19.
6. Leonard Silk & Mark Silk, *The American Establishment* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 202.
7. Isaacson & Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 20–25; Hodgson, "The Establishment," 32.
8. J. Anthony Lukas, "The Council on Foreign Relations—Is It a Club? Seminar? Presidium? 'Invisible Government?'" in *New York Times Magazine*, 21 November 1971, 131.
9. Hodgson, "The Establishment," 14.
10. Armstrong to McCloy, 29 February 1968, Armstrong Papers, Box 42, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton, N. J.
11. McCloy to Armstrong, 28 February 1968, Armstrong Papers, Box 42.
12. George Carver, "The Faceless Viet Cong," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1966, 1–18. Carver's article in *Foreign Affairs* caused a minor brouhaha. On 11 May 1966, Carver wrote Armstrong and said he regretted, "the embarrassment you have been caused and the public attacks on the integrity of your journal..." Interestingly, Kennan wrote to Armstrong, 24 May 1966, and consoled him saying he hopes this "flap" will not "discourage" him "from printing further articles of this quality even when they come from people who spend their days in governmental offices." Both letters, Carver's and Kennan's, can be found in Armstrong Papers, Box 15 & 38. Bernard Fall, "Vietnam in the Balance," is in *Foreign Affairs*, October 1966, 1–18.
13. Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1967, 425–36.
14. Irving Kristol, "American Intellectuals & Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1967, 597, 602, 605, 600.
15. Bundy to Armstrong, 29 November 1954, Armstrong Papers, Box 13.
16. Schlesinger to Armstrong, 16 December 1954, Armstrong Papers, Box 55.
17. Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 72.
18. Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 73.
19. That Kissinger from the beginning is a hard-line, anti-Communist ideologue is demonstrated in these articles and will be explored in chapter 7.
20. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons & Foreign Policy*, with a foreword by Gordon Dean (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 196.
21. *International Security: The Military Aspect in America at Mid-Century Series*, Special Studies Report 2 of Rockefeller Brothers Fund (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1958), 26.
22. Morgenthau, "Death in the Nuclear Age," *Commentary*, September 1961 in Morgenthau, *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, *The Restoration of American Politics*, 22, 24.
23. Gordon Dean, forward to *Nuclear Weapons & Foreign Policy* by Kissinger, vii.
24. *Prospect For America, Rockefeller Panel Reports* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1961), xxiv–xxvi. The same panelists are also noted in the

previously cited 1958 paperback, *International Security: The Military Aspect*, 4–5. Kissinger is listed as the director of The Special Projects Rockefeller Brothers Fund and is the unnamed author.

25. Kissinger's use of the words "peril," "dire peril," "reality of peril," and our "continuing peril" are on 8 and 9.

26. Morgenthau to Armstrong, 7 November 1954, Armstrong Papers, Box 45.

27. Frank Tannenbaum, "The American Tradition in Foreign Relations," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1951, 47.

28. Morgenthau to Armstrong, 7 November 1951, Armstrong Papers, Box 45.

29. Armstrong to Morgenthau, 9 November 1951, Armstrong Papers, Box 45.

30. Quoted in Morgenthau, "Another 'Great Debate': The National Interest of the U.S." in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4, December 1952, 963, 963n.

31. Morgenthau, "'Great Debate,'" 963–964.

32. Morgenthau, "'Great Debate,'" 964–965.

33. Morgenthau, "'Great Debate,'" 964–965.

34. Morgenthau, "'Great Debate,'" 962.

35. Morgenthau to Lanyi, 14 July 1972, Morgenthau Papers, Box 34, Folder 6.

36. Armstrong to Wriston, 26 May 1965, Armstrong Papers, Box 66. A scribbled note at the top of this 3 ½ page letter indicates that Armstrong sent a copy to his colleague at the council, Frank Altschul.

37. Armstrong to Wriston, 26 May 1965, Armstrong Papers, Box 66, 3. On page 3, Armstrong tells Wriston he approves of Alsop taking "Morgenthau to task chapter and verse for a series of misstatements about China and Southeast Asia . . . a field in which I do think Joe has precise knowledge." As we have seen in previous chapters "Joe" had no more precise language about China and Southeast Asia than Armstrong had.

38. Armstrong to Altschul, 30 November 1966, Armstrong Papers, Box 45.

39. Schlesinger, "Hamilton Fish Armstrong, 1893–1973," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1973, unpaginated.

40. Morgenthau to Hutchins, 26 February 1952, Morgenthau Papers, Box 28.

41. McCloy to Morgenthau, 23 February 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

42. E-mail from Alicia Siebenaler, Ass't Director of Studies, Council on Foreign Relations, 16 June 2005.

43. Morgenthau to Franklin, 31 March 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

44. MacEachron to Morgenthau, 31 March 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

45. Morgenthau to Franklin, 15 January 1966, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

46. See, for example, Dr. Ethel Spector Person, "Hans Joachin Morgenthau and the New York Years (1964–1980)" in G.O. Mazur, ed., *One Hundred Year Commemoration to the Life of Hans Morgenthau (1904–2004)* (New York: Semenenko Foundation, 2004), 154.

47. Kirk to Morgenthau, 20 January 1966, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

48. Altschul to Morgenthau, 7 April 1966, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

49. "U.S. Policy Failing, Many Leaders Say in Poll on Vietnam," *New York Times*, 4 February 1965, 3.

50. "Taylor Visits Wall Street For Talk on Vietnam," *New York Times*, 12 June 1965, 2; "Bundy says Hanoi is as Likely to Quit War as to Negotiate," *New York Times*, 16 December 1966, 6; "Rusk Reiterates Stand on Vietnam," *New York Times*, 25 May 1966, 1.

51. There are six "Study Group Reports" where the transcripts are noted as "Digest(s) of Discussions" that are collectively assembled in Council on Foreign Relations Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton, N.J.

52. Dexter to Tannenbaum, 15 August 1951, Armstrong Papers, Box 61, Folder 16.

53. Altschul to Morgenthau, 16 September 1953, Morgenthau Papers, Box 3, Folder 7.

54. Morgenthau to Altschul, 18 September 1953, Morgenthau Papers, Box 3, Folder 7.

55. Altschul to Morgenthau, 22 September 1953, Morgenthau Papers, Box 3, Folder 7.

56. "A Re-examination of American Foreign Policy," Study Group Reports, 16 February 1966, Digest of Discussion, 1–3, 4.

57. "Re-examination," 16 February 1966, 4, 5, 6.

58. Morgenthau, "Attach Hanoi, Rile Peking," *Washington Post*, 15 March 1964, E4.

59. "Re-examination," 19 April 1966, 1, 2, 6.

60. Morgenthau's quote, "Re-examination," 19 April 1966, 4; Michael Wines, "As China Rises, Fear Grows on Whether Boom Can Endure," *New York Times*, 12 January 2010, 1.

61. Statement by Rusk, House Committee on Foreign Affairs chaired by Clement J. Zablocki, *Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia*, 92nd Congress, 1st sess., March 16, 1966, 533; Rusk's statement, "Transcript of Secretary Rusk's News Conference," *New York Times*, 13 October 1967, 17; Humphrey's statement, "Chinese Communist Peril Emphasized by Humphrey," *New York Times*, 16 October 1967, 1.

62. Morgenthau, "War in China," *The New Republic*, 3, April 1965, 14.

63. "Re-examination," 19 April 1966, 3, 5, 7, 10.

64. "Re-examination," 20 June 1966, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10.

65. "Re-examination," 28 November 1966, 1, 3.

66. "Re-examination," 28 November 1966, 1–2.

67. Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," 430, 436.

68. "Re-examination," 28 November 1966, 9, 2–3, 6–7.

69. "Re-examination," 28 November 1966, 4, 6.

70. "Re-examination," 28 November 1966, 6, 13, 7, 9.

71. "Re-examination," 28 November 1966, 4, 8, 12.

72. "Re-examination," 28 November 1966, 7–8, 13.

73. Summary Notes of the 559th Meeting of the National Security Council, 17 June 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 439.

74. Editorial Note, telephone call, McNamara to Johnson, 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 459.

75. "Chronology," in *Reporting Vietnam, Part 2, American Journalism, 1969–1975*, 783–84. Also, "24 Die, Including Civilians, in U.S. Jet Strike in South," *New*

York Times, 11 August 1966, 1; for McNamara's projection of American plane loss, see *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 439. The President authorized the air strikes on 22 June 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 452n.

76. "Texts of Comments by Johnson & Westmoreland," *New York Times*, 15 August 1966, 2; "A Warning by Rusk, *New York Times*, 23 August 1966, 3; "Nixon Advocates Use of More G.I.'s," *New York Times*, 8 August 1966, 1.

77. Memo, Rostow to the President, 7 July 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 491.

78. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Dept. of State, Lodge to the President, 10 August 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 568–69.

79. Telegram, Lodge to the President, 10 August 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 569–70.

80. Telegram, Lodge to the President, 10 August 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 4, *Vietnam 1966*, 571.

81. Morgenthau, "What Should We Do Now?" *Look*, 9 August 1966, 24.

82. Morgenthau, "Do Now?" 24.

83. Morgenthau, "Do Now?" 24–25.

84. Morgenthau, "Do Now?" 25.

85. Morgenthau, "Do Now?" 25.

86. Schlesinger, "What Should We Do Now?" *Look*, 9 August 1966, 30.

87. Herman Kahn, "How Many Can Be Saved," Rand Corporation Study, 1 July 1958, Council on Foreign Relations Papers, Box 168, Folder 2, 30.

88. Jack Raymond, "A Grim Game for Us All," *New York Times*, 17 June 1962, 209.

89. Kahn, "What Should We Do Now?" *Look*, 9 August 1966, 29–30.

90. Morgenthau, "Understanding Military Strategy," *Washington Post*, 20 June 1965 in Morgenthau, *Truth & Power*, 280–81.

91. Morgenthau, "Military Strategy," 281–82.

92. Hanson W. Baldwin, "What Should We Do Now?" *Look*, 9 August 1966, 27–28.

93. Kissinger, "What Should We Do Now?" *Look*, 9 August 1966, 26.

94. Kissinger, "Do Now?" 26.

95. Kissinger, "Do Now?" 26.

96. Kissinger, "Do Now?" 26.

97. Memo of Conversation, Kissinger, W. Averell Harriman, Ambassador at-Large, Daniel I. Davidson, Special Assistant, Montegle Sterns, Special Assistant, 2 August 1966, Harriman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Box 481, Kissinger Folder 1–4. Also noteworthy is Harriman's "brief digests" copy of "the five opinions" expressed in the *Look* Magazine symposium on Vietnam, "What We Should Do Now," Harriman Papers, Box 502, 1–3. Harriman's possession of the articles suggests he was unmoved by Morgenthau's dissenting argument and his enclave strategy to exit Vietnam.

98. Transcript, Kissinger, reply to moderator Brian Williams, "Vietnam and the Presidency, Inside the White House" Conference, 3 March 2006, JFK Library, 53–54.

99. Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 13–14; Ralph Blumenfeld, *Henry Kissinger*,

The Private and Public Story (New York: New American Library, 1974), 166–67; Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 130–33.

100. Morgenthau, “Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, An Evaluation,” *Encounter*, November 1974, 58.

101. “Chronology” in *Reporting Vietnam, Part Two, American Journalism 1969–1975*, 785.

102. Memo, President Assistant Jones to Johnson, Meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors, 2 November 1967, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 5, *Vietnam 1967*, 963, 964–95, 969; Taylor, “The War We’ve Won,” *Fortune*, April 1967, quoted in Clyde Edwin Pettit, *The Experts*, 323.

103. “Chronology” in *Reporting Vietnam, Part Two, American Journalism 1969–1975*, 786–87.

104. John Laurence, *The Cat from Hue: A Vietnam War Story* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 23, 41, 83–84. See also Ward Just, “Notes on Losing a War,” *The Atlantic*, January 1969, 39–44.

105. Alsop, Feb. 1968 quote is in Pettit, *The Experts*, 354 and Lucas, 14 March 1968 quote is also in *The Experts*, 365. “World: After Tet: Measuring and Repairing the Damage,” *Time*, 15 March 1968, 22–23.

106. I. F. Stone, “Saigon Afire Now – Will it be Washington in April?” 19 February 1968, in *The I.F. Stone’s Weekly Reader*, ed., Neil Middleton (New York: Random House, 1973), 218; “The Logic of the Battlefield,” *Wall Street Journal*, 23 February 1968, 14; Frank McGhee’s remark in Peter Braestrup, *Big Story*, 135; *Newsweek*, 11 March 1968, in appendix xxix of the *Big Story*; Walter Cronkite’s remarks from CBS Television, *Who What, When Why: Report from Vietnam*, 27 February 1968, in Braestrup, *Big Story*, appendix xxvi, 181, 183, 189.

107. “Transcript of the President’s News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Matters,” *New York Times*, 3 February 1968, 8.

108. Morgenthau, “U.S. Misadventure in Vietnam,” *Current History*, January 1968, 29, 34.

109. “Vietnam: Sign of a Stalemate,” *New York Times*, 7 August 1967, 1.

110. Morgenthau, “U.S. Misadventure,” 34.

111. Armstrong, “Power in a Sieve,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 1968, 468.

112. Armstrong, “Power,” 469, 470, 471, 472.

113. Armstrong, “Power,” 475.

114. Armstrong, “Isolated America,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1972, 489.

115. Morgenthau, “U.S. Misadventure,” 34.

116. The Morgenthau articles are in Armstrong Papers, Box 63, Vietnam Folder.

117. McCloy to Morgenthau, 4 January 1967, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

118. Franklin to Morgenthau, 28 September 1967, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

119. MacEachron to Morgenthau, 3 March 1967, Morgenthau Papers, Box 14.

120. Morgenthau, *New Foreign Policy*, viii.

121. Morgenthau, *New Foreign Policy*, 242.

122. Nixon meets with National Security Council, 21 January 1969, *FRUS 1969–1976, Vietnam January 1969–July 1970*, Vol. 6, 11–12.

123. Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, 24 January 1969, *FRUS 1969–1976, Vietnam January 196–July, 1970*, Vol. 6, 17–22.

124. Fred Branfman, “Why the Bombers Thundered,” *New York Times*, 2 January 1972, E 11.

125. “Why the Bombers Thundered,” E11.

126. “Why the Bombers Thundered,” E11. This is corroborated in another study which also includes data on the massive civilian casualties that resulted from “the 6,300,000 tons of bombs dropped on Indochina from 1965–71” which, total “more than three times the tonnage dropped by American planes in all theaters during World War II...” See review by Robert Kleiman, *The Air War in Indochina*, eds. Raphael Littauer and Norman Uphoff, Preface by Neil Sheehan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), in the *New York Times Book Review*, 13 August 1972, 1–3.

Chapter 6

Morgenthau's Influence, Fulbright's Conversion, and the Stupidity of Smart Men

Morgenthau had already presented two preliminary chapters to his study group members at the Council before he published "Johnson's Dilemma: The Alternatives Now in Vietnam" in *TNR* on May 26, 1966. If the Council members read this article, they would have come across Morgenthau's chastisement of the administration as incapable of learning either from experience or from rational argument. The war goes on, the killing and the dying continue, and, Morgenthau writes, "We have not yet suffered enough the lessons of Vietnam to sink in." He adds: "Thus, 'what nature has provided and man has wrought must be destroyed because governments, blinded by prejudice and paralyzed by pride, learn too slowly for the good of the governed.'" ¹

In contrast, three months earlier, General Maxwell Taylor, in reply to Senator Henry Aiken, at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on February 17, 1966, said this:

No, sir, we have absolutely no chance of being overrun. Our lads are in charge of this war situation, Senator. We are not being licked. There is too much of a situation we have to run away and hide some place. We are looking for these people and destroying them at the greatest rate that has ever taken place in the history of the struggle. ²

And twenty years later, in 1986, former Defense Secretary McNamara, in his book *Blundering Into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age*, commends Taylor and his colleagues in the military who taught him what he had to know to guide and direct America's military forces during the first eight years of the Vietnam war. McNamara writes:

... I would staff the upper echelons of the department with the brightest people I could find. ... That is how there came to be assembled the ablest group of individuals to serve together in a single government department in the history of our republic. ... They, along with key military advisers—in particular Generals Maxwell Taylor, Earle G. Wheeler, and Lyman L. Lemnitzer—tutored me in all aspects of security affairs: the translation of foreign policy into military strategy, the development of force structure from strategy, the application of military power in pursuit of political ends, and so forth.³

And then, almost a decade later, in 1995, McNamara confessed the war was a mistake. “We were wrong, terribly wrong,” he wrote in *In Retrospect: The Lessons and Tragedy of Vietnam*. Thus, what he is telling us here is that he and “the ablest group of individuals” ever “to be assembled” in “the history of our republic” helped produce the mistake that led to the tragedy of Vietnam, the greatest foreign policy disaster in American history to that time.

Taylor’s statement is preposterous. McNamara’s judgments reflect a confused and muddled mind. And these are all part of the surfeit of foolishness that characterized many of the high level meetings that avoided any realistic assessment of where their policies were leading them. Indeed, many of their high level strategy discussions include tales of deteriorating conditions in South Vietnam, while at the same time their glum reflections were joined with preposterous estimates of forthcoming success. Thus, to borrow the title of a Reston column in the *Times* noted earlier where “the stupidity of smart men” referred to the critics outside the government, here it is the stupidity of smart men in Washington who live in a quasi fictional world of their own making. They sit around conference tables while uttering banalities of optimism as they write memos to each other and read the cables from the American Embassy in Saigon signaling failure. It is as if the United States is proceeding on a foreordained design leading to disaster as the main characters in the drama are impervious to reason. They explore selections of readings that confirm their prejudice. They display unwarranted optimism about the abilities of coup leaders in South Vietnam to strengthen their military forces and their government. They advance ludicrous strategies to win public opinion. And the examples of their stupidity are legion.

Thus, Adam Yarmolinsky of the Defense Department on October 6, 1965, sent McNamara a copy of a Bernard Fall article in *The New Republic* that proclaimed eventual success. Yarmolinsky told McNamara, “I think this is probably worth your reading in its entirety, and perhaps assigning for analysis.” What Yarmolinsky selected was Fall’s appraisal that “the immense influx of American manpower and firepower, and the ruthless use of the latter, have made the South Vietnam war, in the *short run, militarily* [Fall’s emphasis] ‘unlosable.’”⁴ Ten days earlier, *Newsweek* quoted Fall as “now

convinced that American air and fire-power will carry the field.”⁵ It is not known what McNamara did with Fall’s piece, but it did turn up on page 209 of McNamara’s 1995 book noting that Fall “persuaded many the U.S. effort could not fail.” It is thereby apparent that even in 1995 McNamara was still addicted to choosing selectively the material that confirmed his prejudice.

At a White House staff meeting on March 30, 1964, Bundy took note of a book authored by a Frenchman, Roger Trinquier, titled *Modern Warfare*, which was a report on the French experience in Southeast Asia that pointed out that the United States was making the same military mistakes the French made and what the American forces should avoid. As we have seen, de Gaulle told Kennedy the United States would not succeed and would only get bogged down in a major military disaster. This was in 1961 and had no effect on the President. The book authored by Trinquier was brought to Bundy’s attention by Michael V. Forrestal, a member of Bundy’s staff, who suggested that the book “be made required reading.”⁶ Bundy accepted the suggestion, but it is not known whether the members of his staff were required to read it. The premise of the book and its exclusive reliance on military strategy was what Forrestal and Bundy found useful. It raised no questions about whether the war was worth the effort in terms of America’s vital interests.

On occasion, the President’s advisers discussed how the public and the press could be distracted from the negative reports on Vietnam. Thus, at a national security council executive committee meeting on May 24, 1964, Secretary of State Rusk said “we must counter public reports that the President is not acting because of the upcoming elections.” Rusk, acting now as the President’s public relations adviser, told the group that “a major speech by the President was required soon.” It did “not need to contain much [that is] new,” Rusk said, but it was important that “other officials must say the same thing over and over again.” Rusk then noted that in his last speech, he had said nothing new, but the press had picked up on “one idea as if it were new when in fact he had been saying it for months.”⁷

In a Bundy memo to Johnson dated June 25, 1964, to outline the President’s talking points for an “off-the-record” meeting with his advisers, Bundy, like Rusk, wanted the President “to carry out an information and propaganda effort twice as big as what Eisenhower had asked for.” Bundy’s reference was to Eisenhower’s initial commitment to the government of South Vietnam in 1956 that pledged assistance “against subversion and aggression” directed at the Diem regime. He told Johnson “we still use” the strong language used by Eisenhower, and he added that while “the danger and difficulty in Vietnam have increased, this is no time to quit, and it is no time for discouragement.” But it was time to look carefully at the conditions in Vietnam in 1964, which were vastly different from Diem’s rise to power

in 1956 and Diem's assassination in late 1963 followed by the coup that led to the Khanh regime. This example of Bundy's extraordinary negligence is appalling. That the policy adopted for Vietnam in 1956, arguably questionable then, was applicable in 1964 when it was no longer questionable, makes no sense. But Bundy is not interested in making sense. As he tells the President, "This is no time to quit."⁸

An interesting footnote to the Diem assassination is a conversation Ambassador Lodge had with General Khanh that Lodge disclosed to Rusk in a letter on May 26, 1964. Lodge said that Khanh had informed him that "when Diem was shot he had in his hand a brief case containing one million dollars in U.S. currency 'in the largest denominations.'" According to Lodge, Khanh said that General Minh, a member of the junta that overthrew Diem, and was shortly to leave Vietnam, took the briefcase and "has never surrendered it." Khanh also told Lodge that Minh "at the same time had taken possession of forty kilograms of gold bars." Lodge advised Khanh not to make this public and suggested to Rusk that this information was for him, the President, McNamara and "whoever else you think needs to know." He also noted that this is "definitely not a subject which should get into the cable traffic."⁹ This was a major order of corruption by our clients in South Vietnam that elicited not even a pause in our support for Khanh or Minh. Indeed, for Lodge, Rusk, the President and McNamara, nothing was going to interfere with the Administration's mission to fight Communism in Vietnam.

At a White House meeting on September 9, 1964, to review "Courses of Action for South Vietnam," the President, in a moment of temporary sobriety, asked, "if anyone doubted whether it was worth all the effort." Indeed, here was an opportunity to express doubts but no doubts were raised. Two paragraphs earlier, he had asked, "who might come in if Khanh went out." In reply to the first question, Taylor, then Ambassador to South Vietnam, answered "we could not afford to let Hanoi win, in terms of our overall position in the area and in the world." This was seconded forcefully by General Wheeler who spoke for the "unanimous view of the Joint Chiefs," that if South Vietnam falls, so does the rest of Southeast Asia. Thus, General Wheeler, described by McNamara in 1986 as part of the ablest group of advisers in the history of the republic, simply invoked the domino theory. In reply to the question about who might succeed Khanh, Taylor responded "that this was a very uncertain game of prediction."¹⁰ But the fact must be emphasized that the President, even suggesting another coup following the Khanh coup, never elicited any question among his advisers that the various governments in South Vietnam from Diem to Khanh reflected an ongoing institutional disintegration of South Vietnam. This is what Morgenthau meant when he said there is no government in South Vietnam worthy of the name

government. Almost two months later, Khanh had resigned and on October 28, 1964, Taylor cabled the President and confirmed the disintegration. "We should not forget," Taylor wrote, "that there has never been a stable government, and at times, no government at all in South Vietnam since Diem was overthrown last November." There was no government there "to work with," he told Johnson, though Taylor did not recommend any course other than trying to restore a viable government in South Vietnam, which Johnson did not question.¹¹

Six months earlier, on May 15, 1964, during a meeting of the national security council, attended by several members of Congress, McNamara reported on his recent visit to South Vietnam. The report was glum. "The situation has worsened"; "the Vietcong holds the initiative in military action"; the number of people and the amount of territory controlled by the Vietcong are increasing; "The Khanh government is fragmented"; "Khanh controls eight out of fourteen million South Vietnamese"; he will strike the North when his military situation has improved; he does not know how the North will respond to an attack, so "he must have a U.S. guarantee of protection, i.e., the introduction of U.S. forces, before such an attack is launched." McNamara told the group "the most important thing to do now is to back Khanh solidly." In response to a question by Senator Saltonstall about whether "U.S. soldiers will be engaged in fighting," McNamara replied that U.S. personnel "are not engaged in combat except in the course of their training [the] Vietnamese." After citing "facts to refute criticism that the Vietnamese are not fighting" and that Americans are "carrying on the war," Congresswoman Bolton said she "is getting a tremendous amount of mail criticizing our actions in South Vietnam." McNamara's reaction was simply to make "the information he had summarized available to the public," which, thirty years later, as he put it in his 1995 admission of error, the "facts" in "1964 and 1965" dictated "American withdrawal from Vietnam."¹²

To indict McNamara for his negligence in 1964 is not the result of hindsight thirty years later. Sufficient evidence that the war was questionable, even unnecessary, did not escape the nation's journals and newspapers that printed Morgenthau's appraisals of the war. Neither did it escape the official record of Congressional proceedings where several members of the U.S. Senate commented on and inserted a number of Morgenthau's articles in the *Congressional Record*.

Thus, as early as June 12, 1962, during Kennedy's second year in office, Senator Wayne Morse, who would become one of the Senate's most outspoken critics of the growing American military involvement in Vietnam, placed in the *Congressional Record*, Morgenthau's article in *Commentary* titled

“Vietnam—Another Korea.” Morgenthau, Senator Morse said, “challenges some of our present policies in South Vietnam and raises some very pertinent questions to which our government needs to give great heed as we reap-praise” American policy in South Vietnam. It is clear that Morse, in many of his ensuing criticisms of the war, employed, even at this early date, the rationale of Morgenthau’s arguments, which emphasized, in Morgenthau’s words, “the misconception that each Communist territorial gain constitutes for the United States a calamity of the first magnitude” and, as a “corollary,” that the United States must then commit its military forces in any part of the globe that might be threatened by Communist aggression or subversion.¹³

As we have seen, it is an argument Morgenthau made repeatedly, and one that made perfect sense to Morse and others who also accepted Morgenthau’s observation that Communism, as ideology, meant nothing to “the great mass of the peasants” in Vietnam who cooperated with whatever side exercised authority at a particular time and who changed sides as a matter of course to rejoin previously abandoned friends “if the fortunes of [the] guerrilla war” changed.¹⁴ This was the beginning of what Morgenthau later called the mess in Vietnam exacerbated by the policy of indiscriminate military commitment against Communism that began with Dulles. Here I repeat Morgenthau’s warning that “if persisted in,” the result could be a long drawn out “Korean-type war” and, as we have seen, the Kennedy advisers and Kennedy himself were already determined in 1962, to have their war. As Kennedy put it at a news conference on February 14, 1962, “Having helped Vietnam since it became independent we do not intend to withdraw our help when it is fighting to survive Communist guerrilla attacks.” And then he intoned the usual domino scenario: “Further,” he said, “The fall of South Vietnam would endanger the future of all Free Asian nations.” Kennedy went out of his way to emphasize that he had not sent “combat troops” to Vietnam “in the generally understood sense of the word,”¹⁵ but it was generally known that Americans were already engaged in firing back at the Vietcong.

Similarly, on March 15, 1964, as the American military involvement continued unabated four months after the Kennedy assassination, Senator Frank Church inserted in the *CR* Morgenthau’s *Washington Post* article, “Attack Hanoi, Rile Peking: The Case Against Greater U.S. Involvement in Vietnam.” This was the piece, previously noted, that carried the factual observation that the war in Vietnam “is first of all a South Vietnamese civil war, aided and abetted by the North Vietnamese but neither created nor sustained by it.” Nor is there any evidence, Morgenthau argued, that “what is happening in South Vietnam is being planned, directed and supported by China.” That the proposal to extend the war to North Vietnam may invite China to intervene “in view of its national interest confirmed by 2,000 years of history and

its recent "experiences in Laos and Korea."¹⁶ As we have seen, this is exactly what Morgenthau said to the members of the Council at his study group presentation and from their responses, it is apparent that it did not register. It did, however, with Senator Church, a Council member who participated in several Morgenthau study group discussions. Senator Church also used this argument in the questions he posed to several government witnesses during the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings in February 1966 as will be seen later in this chapter.

In the same article, "Attack Hanoi, Rile Peking," Morgenthau also raised the question of guerrilla warfare where, he pointed out, "The Vietcong supply themselves with captured American weapons" and win recruits "from the people of South Vietnam." This added further substance to the growing evidence that the United States was supporting a government that does not have the support of its own people.

A month after the Morgenthau article appeared, McNamara, at a national security council meeting on April 3, 1964, confirmed Morgenthau's pessimism. Before the President and Congressional leaders, McNamara said the "situation had grown worse"; "the people of Vietnam were becoming apathetic toward the war"; "this had the effect in the military of increasing the desertion rate"; "the political structure in the villages and hamlets had almost disappeared"; "frequent changes of hamlet leaders and village chieftains had produced a vacuum into which the Vietcong had moved"; the "local disintegration" in the villages and provinces were caused by "the changes of the central government in Saigon." McNamara said nothing about captured American weapons used by the Vietcong. The weapons, according to McNamara, came "primarily from Communist China." A year later, as noted in a previous chapter, McNamara would hold up a single Chinese rifle at a news conference, a single Chinese rifle, to imply deceptively or acting out of sheer ignorance, that the Chinese were directing the war. And what was McNamara's choice of the alternative policies for Vietnam in view of the deteriorating conditions he described? It was to continue the present course and "make the present program of [military] assistance more effective." "This" he said, "is the course we have chosen to follow."¹⁷

In addition to Senators Morse and Church, Senator Joe Clark of Pennsylvania was also a Morgenthau reader. As we have seen, Morgenthau and the super hawk columnist, Joseph Alsop, had a memorable quarrel in the pages of the *Washington Post*. On April 30, 1965, Senator Clark, in his speech to the Senate made their heated disagreement the central point of his speech in which he remarked that Morgenthau won the argument. Clark took note of the content in both the Alsop column and Morgenthau's published rebuttal and included

these in the *CR*. But Clark, in his remarks, affirmed his “complete dissent” from what he called Alsop’s “emotional” article and took special issue with Alsop who claimed in his article that Morgenthau had not visited and did not know much about Asia. In Clark’s words, “Mr. Morgenthau has been in Asia,” that “he has read deeply about Asian problems” and “knows far more about them than does Mr. Alsop.” And if this was not a sufficient endorsement, Clark also cited Morgenthau’s “considerable good humor and devastating logic.”¹⁸ As we have seen, Alsop titled his column “Pompous Ignorance.” Morgenthau called Alsop’s column “a scandal” and a “flagrant abuse of the freedom of the press,” which Alsop uses “as a license to smear, abuse and misinform.” It is noteworthy that the Alsop brouhaha occurred a month after Morgenthau received his invitation of appointment as a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations for the following year.

Another Morgenthau reader was Senator Earnest Gruening of Alaska. On April 30, 1965, Gruening addressed his colleagues on the Senate floor and noted that he had previously inserted in the *CR* Morgenthau’s *New Republic* article of April 3 titled “War With China?” It will be recalled that this was the piece in which Morgenthau belittled Johnson’s advisers as offering the President “simple-minded conceptions of the enemy” while avoiding “the complexities and subtleties of diplomatic maneuver.” That the “most powerful advice” the President gets, Morgenthau wrote, is to extend the war by bombing North Vietnam because they “do not know what else to do.” Again, Morgenthau called attention to the fact of traditional Chinese national interests, that Chinese Communism adds only “a new dynamic” by which China seeks to secure those interests and that the focus on Asian Communism distorts the assessment of Chinese aims and corrupts the process of making sound policy in Asia.¹⁹

On April 30, Gruening inserted in the *CR* another Morgenthau article published in *The New Republic* of May 1 titled “Russia, the United States and Vietnam.” As Gruening told his colleagues, amplifying Morgenthau’s argument, this was a further demonstration of “the dilemma the United States faces in its Southeast Asia intervention.” Gruening then included a “biographical sketch” of Morgenthau from *Who’s Who* as he lauded Morgenthau’s educational background and what he called Morgenthau’s “superlative qualifications” as a political scientist. And again, for the second time on the same day, Gruening inserted Morgenthau’s rebuttal of the Alsop column in the *CR*.²⁰ Of all the endorsements, Gruening’s was apparently the warmest and with his colleagues, Senators Morse, Clark and Church, firmly endorsed Morgenthau’s analyses about the dangers of America’s military involvement in Vietnam as correct and that should serve as the basis for reconsideration of U.S. policy. Senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee, as will be seen shortly, had not yet become an advocate for American withdrawal. But the upshot of these deliberations in the U.S. Senate was that Morgenthau was getting some attention. The executive office, however, was indifferent. And there is no better example of the administration's folly than the occasion of a special meeting in the White House on June 10, 1964, when William H. Sullivan, a special assistant secretary of state for Vietnamese Affairs, was the discussion leader. The discussion revolved around the prospects for the gathering of a new meeting at Geneva and what to do to shore up South Vietnamese support.

Sullivan began by noting "the most important element" is the "will and determination of the Khanh government and the South Vietnamese people." Their morale, he said, depends on what the United States does in Laos. The South Vietnamese must be clear about U.S. intentions. For the United States to go to Geneva "without gaining our preconditions, there will be a crisis of confidence in South Vietnam." To get a Congressional resolution in support of our policy, "the Vietnamese will be greatly encouraged." [This is the resolution Johnson wanted, which later materialized, as will be seen, as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.] Then Sullivan said: "We will need to indoctrinate our own people" through the U.S. Information Agency in Saigon, "so that they are not conveying to the Vietnamese that we are Gung Ho for a military victory, but rather, are in South Vietnam for the long term." With the installation of the new military commander, General William Westmoreland, Sullivan said, "we can shift from trying to kill every Vietcong, to protecting the Vietnamese population." Furthermore, Sullivan added, "the South Vietnamese government has hired a U.S. public relations firm to assist it in drawing public attention to its accomplishments." It was necessary, Sullivan said, "to reassure the South Vietnamese every day," which was seconded by Rusk. William Bundy took note of the recent U.S. air strike in Laos that, he said, "has helped morale in South Vietnam." McNamara agreed. The effect of the bombing "has improved" South Vietnamese "morale" "in the last two days."²¹

The sum total of the Sullivan report reflects the bankruptcy of U.S. Vietnam policy but not to the President's men determined to persevere. To reassure the South Vietnamese "every day" that the United States will not abandon South Vietnam and remain for the "long term" while the Saigon government employs a U.S. public relations firm to advertise its "accomplishments," expresses the magnitude of their confusion. Indeed: what accomplishments? There are none. What the United States wanted was a military victory and nothing more. And in their endorsement of the Sullivan report, the President's advisers were delusional about how they would act on Sullivan's recommendations. Thus, Secretary Rusk gives his full approval and to review the

effectiveness of U.S. operations in Vietnam, Rusk suggests “a checklist that might have as many as one hundred items on it,” which would be “reviewed every few days.” Rusk’s proposal is laughable. “Pluses and minuses would be placed after each item on the list,” he says, “which would include such questions as countries giving aid to South Vietnam, the appointment of South Vietnamese ambassadors, the religious question, and pay and housing for troops.” He points out that these “actions are the essence of our program” and “not diplomatic moves.” “The checklist,” Rusk goes on, “would be a stimulus to continued action on the many small proposals.”²²

After Sullivan concluded his report, the group turned to a consideration of a Congressional resolution in support of the President’s Vietnam policy, which, as Rusk pointed out, should be requested “only when the circumstances are such as to require action.” At such a moment, Rusk said, “There will be a rallying around the President” when it is clear that “U.S. action is necessary.”²³

That moment arrived two months later on August 2, 1964, when it was reported by the commander of the U.S. destroyer *Maddox* that it was being attacked by three North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin Bay. The *Maddox* returned fire and summoned air support from the carrier *Ticonderoga* stationed nearby. Two days later, the President ordered the *Maddox* to resume patrol accompanied by another destroyer, the *C. Turner Joy*. Both destroyers, operating under the code name DeSoto, were specially equipped to gather intelligence by patrolling off the coast of North Vietnam.

On August 4, the commanders of both destroyers reported they were attacked, but it was later acknowledged by the commander of the *Maddox* that what had appeared as torpedo boats could have been false images that resulted from a faulty radar blip due perhaps to bad weather conditions on a stormy night. There was confusion on the *Maddox* as the sonar displayed what appeared to be torpedoes coming from the patrol boats as the seamen braced for the explosion that never came. Johnson did not wait for clarification and said the incidents were “deliberate attacks” and “open aggression on the high seas.” Within hours, he ordered retaliatory air strikes that included sixty-four bombing sorties over North Vietnamese bases and an oil depot. He also submitted a resolution to both the Senate and House asking for full authority to use whatever means he thought necessary to defend American forces. In the Senate, only Senators Morse and Gruening opposed the resolution.²⁴

In one of his several speeches during the debate on the Senate floor, Senator Morse did not deny the right of the *Maddox* and *C. Turner Joy* to retaliate and go after the PT boats that were attempting to torpedo them. What he did object to was the massive air strikes against the North Vietnamese that followed when “our ships were not under fire” and as the United States

“escalated the war to the mainland of North Vietnam.” Morse also noted that on the one hand, we were carrying the war to the North, and at the same time we were saying “we are not seeking to expand the war,” “we do not want to widen the war.”

In the same speech on August 6, Morse also called attention to the planned bombing of two North Vietnamese islands by the South Vietnamese days earlier on July 31, which, Morse said, the United States must have known about and should not have had its destroyers anywhere in the area. To have the destroyers in the area, Morse noted, could have been seen by the North Vietnamese as a “cause-and-effect relationship between the bombardment by the South Vietnamese and the presence of American naval vessels” in Tonkin Bay as a joint military operation. Morse was adamant. “I do not care how one tries to spell it,” he said. “I do not care with how much political fervor by way of semantics we attempt to describe it.” “The fact,” Morse said, “is that the United States was not protecting any ships” at the time Johnson began the retaliatory air strikes. At another point in his speech, an impassioned Morse noted: “I cannot understand what is happening to my country. I cannot understand what makes people think” that “the problem in Asia” can be settled by war. It requires, Morse said, “a conference table” and “a negotiated settlement” and he urged the involvement of the United Nations.²⁵

Senator Gruening was equally adamant. He would not endorse the “pending proposal,” which he regarded as a policy of continuing the military escalation in Southeast Asia. Moreover, he reminded his colleagues that he had repeatedly voiced his opposition to the war and initially, as early as five months ago, when he had “urged” that the United States get out of South Vietnam “at least to the extent of participation by our soldiery.” “This was not our war,” he said; “that we were wholly misguided in picking up the burden abandoned by France” at a cost of “staggering losses running into tens of thousands of young French lives and vast sums of money”; that the war that has already sacrificed many young Americans “poses no threat to our national security”; and in a sentence that was repeated seven years later, in 1971, to a Senate Committee hearing on Vietnam by a young decorated veteran from Massachusetts, John Kerry, Gruening, in August 1964, told his Senate colleagues: “I do not consider this our war . . . Vietnam is not worth the life of a single American boy.”²⁶

On August 7, after three days of debate, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing the President “to respond instantly with the use of appropriate force to repel any unprovoked attack against the armed forces of the United States and to take such other steps as may be necessary to protect these forces.” The vote in the Senate was 98 to 2; the dissenting votes were cast by Senators Morse and Gruening. The floor manager who guided

the resolution to passage in the Senate was J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a staunch supporter of the President's Vietnam policy. By the summer of 1965, however, Fulbright questioned Johnson's policy. By early 1966, he became a forceful opponent of the war. But on August 6, 1964, Fulbright stood with the President. Fulbright's metamorphosis from a supporter to an outspoken critic of the war is the result of several factors one of which is the "impact" of several Morgenthau articles that helped cause the transformation, as will be seen later in this chapter.

On August 6, 1964, Fulbright began the debate: "Mr. President," he said, addressing the President *pro tem* of the Senate, "I recommend the prompt and overwhelming endorsement of the resolution now before the Senate." He noted the Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services had already endorsed what he called "the wise and necessary action of President Johnson in ordering the 7th fleet and its air units to take appropriate measures in response to the unprovoked attacks on American naval vessels by North Vietnamese torpedo boats." He added: "The American action was limited and measured"; "the single, most notable fact about the American action was its great restraint as an act of retaliation taken by a great power in response to the provocation of a small power." Fulbright then inserted into the record several editorials from major newspapers that supported the resolution and the retaliatory attacks.²⁷

He then answered those Senators who voiced doubt. He told Senator McGovern there is no danger the United States will cede American military decisions to Khanh who wanted to carry the war to North Vietnam. "The policy of our government not to expand the war still holds," Fulbright declared. He told Senator Javits that the UN could eventually be brought in but not before the United States could "stabilize the situation" with "reasonable assurance that North Vietnam and the Chinese would leave these people [the South Vietnamese] alone,"²⁸ and thus, it had not yet dawned on Fulbright that the conflict was a civil war, that is, not until 1966.

To fast forward to 1966 when Fulbright published *The Arrogance of Power*, here he affirms that the conflict in Vietnam is a civil war. Fulbright writes: "It is said that we are fighting against North Vietnam's aggression ... that the 'other side' has only to 'stop doing what it is doing' in order to restore peace." But what the North is doing, Fulbright notes, is "participating in a civil war, not in a foreign country but on the other side of the demarcation line between two sectors of the same country, a civil war in which Americans from ten thousand miles across the ocean are also participating."²⁹ The words within the Fulbright statement, the "other side" to "stop doing what it is doing" were the favored expressions made frequently by the President and his secretary of state.

To return as in a flashback to August 6, 1964, Fulbright then had full confidence in the secretary of state and extolled his competence. Rusk, Fulbright said, "is an indefatigable worker," "has consulted with the members of SEATO"; "we have had positive assurance from the secretary of state" that we will use "all the organs for international peace" including the UN, "to secure freedom in that area."³⁰ In February 1966, at the televised hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Fulbright gave up on Rusk. Here he aggressively disputed Rusk's entire testimony in his defense of the war. To millions who watched the proceedings, Fulbright emerged as a new hero of the anti-war movement. At the close of Rusk's second appearance before the committee on February 18, 1966, Fulbright summed up his opposition to the war:

But all I am pleading with you for and have been very awkwardly, I think, is, [this] isn't the kind of conflict that warrants a vast escalation, a vast expenditure of money and many thousands of deaths. I think it is not that kind of a vital interest, as I can cite many other instances. And I also think that the great countries, especially this country, is quite strong enough to engage in a compromise without losing its standing in the world without losing its prestige as a great nation. On the contrary, I think it would be one of the greatest victories for us in our prestige if we could be ingenious enough and magnanimous enough to bring about some kind of a settlement of this particular struggle.³¹

This response to Rusk took place on February 18, 1966. Fulbright had now concluded that Vietnam was not worth the cost in blood and money; Vietnam was not a vital American interest. Moreover, and just as importantly, the United States could reverse its policy without damaging its standing in the world. The United States could get out of Vietnam without losing its "prestige" for a "great nation," as he said, would not be impaired by being "magnanimous" in working out a "settlement." Again, these words are reminiscent of Morgenthau on the subject of prestige and we have it on the authority of Fulbright's chief of staff, Carl Marcy, that several Morgenthau's articles have had an "impact" on the Senator.³² Indeed, prestige was the new word in the Fulbright vocabulary and one which he first alluded to in his speech on the Senate floor on June 15, 1965, almost a year after he had floor-managed the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. This was also exactly a month after the fifteen hour National Teach-In of May 15, 1965. In the evolution of Fulbright's thoughts on the war, June 15 emerges as the transformative moment.

On June 15, 1965, after the Senate had spent eight days on a tax bill, Fulbright had taken the floor and announced that he wanted to talk about

another subject. He said he wished “to say a few words about Vietnam.” He began by noting that “a complete military victory in Vietnam” could only be “attained at a cost far exceeding the requirements of our interest and honor.” At the same time, he said he opposed an “unconditional withdrawal of American support from South Vietnam.” But he also opposed any “further escalation of the war” that could invite “massive Chinese military intervention” together with large numbers of North Vietnamese troops. He said as the “ground war expands” and as “American casualties increase, there will be mounting pressures” for greater expansion, which he said “would be most unwise.” He then praised President Johnson whose “statesmanship,” Fulbright said, “remains committed” to ending the war “at the earliest possible time without preconditions.” This was leadership, Fulbright said, “appropriate to a great nation” and it is at this point in his address that he took up the theme that summarized his plea to Rusk on February 18, 1966. On June 15, 1965, Fulbright told the Senate:

The most striking characteristic of a great nation is not the mere possession of power but the wisdom and restraint and largeness of view with which power is exercised. A great nation is one which is capable of looking beyond its own view of the world, or recognizing that, however convinced it may be of the beneficence of its own role and aims, other nations may be equally persuaded of their benevolence and good intent. It is a mark of greatness and maturity when a nation like the United States, without abandoning its convictions and commitments, is capable at the same time of acknowledging that there may be some merit and even good intent in the views and aims of its adversaries.³³

It is both interesting and instructive to note that Morgenthau had used these words two months before Fulbright’s June 15 speech. For on April 18, 1965, as noted in an earlier chapter, Morgenthau published “We Are Deluding Ourselves on Vietnam” in the *New York Times Magazine*, his most comprehensive argument to date on why the United States should not be militarily involved in Vietnam. The article, as we have seen, is replete with the course of events in Vietnam after Diem and the failure of America’s national leadership since John Foster Dulles to understand and adopt American policy to its interests. For Morgenthau, the war was a mistake—and it is here where Fulbright borrows Morgenthau’s vocabulary—for it is in the nature of a “great power,” Morgenthau writes, to admit its mistake and preserve its “prestige.” Thus, on June 15, Fulbright uses the same language. Again, a month earlier, on April 18, Morgenthau writes: “Does not a great power gain prestige by mustering the wisdom and courage necessary to liquidate a losing enterprise?” Morgenthau then asks: have we “gained prestige by being involved in a civil war on the mainland of Asia and by being unable to win it?” “Would we gain

more” by not extricating ourselves from it and subsequently “by expanding it unilaterally into an international war?” “Is French prestige lower today than it was 11 years ago when France was fighting in Indochina, or five years ago when she was fighting in Algeria?”³⁴

In his 1989 book, *The Price of Empire*, Fulbright tells us that he “started to read up” on Vietnam in 1964 at the time of the Tonkin Resolution debate. He says he read books written by Bernard Fall and invited him to meet informally with the Foreign Relations Committee. He also read the French journalist, Jean Lacouture, who made several trips to Vietnam and published his reports in *Le Monde* and in other journals.³⁵ A Fulbright biographer, William C. Berman, also includes among the Senator’s Vietnam readings, *I. F. Stone’s Weekly* and *Viet Reports*. Berman writes that the “catalyst” for Fulbright’s growing understanding of events in Vietnam was Bernard Fall but he also writes that Fulbright’s “evolving views” on Vietnam “coincided” with those of Morgenthau, Ronald Steel, William Pfaff and Edmund Stillman. Steel, Pfaff and Stillman, however, in contrast to Morgenthau, were largely unknown to the public. Moreover, Berman writes, it was “Morgenthau, in particular,” whose dissent from “costly and futile interventions abroad” was “virtually identical to Fulbright’s.”³⁶ This is what makes Morgenthau, in Berman’s words, “interesting,” but as to the question of whose thinking on foreign policy preceded their “virtually identical views,” the evidence points to Morgenthau.

In the spring of 1966, following the televised Senate Foreign Relations hearings months earlier, Fulbright delivered the Christian A. Herter Lectures at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Many of the ideas and proposals contained in those lectures were later published in the aforementioned 1966 book, *The Arrogance of Power*, which contains Fulbright’s most comprehensive statements against the war. What is of particular concern for the purposes of this chapter is the preeminence of Morgenthau’s influence on Fulbright though there is no reference to Morgenthau in the book. But the ideas and policy statements may be traced directly to Morgenthau as the following examples demonstrate.

Thus, Fulbright writes: “The Chinese have a ferocious vocabulary but surely some distinction must be made between what they say and what they do.” He adds in a later paragraph, “The ferocity of Peking’s language has obscured the fact that in practice China has tolerated a high degree of independence on the part of her neighbors.” Indeed, this is vintage Morgenthau, and we have been here before. At one point in his testimony to the Fulbright Committee on March 31, 1966, which was not televised, Morgenthau suggested that the rhetoric of Chinese leaders suggested madness while they have displayed “extreme caution” in their actions.³⁷

Two months earlier, on January 31, 1966, Morgenthau was the lead-off witness at the hearings held by the House of Representatives Sub-committee on U.S. Asian Policy chaired by Representative Clement Zablocki of Wisconsin. In his opening statement, Morgenthau pointed to the “very great discrepancy between the verbal assertions of Chinese leaders and the actual policies those leaders have pursued.” In *The Arrogance of Power*, Fulbright uses the same term, “discrepancy,” to describe the “American perception” of China and the reality “as it actually exists.” Thus, Fulbright repeats: “China is considered to be aggressive not on the basis of what her leaders do but rather on the basis of what they say or on the basis of their presumed intentions.”³⁸

In his testimony to the Zablocki Sub-committee, Morgenthau refers to the recent statements by Marshal Lin Biao whom McNamara, Alsop and others not only took at face value, but also equated with Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. Morgenthau tells the committee that you might “ask yourself whether these people are in their right mind. They speak the most extreme language, they set themselves aims that they cannot possibly achieve and they talk almost like madmen.” He then adds: “However, if one looks at the policies they have pursued during the last 15 years or so, one is forced to the conclusion that they have acted with extreme caution.”³⁹

But it is not only the “discrepancy” between Chinese talk and action that Fulbright adopted in his book; it is also Morgenthau’s description of China with its “long history” as “a nation that is also a civilization.” In Morgenthau’s words, there is in Chinese history “this ethnocentricity of universal superiority [which] is still a very important factor in Chinese psychology today in its relations with the rest of the world.” How did Fulbright put it? He wrote: China is a “rich and ancient civilization”; the Chinese, “in their ethnocentric pride, remained aloof, uninterested in the West,” regarded Westerners as “barbarians” and denigrated the offer of King George of England to establish an embassy in Peking. And how did Morgenthau phrase it? He testified: “The Chinese for thousands of years thought they were the only sovereign power in the world.” When “the English King sent a legation to Peking . . . the Emperor told them: ‘We don’t need anything from the outside. You barbarians [may] keep your stuff. England is a tributary of the Emperor of China . . . we don’t want diplomatic relations on an equal basis with anybody . . . because we are superior to everybody.’” In Fulbright’s words: China was “the center of civilization in Eastern Asia”; there were no “rival centers of culture and power” that “instilled in the Chinese their sense of belonging to a civilization,” caused them to view “all foreigners as tributaries and barbarians.”⁴⁰

Indeed, how influential was Morgenthau’s thinking on Fulbright? While Fulbright’s staff of assistants wrote the Senator’s speeches, the textual evidence indicates strongly that they, and thereby Fulbright, relied heavily on

Morgenthau's thinking. The "virtual identity" of their positions, as Berman points out, makes Morgenthau, not Fall, the catalyst in Fulbright's evolution as an opponent of the war. But more directly, in addition to the similarity of content and language, there is also a short note to Morgenthau from Carl Marcy, Chief of Staff of Fulbright's Foreign Relations committee on April 20, 1965. Fulbright was in Arkansas and Marcy, responding to a Morgenthau letter, noted in a post-script that "Your articles have had quite an impact—but not enough, I guess."⁴¹ The meaning of "not enough" is not explained but speculatively, perhaps Marcy wanted Fulbright to advocate withdrawal or liquidation of the war.

Was there any direct correspondence between Fulbright and Morgenthau? Yes, on April 19, 1965, on the subject of a bombing halt. Thus, on the same date, the *Times* reported that Fulbright took issue with Secretary of State Rusk and called for a "temporary halt in air strikes against North Vietnam" as a means to "open the way to peace negotiations." Morgenthau's letter to Fulbright noted his concurrence about the bombing halt. Morgenthau had just returned from Moscow and informed Fulbright that the Soviet government is under great pressure "to take drastic action in response to American policy." On this basis, he encouraged Fulbright to explore the bombing halt while noting that the United States might have missed an important opportunity by not acting earlier.⁴² It was on the following day, April 20, that Marcy wrote to Morgenthau about the "impact" of his articles. Within this time period, it was on April 18, 1965, that Morgenthau's "Deluding Ourselves" on Vietnam appeared. Among Fulbright's papers at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, there is only one Morgenthau article, which is his May 26, 1966, piece titled "Johnson's Dilemma: The Alternatives Now in Vietnam."⁴³

There had also been earlier correspondence between the two men. On April 23, 1963, Morgenthau wrote Fulbright in support of legislation to increase the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency budget and to give the Agency permanent status. When the agency was first established by statute in September 1961, six months after Kennedy argued with Khrushchev in Vienna, the *Time-Life* empire of Henry Luce with its massive circulation was promoting fall-out shelters and making thermonuclear war acceptable with pictures of families gathered around well-stocked shelters as if life would continue as usual. In his letter to Fulbright, Morgenthau noted "the probable disastrous results of a continuing nuclear arms race" and he advised the Senator to promote the "possibility of bringing the nuclear arms race under control." Fulbright wrote back and said he shared Morgenthau's reasons for support of the bill.⁴⁴

On February 10 and 16, 1965, there was another exchange of letters on the forthcoming hearings on east-west trade. Morgenthau noted he would

be available to testify. Fulbright wrote back and said the witness list was completed but asked Morgenthau to prepare a written statement for the record. Morgenthau complied and Fulbright thanked him in a letter on March 4, 1965.⁴⁵

As for Morgenthau's influence on Fulbright, in addition to what has already been cited, there are additional Fulbright statements that confirm Marcy's "impact" judgment in his note to Morgenthau. Thus, on May 6, 1965, *The New York Times* reported that Fulbright at a news conference called for a negotiated settlement of "the war in Vietnam based on the 1954 Geneva agreements." the *Times* quoted Fulbright: "I think the result would be an independent nationalist regime because I don't think the people there would inevitably vote for a sort of Red Chinese regime." In his April 18, 1965, *New York Times Magazine* article, Morgenthau suggested terms of a negotiated settlement that "do not preclude a return to the Geneva Agreement and even assume the existence of a [nationalist] Titoist government in North Vietnam. Nor do they preclude the establishment of a Titoist government for all of Vietnam provided the people of South Vietnam have freely agreed to it."⁴⁶

On May 12, 1965, again in the *New York Times*, Fulbright was quoted: there is a "new ferment in the Communist world"; the *Times* then paraphrased Fulbright: "The Communist world is not the monolith it was 15 years ago." Communism, Fulbright commented, was "increasingly nationalized." In a speech close to a year later, on March 25, 1966, Fulbright pointed to "the master myth of the cold war," that the "Communist bloc is a monolith" resolutely determined "to destroy the free world." In that speech, he noted also that the American people tend to see the world "in moralistic rather than empirical terms," which is again, vintage Morgenthau. Fulbright adds, similar to the way Morgenthau put it, that we are "predisposed to regard any conflict as a clash between good and evil rather than simply a clash between conflicting interests."⁴⁷ Indeed, again, these are Morgenthau's words.

To return to his June 15 speech, Fulbright noted that in the postwar era, "it has been repeatedly demonstrated" that among communist states, nationalism is no longer subordinate to communism. That if the United States in the future will support the "legitimate national aspirations" of other countries, "I do not think that we will soon find ourselves in another conflict like the one in Vietnam." And in his March, 1966 speech, Fulbright repeated the United States must not treat "every Communist state" as "an unmitigated evil," that some "Communist regimes" pose no threat to the free world and what is important, Fulbright said, is to "recognize distinctions" among those regimes so that "we ourselves will be able to influence events ... in a way favorable to the security of the free world."⁴⁸

Again, in Morgenthau's April 18, 1965, article, Morgenthau wrote that since the Dulles era, we identify "the enemy as 'Communist' seeing in every Communist party and regime an extension of hostile Russian or Chinese power. This identification was justified twenty to fifteen years ago when communism still had a monolithic character." But this had all changed, Morgenthau noted, and our current "mode of thought and action" is now "rendered obsolete by new developments." As cited above, on May 12, 1965, in the *New York Times*, Fulbright is almost a perfect echo of Morgenthau: "The Communist world," Fulbright said, "is not the monolith it was fifteen years ago." A week earlier, on May 5, Fulbright speculated on what might be the results of "free elections" in Vietnam based on the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Morgenthau, on numerous occasions, said Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh would resemble the nationalist regime of Yugoslavia established by Tito, which was independent of Russia. Fulbright, on May 5, said: "I think the result would probably be an independent nationalist regime" because the Vietnamese would not vote to become a satellite of China.⁴⁹

To reiterate, there is no mention of Morgenthau in any of the Senator's public speeches or writings. In his Senate speech of March 25, 1966, Fulbright cited George Kennan on the breakdown of the communist monolith. In his selection of witnesses for the televised hearings a month earlier, only two private citizens, George Kennan and retired General James M. Gavin, were called to testify. He also inserted in the *CR* a speech by the U.S. Ambassador to West Germany, George McGhee, on the "prospects" of future U.S. and communist "relations." Especially, in his June 15, 1965, speech in which he signaled his opposition to the war and where, as we have seen, there are several key Morgenthau ideas, Fulbright makes no attribution to Morgenthau. On January 28, in a fifteen minute statement before he began his questioning of Rusk at the televised hearings, Fulbright called attention to the "great dissent, that is evidenced by teach-ins and articles and speeches by various responsible people," dissent, he repeated, by "very reputable scholars," which suggest there is something "wrong" or "there would not be such great dissent."⁵⁰

On the subject of dissent, there is a chapter in Fulbright's *Arrogance of Power* that the Senator titles "The Higher Patriotism" that replicates the first of Fulbright's Christian Herter lectures delivered at Johns Hopkins University on April 21, 1966. The lecture embodies, in both substance and language, Morgenthau's argument that criticism and dissent are essential in a democracy. First, here is Morgenthau in April, 1965, on the subject of dissent:

It illuminates the many misunderstandings that beset our Vietnam policy that in order to criticize that policy in public one has first to justify one's right to do so. The President himself has declared such criticism to be unhelpful and even

damaging. ... many eminent men ... have at least implied that to support these policies was the only decent thing to do ... This position is incompatible both with the principles of democracy and the requirements of sound policy formation. ... To say that the most momentous issues a nation must face cannot be openly and critically discussed is really tantamount to saying that democratic debate and decision do not apply to the questions of life and death. ... Not only is this position at odds with the principles of democracy, but it also removes a very important corrective for governmental misjudgment.⁵¹

Here is Fulbright in 1966 on the same subject:

To criticize one's country is to do it a service and pay it a compliment. It is a service because it may spur the country to do better than it is doing.... In a democracy dissent is an act of faith.... Criticism may embarrass the country's leaders in the short run but strengthen their hand in the long run; it may destroy a consensus on policy while expressing a consensus of values.... Criticism, in short, is more than a right; it is an act of patriotism, a higher form of patriotism, I believe, than the familiar rituals of national adulation. While not unprecedented, protests against a war in the middle of the war are a rare experience for Americans. I see it as a mark of strength and maturity that an articulate minority have raised their voices against the Vietnamese war and that the majority of Americans are enduring this dissent....⁵²

Morgenthau's dissent as the foremost public critic in the national debate on Vietnam is supported overwhelmingly by the evidence. But it is also affirmed by the evidence that Morgenthau also, quietly and without acknowledgment, influenced Senator Fulbright who became a leading critic of the war. Indeed, Fulbright's chief of staff, Carl Marcy, was correct in his estimate that Morgenthau's articles had an "impact" on the Senator's thinking.

The bombing of North Vietnam began in February 1965 in response to the Vietcong attacks on U.S. bases in Pleiku in which eight Americans were killed and more than a 100 were wounded. On February 17, the President told a group of businessmen that the raids known as Operation Rolling Thunder were justified and would continue because of the "continuing aggression" of the North. From the beginning, though the President and Rusk, as the main spokesman for the government proclaimed publicly that their objective was "peace," their real intention was to use the sustained bombing as a means to get the North to negotiate on U.S. terms, which, in fact, meant surrender. To reiterate, this did not fool Senators Morse and Gruening, but did fool the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Thus, in February 1965, Senator Fulbright gave full support to the air strikes and said "the raids would succeed in ending the war in about six weeks."⁵³ Four months later, in June 1965, as noted above, Fulbright questioned administration policy.

In part because of the teach-ins and demonstrations, the administration stopped the air strikes for five days, from May 13 to 17 and sent a note to North Vietnam through its Moscow Embassy that the United States would extend its bombing pause if North Vietnam would make some reciprocal act. The North rejected the U.S. proposal. In the summer of 1965, the Soviets informed the United States that the pause was too short and that Hanoi might respond to a lengthier halt in the raids. On December 24, following several meetings with his advisers, Johnson halted the raids for thirty-seven days, from Christmas to January 30, 1966, when the air strikes resumed. In the course of that interval, Johnson sent envoys to over thirty countries asking them to use their influence to get the North to respond. Again, North Vietnam refused. There would never again be another lengthy pause in the bombing, and the brief two- or three-day pauses during the Christmas seasons of 1966 and 1967 were not intended to achieve a political objective.

In 1965, *Time* magazine's man of the year was Lyndon Johnson. At the close of 1965, Johnson had produced an amazing passage of eighty-nine laws including such milestone legislation as Medicare and the Voting Rights bill. In 1966, *Time*'s man of the year was General William C. Westmoreland, which in hindsight appears as a portent of what is to come. For the Great Society program that had such a remarkable beginning in 1965 could not be funded and began to falter as the war took precedence over everything else.

The Johnson style, amazingly adept in domestic affairs, had no relevance in matters of foreign policy, a subject in which Johnson was almost totally bereft and for which he had no real interest. Indeed, it was foreign policy that vexed and befuddled the President. Thus, on March 2, 1964, two weeks before Johnson was scheduled to have a televised interview with David Brinkley of NBC, Eric Severeid of CBS and William Laurence of ABC taped in the Oval Office and broadcast on March 15, Johnson asked McNamara to prepare a memorandum. Johnson wanted "a couple of pages ... so I can read it and study it and commit it to memory ... on the situation in Vietnam." Johnson tells McNamara "I would like to have ... when everybody is asking me, something in my own words [so] I can say, why, here are the alternatives and here's our theory, and that's what we're basing it on..." He asks McNamara: "Do you think it's a mistake to explain what I'm saying now about Vietnam and what we're faced with?" And McNamara replies: "I do think, Mr. President, it would be wise for you to say as little as possible." He then tells Johnson just how bad the Vietnam situation is: "The frank answer is we don't know what's going on out there ... the signs are disturbing ... poor morale in Vietnamese forces ... disunity, a tremendous amount of coup planning against Khanh."⁵⁴

It is a very revealing fact that in the course of the one hour program, of the thirty-four questions asked of Johnson at the televised interview, only four dealt with Vietnam and Vietnam did not come up until question number twenty-four. But when William Laurence noted that Johnson had spent his first month in office making final decisions on the budget and asked "Why was the budget so terribly important?" the President, given the opening, expanded on what truly interested him. Johnson replied that he intended to close down some ninety-six military bases and spend the money, in his words, "to meet the unfilled needs of poverty-stricken people." Indeed, he used the word "poverty" four times. He then made a short speech: he wanted manpower work programs to train young boys who were high school dropouts; he invoked Franklin Roosevelt who said that one-third of the nation is "ill clad, ill fed and ill housed"; he noted that "30 years after Roosevelt, one-fifth of the nation earn less than \$3,000 a year." In reply to a David Brinkley question, Johnson said "we are going to try to get at the roots and causes of poverty"; that "illiteracy and ignorance and disease" are too costly and "make for much unhappiness."⁵⁵

In response to question twenty-four on Vietnam, Johnson followed almost verbatim the talking points provided by Bundy. Bundy advised Johnson "to quietly but firmly spell out the following themes": "Neutralization of the whole area has been repeatedly denounced by the Communists and is therefore not practicable now"; the United States is supporting "the right of people to choose their own course" and if the aggression stops, "the need for our help will end"; the United States will be "firm and strong"; "We are strong, calm and determined in a situation that has danger but also hope"; Our ambassador "is our top man in the field, and you are proud of the U.S. unity" here and in Vietnam.⁵⁶ In answer to the question on Vietnam, Johnson simply echoed Bundy's instructions. Indeed, on matters of foreign policy, Johnson, greatly unsure of himself, relied on Bundy and McNamara. On matters of domestic policy, Johnson needed no advisers. He knew what he wanted to do. And in following the advice of Bundy and McNamara, Rusk, Lodge and Rostow, the Johnson Presidency ended in failure and tragedy.

On January 9, 1966, on the sixteenth day of the bombing pause, the *New York Times* reported that about 8,000 American troops aided by a contingent of Australian and New Zealand forces "launched their largest offensive operation of the Vietnam War." The operation was directed at the Vietcong forces in the Hobo or Anson Forest twenty miles northwest of Saigon, a region that was the operational base of a battalion of Vietcong troops. The operation was kept secret from the South Vietnamese Army Command, which was known to be "riddled with Vietcong agents." The battle began with heavy artillery "pounding the landing zone" ninety minutes before the troop-carrying Army

helicopters arrived from the American air bases at Bienhoa and Laikhe. The *Times* quoted American artillerymen who said "that never in the history of the Vietnam war had so much artillery been used to soften up suspected Vietcong positions," which also included a "strike by B-52 strategic bombers."⁵⁷

The day before, on January 8, Senator Mike Mansfield submitted his report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that concluded that the position held by South Vietnam cannot be maintained without "further augmentation of American forces on the ground." That "all of mainland Southeast Asia, at least, cannot be ruled out as a potential battlefield" in a war that has already "extended significantly into Laos" and the Cambodian border. The warning was clear: under "present terms of reference," Mansfield reported, in January 1966, "the indefinite expansion and intensification of the war will require the continuous introduction of additional U.S. forces"; the end "cannot be foreseen," Mansfield noted, and "there are no grounds for optimism."⁵⁸

A week later, on January 16, retired Lieutenant General James M. Gavin offered an equally pessimistic appraisal of the war in a letter published in *Harper's* magazine. Gavin, age fifty-eight, was a well-known and respected combat commander in Europe during World War II and in Korea. He left the Army in 1951 as chief of research and development and was later appointed Ambassador to France by Kennedy in 1961 to 1962. In 1966, Gavin was chief executive officer of the Arthur D. Little Corporation, an industrial research company in Massachusetts. In his letter, Gavin warned that the United States would require "many times as much force" as currently employed to prevent the collapse of South Vietnam. That if the United States applies the force needed to achieve its objective, China, in all likelihood, would enter the war in Vietnam and "reopen the war in Korea." As Morgenthau was the first critic to dispute the domino theory, General Gavin was the first most prominent military professional to similarly question its validity. "I do not for a moment think," Gavin wrote, "that if we should withdraw from Vietnam the next stop would be Waikiki." He added that the "Malay Peninsula, Thailand and the Philippines can all be secured." He did not discount the serious problems that would be presented by withdrawal from Vietnam, but these "problems," Gavin wrote, "would be far less serious" than those "associated with the current conflict." He said he was opposed to the resumption of bombing and went as far as advocating a permanent end to the bombing. For Gavin, in his words: "To increase the bombing and to bomb Hanoi—or even Peking—will add to our problems . . . and it will not stop the penetration of North Vietnamese troops in the South." As an alternative policy, Gavin endorsed the enclave strategy: he proposed the limitation of U.S. military operations restricted to the holding of coastal enclaves in South Vietnam while an ultimate political solution should be sought at Geneva or at the United Nations.⁵⁹

As noted above, Gavin's letter in *Harper's* was printed in February 1966. It was reported by *The New York Times* on January 17, the day the February issue of *Harper's* appeared. Former Army Chief of Staff, General Matthew B. Ridgeway, then published a letter in *Harper's* endorsing General Gavin's enclave strategy. The enclave strategy was first proposed by Morgenthau six months earlier on June 27, 1965, in the *Milwaukee Journal*. Morgenthau referred to it a week earlier in his debate with Bundy on June 21. He included it in his *Look* magazine piece in August 1966. In July, 1965, an editorial in the *New York Times* endorsed the enclave policy. Among a number of alternatives, the *Times* chose and defined it as defensive enclaves "to establish unconquerable beachheads along the coast and a perimeter around Saigon, and then to hold" these positions until "negotiations on honorable terms become possible." Six months later, on January 31, 1966, as the Fulbright hearings got underway, Walter Lippmann made the enclave policy the subject of his *Newsweek* column. Lippmann called it "the holding strategy" and advised its adoption by the President just as Johnson resumed the bombing after the 37 day pause. For Lippmann, the United States was "at a turning point," and the enclave policy was the only strategy that made sense given the inability of "American soldiers fighting 8,000 miles away to make secure 2,500" South Vietnamese villages.⁶⁰

Two weeks later, on February 15, 1966, even the *Wall Street Journal* endorsed the enclave strategy. The *Journal* editorial noted that Generals Gavin and Ridgeway "have a point in contending that the United States should hold where it is until it can decide what it wants to do." The editorial pondered "how this war can be won?" as it warned against expansion and whether there may be "any Vietnam left worth anyone's having." The editorial asked: "Where, in all this thrashing about, is the opportunity for the deep reflection the war urgently demands?"⁶¹ Of course, that was the problem. There was never any "deep," let alone even a superficial "reflection," by the administration about what it was doing in Vietnam in the first place.

Back at the White House, Bundy said nothing to the President about enclaves. Valenti, in a January 1966 memo to the President, made reference to Gavin's "enclave thesis." He also told Johnson that Senators Pell and McGovern and columnist Walter Lippmann were advocating the adoption of the "enclave" policy to coincide with the bombing halt.⁶² George Reedy, who preceded Bill Moyers as press secretary, sent Johnson a memo dated February 17, 1966, advising Johnson "to invite Gavin and Kennan to the White House for a quiet but lengthy and thorough, luncheon conference." Kennan had already testified at the Fulbright hearings where he had expressed great doubt about the war. Reedy suggests a series of meetings where there could be a "continuing arrangement" of these meetings so that their advice would be

available on a frequent basis. Gavin and Kennan, Reedy tells the President, "made clear their uneasiness" about the war and "expressed some opinions that are worth considering." Reedy, however, was less interested in the enclave strategy than he was in how the meetings with Gavin and Kennan might be useful as a public relations ploy. "It is possible," Reedy tells the President, "that they have a point;" and "it is possible they don't." And while "they may have some thoughts worth hearing," their presence in the White House would enhance the image of the President. The meetings would thereby convey a picture of Johnson listening to a group of men whose advice, Reedy notes, differs from "the unanimity among the President's advisers." It would, Reedy adds, also tone down the heated nature of the debate. It would also deprive the "doves" of a "rallying point."⁶³

Johnson did not meet with either Gavin or Kennan. When Johnson met with his advisers on February 26, the Reedy memo was not mentioned. The only reference to Kennan took place when Johnson told Bundy he could not understand why Kennan testified on Vietnam since he had never been there. Bundy replied that "Kennan's motivation may be found by his extreme Europe-first attitude."⁶⁴ This is another splendid example of Bundy's misunderstanding of the war for Bundy made no comment about the merits of Kennan's argument. It did not dawn on Bundy that maybe, just maybe, Kennan's motivation may just have been to provide truthful answers to questions about his assessment of the war. Indeed, Bundy, at this stage of the war, was too far gone in his zealous and ideological commitment to fight in Vietnam. For Bundy, truth did not matter and thus it did not matter for Bundy's protégé on foreign affairs, the President of the United States.

Thus, the Johnson reaction was to circle the wagons with defensive maneuvers. The Gavin position prompted Johnson to say he wanted such retired military officers as Generals Eisenhower, Ridgeway, and Bradley briefed on the developments in Vietnam. He also wanted a list of retired generals who make public statements similarly briefed. He wanted regular meetings on Vietnam every Saturday "to make sure we're doing everything we need to do." He said Senator Russell would offer a resolution to counter Senator Morse's resolution to repeal the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. He said Director Raborn of the CIA had been assigned to deflect Senator Fulbright's criticism by showing him intelligence data.⁶⁵

Johnson, on rare occasions, would use the words "national interest" but only rhetorically. The President thus had not a clue as to the substantive nature of the criticisms opposed to his policies. And because he was unalterably convinced that he was right, and had sought to be advised by those who confirmed his conviction that the enemy had to be destroyed, he did not understand that dissent could be legitimate. Two days earlier, on February 24,

at a meeting with Congressional leaders, Johnson read a report from Ambassador Lodge who wrote that the First Cavalry had won a bloody battle over the Vietcong. "Our boys showed them how to fight," Johnson said and then added: "Can't understand why Americans who dissent can't do their dissenting in private. Once we are committed to a program of action, there never has been public dissent." He added: our military "men can't understand why prominent men in the United States continue to criticize our policy;" why our "Senators can't" understand "why we are in Vietnam."⁶⁶ Johnson, as noted above, did not understand the legitimacy of dissent in a democracy.

Events and choices in matters of foreign policy do not remain static. In reply to a question during his testimony at the Zablocki Committee hearings on February 1, 1966, Morgenthau, when asked if he had changed his mind on Vietnam, said he had because events in Vietnam had changed. He told the Committee that two or three years ago, the United States could have accepted de Gaulle's proposal to neutralize all of Southeast Asia and that even a year ago, in 1965, we could have disengaged from Vietnam "without too much loss of face." "Today," Morgenthau told the Committee, "we can't disengage ... we are too deeply involved in Vietnam." But there was something we could do to hasten an end to the war. What "we ought to do," Morgenthau said, is to "hold what we control rather than escalate the war."⁶⁷

Again, as he had suggested on other occasions, Morgenthau proposed the enclave strategy. In Morgenthau's words, "We ought to hold the coastal enclaves and the cities and be satisfied with a de facto division of South Vietnam, sitting tight and waiting for the other side to come to the conference table." Months later, Morgenthau included it in his *TNR* piece of May 28, 1966 where he added greater detail. Here, he described it as a policy that would amount to the "temporary acceptance on our part" of the existing division of South Vietnam into "the territory controlled by the Vietcong" and the territory held by the South Vietnamese military. "It would imply," Morgenthau writes, "the cessation of search-and-destroy forays and of air attacks" and the acceptance of "the status quo in the cities and the military bases presently under Vietcong control." These conditions "would be intended to last only for the duration of negotiations" and it would be "expected" or even "stipulated" that the Vietcong would not engage in attacks or sabotage "within these enclaves."⁶⁸ As noted above, it was proposed again by Morgenthau in *Look* magazine two months later in August and in the televised debate with Bundy a year earlier.

At the same time Morgenthau first proposed the enclave strategy in June 1965, the Premier of the South Vietnamese government was Phan Huy Quat who, with several prominent members of his government, were

prepared to move toward a negotiated settlement. The Quat government had been installed by the military led by General Khanh. Khanh had replaced General Duong Van Minh also known as "Big Minh" and Minh had succeeded South Vietnam's first President, Ngo Dinh Diem who was assassinated in November 1963. Indeed, the bizarre history of South Vietnamese political destabilization is reflected in the several *coup d'états* that took place in 1964 and 1965. The Quat government, installed in February 1965 lasted until June 1965. It had been Quat's public statements about the effects of the war on the Vietnamese people and the need to end the war that caused several American officials to worry that Quat might not be interested in pursuing the war aggressively.⁶⁹

In February 1965, Khanh, regarded favorably by U.S. officials as willing to pursue the war, had changed his mind and purportedly sought talks with the Vietcong. Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland then sought to replace Khanh with their new hero in South Vietnam, General Nguyen Cao Ky. The United States then allowed Ky and his generals to remove Khanh and overthrow the Quat government. Ky and Generals Thieu and Nguyen Van Chanh Thi ousted Quat and General Ky became the new Prime Minister. Ky, a combat fighter pilot veteran who wore black flying suits and holstered two pearl-handled revolvers, became the new administration's man in Vietnam. Publicly, Ky said he would defeat the Vietcong and never negotiate with them. He also spoke admiringly of Adolph Hitler and was interviewed by *U.S. News* on August 1, 1966, where he advocated an invasion of North Vietnam that he later retracted. Ky also told Walter Cronkite on *Face the Nation* that he had "the confidence of the people" and that "for the first time in two years, after five governments and four *coups*, we have a period of stability."⁷⁰

Just as it had supported the Minh, Khanh, Quat and Thi governments, the President and his advisers now fully backed the Ky regime. Had the United States decided to adopt some form of coastal enclaves as a defensive policy aimed at a compromise, the United States could have imposed this on the Ky government. Not one of the Johnson advisers counseled the President to give it some thought. On February 2, McNamara told the press that if military operations were restricted to enclaves, this would result in "turning over large uncontested areas to the Communists."⁷¹ By February 3, the Administration had already resumed the bombing of North Vietnam. On February 4, just one week after the Fulbright Committee had concluded the first day of its televised hearings, the President made a surprise announcement at an unscheduled news conference that he would fly to Hawaii to meet with Ky, Westmoreland, Ambassador Lodge, and other American military officials for a three-day review of the war. The *Times* reported that the meetings were not expected to produce any change of policy, but it appeared, as the *Times* noted, that the

trip was an apparent attempt to divert attention from the Fulbright hearings, which it did. Thus, on February 5, Johnson's trip to Hawaii was reported on the front page of the *New York Times* with a picture of Premier Ky and his wife, both wearing flying suits, while visiting the Bongson battlefield. At his unscheduled news conference, the President also defended his decision to resume the bombing.⁷²

On February 6, a lengthy report of the Honolulu meetings, again beginning on the front page of the *Times* provided additional details. The entourage of American officials included four cabinet secretaries and their assistants, members of Johnson's personal staff including Moyers, Valenti, and presidential assistant Marvin Watson. Ambassador Lodge was accompanied by several staff members including General Edward G. Lansdale. Long involved in South Vietnam affairs, Lansdale, it will be recalled, was the CIA operative who helped install Diem to power and who also convinced Kennedy in 1961 that South Vietnam had to be defended. Essentially, the trip to Honolulu was meant as a vote of confidence for the new government in Saigon. Yet, as the *Times* noted, the President repeatedly declared that he was ready "to invest great sums in economic and social development in Vietnam and would extend the aid to North Vietnam upon an acceptable peace" and "an end of aggression against the South."⁷³ Johnson never quite understood that the North was interested only in uniting the two Vietnams into one country. A week after the President took off for Hawaii, the enclave strategy received another endorsement on national television from one of America's most respected diplomats.

On February 10, 1966, George F. Kennan, appearing before the Fulbright Committee, endorsed the enclave plan and attributed it to General Gavin. In his opening statement, Kennan said that Gavin was on "the right track" in suggesting "what limited areas we can safely police and defend, and restrict ourselves largely to the maintenance of our position there." He added that he had not been impressed with the arguments opposed to Gavin's suggestions. "When I am told," Kennan noted, "that it would be difficult to defend such enclaves, it is hard for me to understand why it would be easier to defend the far greater areas to which presumably a successful escalation of our military activity would bring us." He did not think the United States would be reproached by our allies for adopting a "defensive rather than an offensive strategy in Vietnam at this time..."⁷⁴

Earlier in his statement, he pointed to the "spectacle" appearing in thousands of photographs and news reports of "Americans inflicting grievous injury on the lives of poor and helpless people ... no matter how warranted by military necessity or by the excesses of the adversary" brought on by

"our operations." Any such gain or victory, he said, "would be a hollow one in terms of our world interests, no matter" the advantages derived from the "developments on the local scene." He advocated "a resolute and courageous liquidation of unsound positions" rather than "the most stubborn pursuit of extravagant or unpromising objectives."⁷⁵

Asked by Senator Symington: "Am I correct in feeling that you would want to withdraw to these enclaves in South Vietnam?" Kennan replied: "That strikes me as the most hopeful alternative that we face...." Noting that the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong have "a great deal of space and manpower to give up" and have "equality, if not superiority in numbers of people," Symington asked if Kennan would use sea and air power as equalizers. Kennan replied that he doubted a heavy military response could "put an end to Communist pressures in this part of the world." He said "you can bomb these oil supplies and means of communication in North Vietnam," but the Vietcong will continue to control the "bridges at night which we control during the daytime" even if the bombing was effective. To Senator Hickenlooper, who asked if the "rather immediate withdrawal" of U.S. forces would be used as a propaganda tool by the Communists, Kennan answered dismissively that "it would be a six months' sensation" and "we would survive in the end, and there would be another day." When Senator Lausche asked, "Who stands in the way" of free elections in Vietnam? The United States, Red China and Hanoi? Kennan responded "the whole situation stands in the way," and then he added: "You could not have such an election in a civil war situation." In reply to Senator Case, Kennan repeated, the conflict is a civil war. Years later, as noted earlier, in *The New York Review of Books*, Kennan colorfully remarked, that the chief lesson of Vietnam is not "to mess into other people's civil wars where there is no substantial American strategic interest at stake." When Senator Gore returned to Kennan's basic position "that it is in our national interests and in our national security to prevent this conflict from further major escalation" and "to prevent it from becoming a war between the United States and China," Kennan answered: "This is precisely my position."⁷⁶

In addition to his advocacy of enclaves, Kennan's opening statement to the Committee, fully consistent with the enclave strategy, made it clear to millions of television viewers that he did not think Vietnam was essential to American national interests. "The first point I would like to make," Kennan said,

is that if we were not already involved as we are today in Vietnam, I would know of no reason why we should wish to become so involved, and I could think of several reasons why we should wish not to. Vietnam is not a region of major military, industrial importance. It is difficult to believe that any decisive developments of

the world situation would be determined in normal circumstances by what happens on that territory. If it were not for the considerations of prestige that arise precisely out of our present involvement, even a situation in which South Vietnam was controlled exclusively by the Vietcong, while regrettable, and no doubt morally unwarranted, would not, in my opinion, present dangers great enough to justify our direct military intervention.⁷⁷

Two paragraphs later, Kennan told the Committee:

From the long-term standpoint, therefore, and on principle, I think our military involvement in Vietnam has to be recognized as unfortunate, as something we would not choose deliberately, if the choice were ours to make all over again today, and by the same token, I think it should be our government's aim to liquidate this involvement just as soon as this can be done without inordinate damage to our prestige or to the stability of conditions in that area.⁷⁸

Thus, for George Frost Kennan, in brief summary form, the war is a mistake: Vietnam is not a vital American interest and thereby does not "justify our direct military intervention"; therefore, the United States should aim to "liquidate" the war as soon as possible without impairing American "prestige." Indeed, this is what Morgenthau had been saying all along and that Senators Morse and Gruening had also been advocating while citing Morgenthau in their Senate speeches and inserting several of his articles in the *Congressional Record*. The day after Kennan testified, on February 11, the *Times*, in a profile of the "Scholarly Diplomat," noted the "unusual hush [which] fell over the prelunch drinkers" at Washington's Metropolitan Club as "members and guests, including government officials, bankers, lawyers and journalists" sat in groups around a television set and watched Kennan express his opposition to the war. The profile, however, focused on Kennan's style, "reserved and scholarly in appearance," choosing words and speaking with care.⁷⁹ It did not at all explore the substance of his remarks to the Committee.

Except for one article in the *Washington Post* on December 12, 1965, Kennan had been silent on Vietnam. In a letter to General Wheeler in November 1965, Kennan said "I have not been following current affairs closely in recent months..."⁸⁰ In his December 12 *WP* article, Kennan did not flatly oppose the war as he did two months later at the Fulbright hearings. This article only expressed concern that Vietnam was distracting U.S. "interests and responsibilities in other areas of world affairs." For the readers of the *WP* at the end of the year that witnessed the wave of teach-ins around the country, Kennan did not come close to the position he took on February 10 where, in the closing paragraph of his opening statement, he said "our country should not" assume the "main burden of determining the political realities in any other

country and particularly” one so “remote from our shores.” He added: “This is not only not our business,” but “I don’t think we can do it successfully.”⁸¹ And, reminiscent of Morgenthau’s reference to Alexander Hamilton in his opening address to the May 1965 National Teach-In, whereby Hamilton warned against unwarranted and dangerous foreign policy adventures where the national interest is compromised, Kennan ended his formal statement by quoting John Quincy Adams who wrote on July 4, 1821:

Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will be America’s heart, her benedictions, and her prayers. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. . . . She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication. . . .⁸²

Kennan added that while he wasn’t sure “exactly” what Adams means, he did think that Adams “spoke very directly and very pertinently to us today.”

On February 7, 1966, three days before Kennan voiced his opposition to the war, Senator Fulbright told the press that the country was greatly divided over the Administration’s war policy. “I have never seen such dissent, reservation, groping and concern,” Fulbright noted. He said he didn’t understand “the objective of this very large undertaking.” He added that “It crept up on us little by little, and it is now a very major involvement.” So the purpose of his committee’s inquiry, Fulbright said, is “to get a clarification of policy,” to confront the administration’s spokesmen to questions that tested “the validity of their assumptions” and to provide an opportunity for the American people to determine whether the war deserves their support.⁸³

The President responded to Fulbright from Hawaii: he called the critics “special pleaders who counsel retreat in Vietnam.” The President’s supporters included former President Eisenhower who, on January 31, said “President Johnson ‘unquestionably has made the correct decision’ in ordering the resumption of bombing.” If the United States did not fight in Vietnam, Eisenhower said, invoking the stale and preposterous corollary of the domino theory, the United States would have to fight “in some remote place not of our own choosing.”⁸⁴ Three weeks earlier, *Time* magazine, on January 7, heralded its 1966 “Man of the Year,” General Westmoreland, who “directed the historic buildup” in Vietnam, “drew up the battle plans, and infused the 190,000 men under him with his own idealistic view of U.S. aims and responsibilities.” On February 11, the day after Kennan testified, Joseph Alsop remained steadfast in his enthusiasm for the war. Alsop wrote: “this war can be won, [and] with serious effort, may be won rather soon. . . . If the requirement is met, the

enemy's backbone of regulars can even be broken this year, and when and if that happens, this war will be effectively won."⁸⁵

The *New York Times*, two days later on February 13, was not so sanguine. "The outlook is for war and more war, with no end in sight." In its concluding sentence, the *Times* warned "the United States is in for a long, hard, more costly and more dangerous war." The *Wall Street Journal* on February 15, two years before it broke with the administration following the Tet offensive of 1968, pondered, in 1966, "how this war can be won" either by "a clear-cut victory" or in "the limited sense" of a "cease-fire" leading to a negotiated settlement. And, more astutely, the *WSJ* pointed to "the atmosphere of confusion" in Washington: "the spur-of-the-moment Honolulu conference" and the "scurrying" of envoys to over thirty capitols to exert pressure on North Vietnam to negotiate. "The Whole Thing," the *WSJ* noted, "adds up to an impression of impulsiveness and amateurishness in international relations."⁸⁶ Four days later, *TNR* on February 19, endorsed Kennan's and Gavin's strategy to hold the coastal enclaves and wait for negotiations to begin. The United States, *TNR* reported, is spending about \$1 billion a month on the war; that in the last year, the United States "has dropped more than a ton of bombs for each soldier in South Vietnam" though "Communist forces nevertheless have increased." *TNR* found it incredible that "the official scenario" of administration policy is "to destroy enough property in the North, kill enough Communists in the South" while pressing for "social reforms in Saigon" and thereby to "win the hearts and minds of the people and so to win the war."⁸⁷

Meanwhile, back at the White House, the amateurishness noted by the *WSJ* is borne out by the nonsensical statements of the policy-makers attempting to justify what they are doing in Vietnam while also trying to discredit their critics to gain public support for their war. Their reflections are beyond stupid. Their pronouncements have nothing to do with the real issues of the war. Facts are not in their vocabulary.

Thus, at a high level meeting on December 18, 1965, six weeks before Fulbright convenes his televised hearings, the subject under discussion involves the pros and cons of a bombing pause in North Vietnam. Under Secretary of State Ball says that North Vietnam has little "freedom of action" because it is the "Communist powers" that are directing Hanoi. Rusk tells the group that the American people "are isolationists at heart" but will support the war effort "if they are convinced there is no alternative" and "will do what has to be done." The President laments that "it rankles me that we have to prove again to Congress we are striving for peace. We've done that again and again." Rusk adds that "it's our deepest national interest to achieve our goal by peace not war" that makes no sense since the administration is waging actual war. And then there is McNamara who is worried about leaks. When

Rusk says McNamara “underestimates [the] problem we face in South Vietnam,” McNamara answers that the “greatest danger we face is right in this room.” McNamara continues: [You] “simply cannot discuss this with your wife. I can see stories about this—and I am embarrassed. Please let us check ourselves and discuss [this] with no human being.”⁸⁸ At an earlier meeting on December 7, rejecting the possibility of convincing Senator Fulbright that the Administration was “willing to make peace,” McNamara’s comment was [we] “Won’t get Fulbright, he wants [to] let [the] Commies in.”⁸⁹

There were only five days of televised hearings and just four witnesses called to testify. General Gavin and Ambassador Kennan, as noted above, wanted an end to the conflict and both endorsed the enclave strategy as a means to begin negotiations. The two government witnesses, Secretary Rusk and General Taylor proceeded as expected and attempted to justify their Vietnam policy. What is instructive about their testimony is their dogmatic insistence that the war must be waged and in this they are helped by those members of the Committee, particularly Senators Hickenlooper, Lausche, Mundt, Sparkman, and Russell who supported the war policy. Those on the committee who saw deficiencies in their defense of the war included Senators Fulbright, Morse, Church, Gore, Pell, McCarthy, and Aiken. For five days, on January 28, February 8, 10, 17, and 18, the caucus room of the old Senate Office Building was crowded with spectators including high administration officials, several wives of the senators and many college-age observers who lined the walls of the chamber three deep.⁹⁰ The television cameras captured the drama and the irreconcilable differences separating the critics from the architects of the war.

The first witness was the secretary of state, whose opening statement was a repetition of the usual refrain: “the heart of the problem” is the attempt of the North “to impose its will on the South by force”; the United States seeks “a peaceful solution” while it helps the South militarily; The United States has a “clear and direct commitment” to South Vietnam and the integrity of that and similar commitments “is absolutely essential to the preservation of peace right around the globe”; “at stake” is “whether aggression is to be permitted, once again, to succeed”; “aggression,” he says, “feeds on aggression”; “the two leading Communist powers” are determined “to use force to promote the spread of Communism”; he refers to South Vietnam as “the free Vietnam” that “we seek to preserve through military efforts. . . .”⁹¹

What can one say about Rusk’s presentation? It is January 28, 1966, the facts are in, Vietnam has been debated again and again, and Rusk is engaged in the repetition of identicals. Indeed, we have been here before and most notably, the televised debate on June 21, 1965, when Morgenthau commented,

after getting nowhere in his debate with Bundy and Brzezinski, that “it is, of course, obvious, and it has been obvious to me all along, that the government lives in a different factual world from the factual world in which its critics live.” Rusk was egregiously wrong on the facts. Morgenthau had made this clear throughout the war. But Rusk was also humanly wrong when, in his opening statement, he said “they [the South Vietnamese] must know” that their “long struggle is worth their suffering and personal tragedies.” From eight thousand miles away safely ensconced in his office at the State Department, Rusk has the audacity to say their “suffering” and “tragedies” are worth it. And then he adds: “They must know that by this hard course their future will be better than their past.”⁹² So in Rusk’s reasoning, it is perfectly all right for the Vietnamese people to endure the horrors of war, because, by Rusk’s calculations, they will have a better future.

At one point, Senator Gore told Rusk that “many people do not believe,” that “many members of Congress do not believe,” that the cost “is worth the endeavor.” Rusk is unmoved. In part of his long and repetitive defense of why we are in Vietnam, Rusk returns to the “peace” mantra: he says “we have to reflect upon how one builds a peace. Do we build it by standing aside when aggression occurs or do we build it by meeting our commitments?” Gore responded: “I was not too favorably impressed in the last few days with the statements by administration leaders, including yourself this morning” particularly Rusk’s assertion that “during the bombing pause, infiltration has continued from the North” and “also from the South,” which led Gore to ask: “Did you honestly expect that because there was a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam that they would *ipso facto* stop all their military movements?” Gore continued: “The question I am trying to pose is, is this a realistic approach or is this a propagandistic approach?” Rusk’s answer: The North has “no right whatever to move from North Vietnam into South Vietnam to seize South Vietnam. That is aggression.”⁹³ Was it aggression or was it a civil war?

At a later point, Senator Church told Rusk that one can look at the war in Vietnam “as some scholars do,” as basically a civil war, “an indigenous war to which the North has given a growing measure of aid and abetment.” But, Church continues, “either way you look at it, it is a war between Vietnamese to determine what the ultimate kind of government is going to be for Vietnam.” “When I went to school,” Church goes on, “that was a civil war. I am told these days it is not a civil war any more.” Rusk’s reply: “Well, Senator, I do not follow that point at all.” Why, according to Rusk? Because, as he repeats, once again, it is “aggression,” this time he adds, prohibited “by the military clauses” that, for Rusk, established the “1954 commitment” “known to North Vietnam before they started against South Vietnam.” Church then asked if the terms of the Geneva Agreement have “been adhered to on either

side?" Rusk then agreed that violations have taken place on both sides but for Rusk, once again, "the basic fact" is that the North, by sending "armed men" and equipment is trying "to take over South Vietnam by force."⁹⁴ Thus, for Rusk, there is no civil war among indigenous Vietnamese, North and South; it is a simple matter of aggression.

Senator Fulbright, as Chairman, was the first to question Rusk on the history of our Vietnam engagement. Fulbright asked: "When did we first become involved?" When did the United States begin its financial support of the French in Vietnam? "Was France ... trying to reassert its colonial domination of Vietnam?" "What moved the State Department to assist France to retain her control of Vietnam?" "How much aid" did we give France?" Fulbright noted that "You stated in your original statement that we have a clear commitment. What is the origin and basis for a clear commitment to the action we are now taking in Vietnam?" And how do "you foresee the end of the struggle?" "Are we likely to be there five, ten, twenty years?" "What do you foresee?"⁹⁵

In the second round of his questioning, Senator Fulbright took up the question of origins where he had left off and that followed Senator Church's questions. The colloquy, which shows Fulbright's determination to explore how the United States became involved in supporting the Diem regime in the first place and Rusk's inability to counter Fulbright's expose that has led to the current debacle, went this way:

Fulbright: May I ask in that connection, what is the explanation of why in 1956, in pursuance of the Geneva Accords, elections were not held? ... We backed Diem, did we not? Didn't we have much to do with putting him in power?

Rusk: Well, we supported him.

Fulbright: That is what I mean.

Rusk: That is correct.

Fulbright: And he was—to an extent had—a certain dependence upon us, did he not?

Rusk: We were giving him very considerable aid, Mr. Chairman.

Fulbright... In accordance with the Treaty he was requested to consult about elections, and he refused to do so, is that correct?

Rusk: Well, neither his government nor the government of the United States signed that Agreement.

Fulbright: But isn't it correct? We will come to that as a separate point. But it is correct he refused to consult, is that correct?

Rusk: I think that is correct, sir.⁹⁶

I quote this at length, not only to demonstrate Fulbright's acuity in his encounter with Rusk, but also to emphasize that it is Morgenthau, who first

pointed out how the Diem regime became a client government of the United States. He did this, it will be recalled, in both his April 18, 1965, "Deluding Ourselves" article and his opening address at the May 15 National Teach-In. It was Morgenthau's repeated argument that Diem and his successors were dependent on the United States and could not survive without our help. Moreover, it is also Senator Church, whose explanation of the conflict as a civil war "aided and abetted by the North," has Morgenthau written all over it.

The colloquy continues. Fulbright then asks Rusk "Why, in your opinion, didn't we sign" the Geneva Treaty? "There were nine members there, and eight signed it. We refused. Why didn't we sign it?" To which Rusk has no answer. He replies: "I have tried to find in the record a full discussion of that subject" and "I have been unable to do so." Yet, Rusk also says, that while the United States did not sign the accord, "they would acknowledge it ... and would consider any attempt to upset it by force as a threat to the peace." Fulbright then went on the offensive:

Fulbright: Not having signed it, what business was it of ours for intervening and encouraging one of the signatories not to follow it, specifically Diem?

Rusk: Well, the prospect of free elections in North and South Vietnam was very poor at that time.

Fulbright: Now, they have always been poor, and will be for a hundred years, won't they? That was not news to you, I mean, this was a device to get around the settlement, was it not?

Rusk: No, no, Mr. Chairman. I do not believe the prospect of free elections in South Vietnam anyhow are all that dim.

Fulbright: Have they ever had them in two thousand years of history?

Rusk: They have had some free elections in the provinces and municipalities in May of this year.

Fulbright: Under our control and direction.

Rusk: Not under our control and direction; no sir.

Fulbright: Who supervised them?

Rusk: Multiple candidates, with 70 percent of the registered voters voting, and with results which indicate that people in these local communities elected the people ... that you would expect them to elect ... as natural leaders of the community....⁹⁷

The ensuing exchange between Senators Aiken and Fulbright and Rusk indicate the vacuity of Rusk's remarks about local elections and the impossibility of national elections in the midst of war. When Aiken asked, "Are the successful candidates still living now?" Rusk replies that where "the government is concerned," they are still alive though "the Vietcong continue to kill them, assassinate them, kidnap them." So Rusk concludes that "those who were elected are not in office,"⁹⁸ the admission of which makes a mockery

of elections and Rusk's absurd claim that it is the "multiple candidates" who supervise the elections before the demise of those who get elected. The upshot of which is that elections, in any real sense of the term, cannot be held while the fighting goes on.

On February 8, 1966, Senator Burke Hickenlooper asked General Gavin about a speech delivered in New York by General Maxwell Taylor. Gavin, in his opening statement had reaffirmed his endorsement of the enclave strategy, which, as we have seen, first appeared in his letter to *Harper's* magazine. Hickenlooper, a strong supporter of the war, was thereby a strong supporter of General Taylor. Hickenlooper quotes Taylor "as saying, in effect," that he knew of no officer who shared Gavin's view of "the enclave theory." Hickenlooper then goes on to quote part of Taylor's speech, which says

this country cannot escape its destiny as the champion of the free world. There is no running away from it. The impulse to withdraw our troops into safe enclaves in South Vietnam has much in common with the yearning for safety beyond defenses at our coastlines, and is equally illusory.⁹⁹

Hickenlooper is not interested in "how or when that got us into this situation in Vietnam." "Our presence there," Hickenlooper says, is the "most formidable part of the free world" and goes far beyond the question of just "winning a battle." For Hickenlooper, it is an "ideological battle" and if "we don't win," he asks, "what do you think will happen to American prestige in Africa and South Asia and Indonesia and the Philippines and Formosa, Japan?" Hickenlooper goes on: "I am talking about the old Communist philosophy from Moscow, that the way to Paris is by way of Peking, and the encirclement policy of capturing first South Asia" then "Africa or portions of it, and the Mediterranean and so on under that long-range theory."¹⁰⁰ Gavin retorts by refocusing on Taylor's criticism of his enclave endorsement.

Yes, I assume you base your question upon the statements made by General Taylor, Senator, and these I find deeply disturbing. I am not sure he [Taylor] read what I wrote but he has these things to say. He attributes to me a holding strategy ... a withdrawal of United States ground forces, which would lead to a crushing defeat, a capitulation, abandonment of many people, a retreat ... a retreat which would be disastrous.... I don't understand this. This to me is a technique that I found so very distressing.... and you find yourself defending what you didn't say. I don't think he read what I wrote.¹⁰¹

Hickenlooper had no response except to say that "one of the purposes" of the hearings is "to clarify the situation because there is a great deal of

confusion.... "And General Taylor, as we have seen in these pages, is not the most astute of foreign policy students as his public and closed-door statements reveal and as his testimony at the hearings confirm. Thus, in his opening statement on February 17, General Taylor repeats the usual shibboleths about "wars of liberation" that are all part of the Communist design and reflected in statements by Khrushchev, North Vietnamese General Giap and, of course, the administration's favorite, Defense Minister Lin Piao. For Taylor, the design is simply to expand Communism across the globe. In doing so and in his reference to South Vietnam, Taylor makes a mockery of the facts. He tells the committee that "in a democracy such as they have in South Vietnam where there is no police state, anybody could go out on the street and carry a banner and demonstrate against the government and against the war."¹⁰² In fact, no such freedom existed in South Vietnam.

When asked by Senator Morse about democracy at home: "Now, when the people of a country demonstrate an opposition to a foreign policy of that country and make clear that they wanted the Indochina war stopped, do you interpret that as a weakness on the home front?" Taylor called it a weakness if one wants "success in Southeast Asia," but he did not deny the right of a people to try to change foreign policy. When Morse then said he believed the American people "will repudiate our war in Southeast Asia," Taylor replied, "That, of course, is good news to Hanoi, Senator." Indeed, this is how Taylor responded to such questions. Earlier, when asked about the enclave strategy by Senator Pell, Taylor said that policy would be "the best news for Hanoi and a great discouragement to South Vietnam." Taylor's retort to Morse elicited a sharp response: Morse called Taylor's remark a "smear" tactic, and he refused, he said, "to get down in the gutter ... and engage in that kind of debate." Morse then repeated the question as to whether debate in a democracy is a weakness. Taylor could not deny it but said only that he "would feel that our people were badly misguided and did not understand the consequences of such a disaster."¹⁰³

In reply to a question by Senator Gore about the growing scale of the conflict, Taylor said the United States was waging a limited war. Taylor's estimates of enemy forces and casualties suggested the United States was engaged in an all-out war. Thus, the enemy's losses, according to Taylor, were "estimated" at "17,000 a month"; these included "an estimated 3,800 killed, 1,000 wounded and 2,400 defections." Taylor said it was not an objective of the United States to occupy "all of South Vietnam or the hunting down of every guerrilla." The aim of American policy, Taylor said, was to secure "a high proportion of the population" by attacking "main line enemy units."¹⁰⁴ Senator Fulbright, as the following colloquy suggests, was incredulous:

Fulbright: I find your answer to Senator Gore is unsatisfactory. You say it is not unlimited, but the implication, the only logical conclusion of your objective, would seem to be to surrender.

Taylor: No, sir, I am not asking for anyone to surrender.

Fulbright: I don't see how else you can explain it. I don't understand this play on words—maybe I am much too stupid to understand what it means when you say, well, we are going to do what it takes to make them come to the conference table....

Taylor: This is simply to make them see pursuing their present course of action is so disadvantageous, it is to their interests to come to the table.

Fulbright: Yes, I think that to me means to surrender.

Taylor: No, sir, it is not surrender.¹⁰⁵

Fulbright then defined for Taylor the nature of a limited war that is a “compromise where we don't necessarily get our way and they don't surrender.” Taylor responded: “How do you compromise the freedom of fifteen million South Vietnamese?” Indeed, what freedom, under the several military juntas including the most recent, General Ky?

Fulbright also asked Taylor about the use of napalm in Vietnam. “General, can you imagine, in your wildest dreams, of a Secretary of Air, agreeing to napalm a great city ... with millions of little children ... innocent babies ... and mothers ... who never did any harm, being slowly burned to death?” And here is where Fulbright made Taylor look very foolish as this exchange makes clear.

Taylor: I am not sure of the situation; I can't visualize the situation you are asking me about.

Fulbright: Isn't it a fact we did just that in Tokyo?

Taylor: The fire raid?

Fulbright: Didn't we?

Taylor: I am not familiar with the details.

Fulbright: You are not familiar?

Taylor: ... but we certainly dropped fire bombs on Tokyo.

Fulbright: You hadn't heard about the bombs?

Taylor: I had heard about it.¹⁰⁶

Fulbright then goes on to ask: “What difference, really, morally or any other way, do you see between burning innocent little children and disemboweling innocent civilians?” Taylor calls this “an unhappy concomitant of the attack of the targets that happened in the bombing.” Fulbright asks is this not part of the objective of “breaking the will of the opposition?” Taylor says “we are not deliberately attacking civilian populations in South Vietnam”; that “we are making every effort to avoid their loss.” Fulbright notes that

"We drop napalm bombs on villages just deliberately." Taylor says we are trying "to protect the civilian population which we are trying to rescue and not destroy."¹⁰⁷ So what we have here is another case of burning down a Vietnamese village in order to save it.

In an exchange with Senator Sparkman who asked Taylor if there had been "some growth in the stability of the [Ky] government?" Taylor replied that "anything would be an improvement over what I saw" as Ambassador working with "five prime ministers in the course of my 13 months." The Ky government, Taylor said, was in its eighth month and "has done better than any government in terms of stability since that of President Diem." Taylor then offered an explanation for this "stability": "This is the first government," Taylor noted, "which is solidly backed by the armed forces, and as long as they are behind this government in the present sense, it is not going to be overturned by some noisy minority."¹⁰⁸

Noting Taylor's opposition to a defensive policy, Senator Aiken asked Taylor about holding our bases in enclaves and remaining there for as many years as is necessary. As in his opening statement, he said it would be "disastrous," the end of the South Vietnamese government that could not survive if the United States abandoned its mobility and firepower. When Aiken asked about the Vietcong and whether "all our bases are surrounded by the Vietcong?" implying the Vietcong have a military advantage over our forces, Taylor then resorted to childish military bravado about the meaning of the word "surrounded." "Not in the way 'surrounded' suggests," he replies:

Taylor: They have mortar; six men can have a mortar attack and get away with it. But forty thousand Marines being in danger of the Vietcong—I am sure all forty thousand Marines would rise in anger at the suggestion.

Aiken: I think you are right. But on the other hand, it isn't safe for American soldiers at least to venture out [from their] bases.

Taylor: Senator, there are bases in Washington that are not safe to walk around at night.¹⁰⁹

At one point during the hearings, Fulbright told Taylor that "what we are questioning is the wisdom of the policy, particularly if it leads to substantial escalation of the war. I hope you understand." It is obvious that Taylor did not understand.

In his opening statement in his first appearance before the Committee on January 28, Rusk's essential theme was aggression, the attempt by the North to take over the South. The word "aggression" appears four times in his statement, sometimes the word "aggression" alternates with "external attack" or

"external interference," and always, as "North Vietnam attempts to impose its will" on South Vietnam "by force." In Rusk's view, this endangers "the preservation of peace right around the globe." He refers to Vietnam as "free," the "free Vietnam we seek to preserve through military efforts," "our U.S. military power in support of the forces of the government of South Vietnam." "There is no alternative," Rusk says, "except defeat and surrender," which leads Rusk to add another dimension as to why the United States is responding to this "aggression." Here, he says it is the "integrity of our commitments," and he repeats the word "commitment," which he says is a "clear and direct commitment."¹¹⁰ Later, under questioning, it is the SEATO pact from which the commitment derives.

Senator Fulbright does not accept Rusk's "free Vietnam." "Well, now," Fulbright quotes an unnamed critic, "let's put aside all this talk about democracy in South Vietnam," Fulbright tells Rusk. "You know that is unrealistic. There are no institutions there, and never have been, of democracy." Fulbright then asks: Is this still part of the "commitment," that wherever on the globe a Communist state emerges the United States must "meet it and stop it?"¹¹¹

On the SEATO pact, Fulbright says the United States has "no unilateral obligation to do what we are doing. Now you say we are entitled to do it. That is different from saying we have an obligation under this SEATO Treaty." Fulbright then reviewed the provisions of the SEATO pact that, he said, calls for consultation if one of the several parties [Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and the three Western powers, France, Britain, and the United States] is attacked. The next step is "to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense." Fulbright reminds Rusk that under the provisions of the Geneva Agreement, South Vietnam was not a signatory. When Fulbright correctly notes that the United States was under no "unilateral obligation" to intervene in Vietnam, Rusk could only respond that it was "an obligation of policy." He attempts to explain this by adding that the obligation is "rooted in the policy of the Treaty,"¹¹² which is a new definition of what a treaty requires and is thus highly questionable.

Rusk testified again on February 18 and repeated the Administration's defense of its policy but added what he referred to as the global threat to America's security. The United States is in Vietnam, Rusk said, because "the issues posed there are deeply intertwined with our own security and because the outcome of the struggle can profoundly affect the world in which we and our children live." The situation in Southeast Asia, Rusk said, is "complex," but, in his view, "Americans who have a deep and mature understanding of world responsibility, are fully capable of cutting through the underbrush of complexity and finding the simple issues which involve our largest interests and deepest purposes."¹¹³ We have been here before. It is again the useless

regurgitation of official dogma and thus a completely mistaken view that America's security is bound up with the defense of a fictional "freedom" in South Vietnam that stretches our interests to the entire globe.

Again, as it was in his earlier opening statement on January 28, Rusk, repeats, at least three times in his second opening statement, that it is "Communist aggression" that is at the heart of the conflict. And again, the purpose of U.S. policy in Vietnam was aimed at "preventing the expansion and extension of Communist domination by the use of force against the weaker nations" of the area. Several paragraphs later, Rusk attributes the "confusion" of the conflict as a civil war to the Communists who "try to make it appear" as a revolt of "indigenous" Vietnamese. Otherwise, Rusk noted, U.S. combat troops would not be in South Vietnam. If not a civil war, then what was it? For Rusk, repeatedly, it was always "aggression by Hanoi against the people of South Vietnam." Indeed, Rusk was uneducable. And in the concluding paragraph of his opening statement, Rusk repeats: "the elementary fact is that there is an aggression in the form of an armed attack by North Vietnam against South Vietnam."¹⁴

At one point when Fulbright again counseled Rusk that the conflict in Vietnam is not "worthy of an escalation" and added that this could also result in war with China, Rusk responded with a slick retort: he questioned what "the substance of the compromise would be." He said this could mean "that we should abandon the effort in South Vietnam." Fulbright answered that he was suggesting, not abandonment, but "a conference" with "reasonable terms" that would include "even the National Liberation Front [the political arm of the Vietcong] ... to participate in an election." Fulbright, in one of his finest moments, then added that "Vietnam is their country. It is not our country. We do not even have the right that the French did. We are obviously intruders, from their point of view."¹⁵

Rusk, unmoved, says it is still "aggression"; he repeats, it is aggression by "the North against the South." But, Fulbright asks, are the North Vietnamese the "invaders?" Are North Vietnam and South Vietnam two countries? Rusk has difficulty with this question: he replies: sometimes it was yes, sometimes no. North Vietnam, for Rusk, is a Communist country. And he also explains the war as "one further effort by a Communist regime in one half a divided country to take over the people of the other half at the point of a gun and against their will," which implies two countries that prompted this exchange:

Rusk: Mr. Chairman, but when you say this is their country—

Fulbright: It is their country, with all its difficulties, even if they want to be Communists. . . . Just like the Yugoslavs. I don't know why we should object to it.

Rusk: We are making a distinction though, that is, that South Vietnam is not Hanoi's country.

Fulbright: It is not our country. It used to be one country.

Rusk: But there was a settlement, Mr. Chairman, on the basis of the 17th parallel. There were some differences about various aspects of that.

Fulbright: What kind of settlement was it? I think it would be fine if you would make it very precise. Did it divide it into two separate nations?

Rusk: It did not establish it as two separate nations, but it provided some procedures by which this could occur if that is what the people wanted.”¹¹⁶

It was at this point, as noted above, that Fulbright told Rusk: “I am pleading with you, “have been,” for this is not “the kind of conflict that warrants a vast escalation, a vast expenditure of money and many thousands of deaths.” “Great countries,” he added, “especially this country, is quite strong enough to engage in a compromise without losing its standing in the world.”¹¹⁷ Rusk gave his standard reply. It was the other side, he said, which refused to negotiate.

In his five-page introduction to the published record of the hearings, Senator Fulbright tells his readers that the educational goal of the televised hearings have been successful, at least as measured by the “over twenty thousand letters and telegrams” received from American citizens. He notes that “a few were scurrilous, but 99 percent were thoughtful outpourings from every part of America.” He writes that the hearings had “served the national interest” and he repeats the term “national interest” three additional times in his Introduction. And perhaps just as importantly, Fulbright concedes that while

members of Congress and citizens at large do not have the facts or the background to tell the Commander-in-chief how to wage war; but they do have the capacity to pass judgment on whether the massive deployment and destruction of their men and wealth seems to serve their over-all interests as a nation. That is what democratic government is all about.¹¹⁸

In eight years as secretary of state, Rusk never deviated from this official line. At his last press conference on January 4, 1969, two weeks before Nixon was to take office, he was asked “what went wrong in Vietnam?” His answer: it was “a persistent and determined attempt by the authorities in Hanoi to take over South Vietnam by force,” which proves that his mind remained closed to empirical judgment. When asked if he had left the world in a better place, he said “We have had eight years without a nuclear war and I attach great importance to that.”¹¹⁹ On its face, this is a sleight-of-hand diversion to shift attention from the immediate carnage in Vietnam to an entirely different foreign policy question that did not distract Rusk from his official duties in promoting the war in Vietnam. Rusk died in 1994. In his memoirs titled *As I*

Saw It, published in 1991, he had learned nothing. He still believed there was a world-wide Communist movement to control the world.¹²⁰

The enclave strategy was never considered by the President and his high level advisers. For to do so would mean that the administration had begun to question the assumptions of its Vietnam policy, which it never did. Senator Fulbright, who had managed the passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution through the Senate in August 1964, eventually, as we have seen, reversed his appraisal of the war and, by early 1966, stood with the dissenters, including his colleagues, Senators Morse, Gruening, Church, Aiken, McGovern, and Clark. Senator Eugene McCarthy, also a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had not yet become a vocal opponent of the war. And above all, Fulbright now stood with Morgenthau, whose arguments, as we have seen, became part of Fulbright's opposition to the war.

In 1968, when Fulbright stood for re-election, Morgenthau was a contributor to his campaign, for which Fulbright thanked him and especially, for Morgenthau's "approval" of his "work in the Senate."¹²¹ Understandably, for Morgenthau had picked up an important dissenting ally.

In the spring of 1974, Fulbright was challenged and defeated in the Arkansas primary and again Morgenthau contributed to his campaign. Fulbright wrote another letter thanking Morgenthau for his generous support. Morgenthau wrote Fulbright in May 1974 and said he was "profoundly saddened" at the outcome of the election. He said he had "looked up" to Fulbright and regarded him "as one of the few great public servants"; he added that it will be difficult for him "to visualize American foreign policy without either your support or your critique." Morgenthau told Fulbright that he reminded him of "a Roman soldier in the last days of the Republic, doing his duty while knowing full well that it will be in vain,"¹²² a sentence that has significant autobiographical meaning for the writer of the letter. For Morgenthau, too, did his duty in attempting to halt the drift into disaster and also knew that his effort was in vain.

NOTES

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2. "The Statement and Testimony of General Maxwell D. Taylor" in *Vietnam Hearings*, 192.
3. McNamara, *Blundering Into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 201–202.
4. Memo, Yarmolinsky to McNamara, 6 October 1965, Yarmolinsky Papers, Box 27, JFK Library.

5. Quoted in McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 209. Also in "The Periscope," *Newsweek*, 27 September 1965, 19. The article in question is Bernard Fall, "Vietnam Blitz, A Report on the Impersonal War," *The New Republic*, 9 October 1965, 17–21. The phrase, "militarily unlosable," is on p. 20.

6. Memo of Record of the White House Daily Staff Meeting, 30 March 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 197.

7. Summary Record of the National Security Council Executive Committee Meeting, 24 May 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 373.

8. Memo, Bundy to the President, 25 June 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 530–531. Bundy earlier referred to Eisenhower; Memo, Bundy to the President, 14 March 1964, where Bundy emphasizes "this is no time to quit," *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 148.

9. Lodge to Rusk, 26 May 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 381.

10. Memo of Meeting, the White House, 9 September 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 752–53.

11. Ambassador Taylor to the President, 28 October 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 859.

12. Summary Record of the 532nd Meeting of the National Security Council, 15 May 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 329, 331. Also McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 320.

13. Morse, *Congressional Record*, 12 June 1962, 10215–10217.

14. Morgenthau, "Vietnam – Another Korea?" *Commentary*, May 1962, 371; also in Morgenthau, *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, *The Restoration of American Politics*, 370.

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16. Morgenthau, "Attach Hanoi, Rile Peking—The Case Against Greater U.S. Involvement in Vietnam," originally in *Washington Post*, 15 March 1964, E4; also in *Congressional Record*, 15 March 1964, 5462 and in Morgenthau Papers, Box 102.

17. Summary, Record of the 526th Meeting of the National Security Council, 3 April 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 222, 223.

18. Joseph Clark, 30 April 1965, *Congressional Record*, 8781, 8782; in Morgenthau Papers, Box 185.

19. Ernest Gruening, 30 April 1965, *Congressional Record*, 8751; in Morgenthau Papers, Box 185.

20. Gruening, 30 April 1965, *Congressional Record*, 8751; Morgenthau Papers, Box 185.

21. Summary Record of a Meeting, White House, 10 June 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 487–489.

22. Summary Record, 10 June 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 489.

23. Summary Record, 10 June 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 491.

24. Editorial Notes, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 609; Summary Notes of the 538th Meeting of the National Security Council, 4 August 1964, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1964*, 611, 612–13.

25. Morse, 6 August 1964, *Congressional Record*, 18425, 18427.

26. Gruening, *Congressional Record*, 18413–18414.

27. Fulbright, 6 August 1964, *Congressional Record*, 18399–18402.

28. Fulbright, 6 August 1964, *Congressional Record*, 18402, 18405.

29. Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1966), 107.

30. Fulbright, 6 August 1964, *Congressional Record*, 18405.

31. “The Testimony and Statement (concluded) of Secretary of State Dean Rusk,” *Vietnam Hearings*. Fulbright quoted on 287.

32. Marcy to Morgenthau, 20 April 1965, Fulbright Papers, Special Collection, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, Arkansas, Box 35, Series 48, Folder 2; also in Morgenthau Papers, Box 22.

33. Fulbright, 15 June 1965, *Congressional Record*, 13173, 13172.

34. Morgenthau, “Deluding Ourselves,” 72–73; Fulbright, *Congressional Record*, 1372.

35. Fulbright, *The Price of Empire* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), 107–108.

36. William C. Berman, *William Fulbright and the Vietnam War: The Dissent of a Political Realist* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1988), 2, 98.

37. Fulbright, *Arrogance*, 151; Morgenthau, quoted in “U.S. Urged to Seek a Moderate China,” *New York Times*, 31 March 1966, 10.

38. Statement of Morgenthau, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on The Far East and The Pacific, *U.S. Policy Toward Asia, Part I*, 89th Cong. 2d sess., 1 February 1966, 120; Fulbright on China, in *Arrogance*, 151–152.

39. Morgenthau, House Committee hearings, *U.S. Policy Toward Asia, Part I*, 120

40. Morgenthau, House Committee hearings, *U.S. Policy Toward Asia, Part I*, 133; Fulbright on China, in *Arrogance*, 140–142.

41. Marcy to Morgenthau, 20 April 1965, Fulbright Papers, Box 43, Series 48, Folder 2. Also in Morgenthau Papers, Box 22.

42. “Fulbright Urges Halt in Bombings,” *New York Times*, 19 April 1965, 1. Morgenthau’s letter to Fulbright, 9 April 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 22.

43. The Morgenthau article is in Fulbright Papers, Box 35, Series 48, Folder 2. A scribbled note in the upper left hand corner of the photocopy reads “worth reading.”

44. Morgenthau to Fulbright, 23 April 1963, Morgenthau Papers, Box 22; Fulbright to Morgenthau, 29 April 1963, Morgenthau Papers, Box 22.

45. Morgenthau to Fulbright, 10 February 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 22; Fulbright to Morgenthau, 16 February 1965, Morgenthau Papers, Box 22.

46. Morgenthau, “Deluding Ourselves,” 65, 68.

47. “Fulbright Urges Conciliatory Line,” *New York Times*, 12 May 1965, 4; Fulbright’s March 25, 1966 speech is quoted in Tristram Coffin, *Senator Fulbright, Portrait of a Public Philosopher* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1966), 319–323. Indeed, Fulbright’s speech could well have been spoken by Morgenthau.

48. Fulbright, *Congressional Record*, 15 June 1964, 13173. Also in Coffin, *Senator Fulbright, Public Philosopher*, 323.

49. Morgenthau, "Deluding Ourselves," 66–67; "Fulbright Urges Conciliatory Line," *New York Times*, 12 May 1965, 4; "Fulbright Urges Vietnam Solution," *New York Times*, 6 May 1965, 4.

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51. Morgenthau, "War with China," *TNR*, 3 April 1965, 11.

52. Fulbright, "The Higher Patriotism," 21 April 1966, quoted in Coffin, *Public Philosopher*, 354.

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61. Editorial, "Carnival of Diplomats," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 February 1966, 16.

62. Memo, Valenti to the President, 25 January 1966, Office of the President Files, "Valenti, Jack," LBJ Library, Box 12.

63. Memo, Reedy to President Johnson, 17 February 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1 *Vietnam 1966*, 236–237.

64. "Notes of Meeting," 26 February 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1966*, 261–262.

65. "Notes of Meeting," 26 February 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1966*, 260–261.

66. "Notes of Meeting," 24 February 1966, *FRUS 1964–1968*, Vol. 1, *Vietnam 1966*, 258.

67. Morgenthau's testimony, House Committee, *U.S. Policy Toward Asia, Part I*, 1 February 1966, 128.

68. Morgenthau's testimony, House Committee, *U.S. Policy Toward Asia, Part I*, 1 February 1966, 128; Morgenthau, "Johnson's Dilemma: The Alternatives Now in Vietnam," *TNR*, 28 May 1966, 16.

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95. Rusk Testimony, 28 January 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 9, 10, 12.
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97. Rusk Testimony, 28 January 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 39–40.
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100. Gavin Testimony, 8 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 79.
101. Gavin Testimony, 8 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 79.
102. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 168, 169, 219.
103. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 177–178, 187, 219.
104. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 213, 196.
105. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 223.
106. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 221–22.
107. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 222.
108. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 183.
109. Taylor Testimony, 17 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 192–193.
110. Rusk Testimony, 18 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 228–29, 230, 235, 239, 247.
111. Rusk Testimony, 28 January 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 34–35.
112. Rusk Testimony, 28 January 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 36.
113. Rusk Testimony, 18 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 229.
114. Rusk Testimony, 18 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 247.
115. Rusk Testimony, 18 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 282–83, 275–76.
116. Rusk Testimony, 18 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 283–84.
117. Rusk Testimony, 18 February 1966, *Vietnam Hearings*, 287.
118. Introduction by Fulbright, *Vietnam Hearings*, xi–xii.
119. “Excerpts from Rusk’s News Conference,” *New York Times*, 4 January 1969, 3.
120. Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It: A Secretary of State’s Memoirs* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1991). There is not even a hint of misgivings about Rusk’s involvement in perpetuating the myths of the Vietnam disaster in his eight years as Secretary of State. “I left office with few regrets,” he writes, 530.
121. Fulbright to Morgenthau, 10 January 1969, Morgenthau Papers, Box 22.
122. Morgenthau to Fulbright, 29 May 1974, Morgenthau Papers, Box 22.

Chapter 7

“What I Have Said Recently, I Have Been Saying for Years, without Anybody Paying Any Attention.”

Following his appearance at the Fulbright hearings, Rusk became the mainstay of the Administration's "truth squads" campaign to win public support for the war. On September 21, 1966, Yale law Professor Eugene Rostow, brother of Walt W., was appointed an undersecretary of state as Rusk's number three man. On the same day, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, the attorney general, replaced George Ball as undersecretary and Foy D. Kohler, ambassador to the Soviet Union, was also appointed an undersecretary. As the *New York Times* put it, the three new undersecretaries were appointed "to work with Secretary of State Rusk" and join him as they traveled the country in a massive public relations campaign. Thus, months after his appearance at the Fulbright hearings in January 1966, the *Times* reported that Rusk, Katzenbach, Rostow and Kohler made "92 speaking appearances before civic, world affairs, church, labor, women's and business groups" to stem the growing criticism of the war. The *Times* also noted that a Rusk colleague praised the secretary as "fabulous" who "speaks at least once a week to some group here in Washington [and] at least every fortnight outside the city, and the pace keeps up week in week out year after year."¹

As examples of the messages sent by the "truth squads," Rusk, at a news conference on October 12, 1967, repeated the same stale reasons for the war he had offered before and after his testimony at the Fulbright hearings. Thus, on October 12, Rusk said again that he deplored Hanoi's continued refusal to negotiate. Rusk also told the reporters that while he had "never subscribed to the domino theory," he also noted that North Vietnamese forces were operating in Laos, Thailand, Burma and Indonesia, a deceptively oblique way to affirm what he said he did not subscribe to. "You don't need the domino theory," Rusk said, just "look at their proclaimed doctrine and what

they're doing about it." Five days later, on October 17, Katzenbach defended the Vietnam policy at Fairfield University in Connecticut while Rostow, at the University of Kansas, warned the students that criticism of the Vietnam policy was the result of growing "isolationism." And Rusk, on October 21, 1967, again warned that the United States "had a direct security interest in preventing the expansion of a billion Chinese armed with nuclear weapons" threatening the entire globe.² Two months later, in December 1967, when asked why he had announced his candidacy for the presidency, Senator Eugene McCarthy said he had decided to enter the primaries after he heard Rusk's pronouncement that one "billion Chinese" carrying "nuclear weapons" were about to invade the West.³

On October 22, the *Times* noted "the mood of discontent brought on by the Vietnam war" described by one "veteran Senator" "as ugly as anything I have seen around here in many a year." A recent demonstration in Washington organized by The National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam required the presence of some 10,000 Army troops and National Guardsmen as well as U.S. Marshals and policemen to prevent violence among the demonstrators and those who opposed the demonstration. Months earlier, in April and May, 1967, there were protests and demonstrations at the nation's colleges and universities where about 200 students at New York University burned their draft cards. Future demonstrations were planned including a "Vietnam summer" initiated by anti-war activists at Harvard in which the goal was to recruit 10,000 volunteers who would organize local anti-war activities throughout the country.⁴

It was against this background that Morgenthau, on October 28, 1967, published "What Ails America" in *TNR*. "Contemplating the American scene today," Morgenthau writes, there is

the disarray of foreign and domestic policies, the violence from above and below, the decline of the public institutions, the disengagement of the citizens from the purposes of the government, the decomposition of those ties of trust and loyalty which link citizen to citizen and the citizens to the government ...⁵

...

There is a tone of veiled discouragement in this essay for the absence of trust and loyalty among the citizens and their government reflects the absence of a genuine democracy because, as Morgenthau writes, "the will of the people count for so little" while the "President and his advisers ... are allowed to persist in the perpetuation of an error [and] are allowed to persist in involving the nation in a disastrous war." That while the opponents of the war can vote, make speeches, collect signatures, pass resolutions, "demonstrate, protest, and petition," they have little impact on the "life and death" decisions made

by those Morgenthau calls “the technological elites” of the government. He writes that he will not here repeat the arguments he has advanced “for more than six years against our involvement in Vietnam,” but then he adds what he has said repeatedly over the years that “the war is politically aimless,” cannot be won “in terms of the Administration’s professions” and which “violates the very principles upon which this nation was founded and for which it has stood both in the eyes of its own citizens and of the world.”⁶

When Morgenthau explores “the organic relationship” of violence abroad, that pounding a nation of peasants into oblivion and thereby denying the national and revolutionary character of their struggle, he tells us that this has something to do with “the trend toward violence at home”: that when the President and his supporters accuse the dissenters of providing “aid and comfort to the enemy,” it is this that provides “official sanction” to treat the dissenters as enemies and traitors; that “an organization ironically misnamed Freedom House has openly advocated” the suppression of dissent that it equates with “disloyalty or treason”; that “it is not by accident that a retired Air Force General” was “loudly applauded” when he told an audience of American Legionnaires that “while military takeover is a dirty word in this country, but if professional politicians cannot keep law and order it is time we do so, by devious or direct means.” These were all “ominous prospect [s],” Morgenthau declared.⁷

Months earlier, on May 10, 1967, there were “Peace Teach-Ins” involving “more than 80 college campuses” participating in a “national day of inquiry” throughout the country on radio and telephone hookup. From Sanders Theatre at Harvard, Professors John K. Fairbank, John Kenneth Galbraith, Stanley Hoffmann, and others spoke to students in the East and South “including Tulane, Louisiana State, Alabama and Duke Universities.” From Smith College at Northampton, Massachusetts, Amherst history professor Henry Steele Commager spoke by radio to students in New England. Another program was beamed to students in the Midwest and West from the University of Chicago where Morgenthau was the principal speaker. The sponsoring organization was the National Association of Student Publishers and Editors which had been established just a month earlier. The association was composed of more than 200 student council presidents and editors of college publications. Their purpose was to “to define more clearly the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the Administration’s policy in Vietnam and to explore alternatives.”⁸

As we have seen in these pages, the reasons for the dissatisfaction had been defined by Morgenthau in debates and teach-ins throughout the country and well before as the war unfolded during the Kennedy years. In his interview with Chicago reporter Paul Gapp and printed in the *Chicago Daily News* on July 17, 1965, and in the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Denver Post* a week

later, on July 25, Gapp was greatly astonished at the breadth of Morgenthau's knowledge that formed the basis for his opposition to the war. Indeed, Gapp called Morgenthau "a walking national headquarters and prime source of academic wisdom for those who insist" that the Johnson policy "can ultimately lead to oblivion." He also described his interview "a little like sitting before a large electronic console wired to a political thinking machine." Whatever the question, Gapp writes, whether on China, Russia, France, or members of the Administration, "out comes a neat, beautifully assembled package of data and commentary." In other words, Gapp was impressed. Morgenthau articulately dissected and explained complex events in clear and precise terms and, especially, why the United States had no business being in Vietnam. It will be recalled that Frankel, Reston, and Sulzberger of the *Times* and its editorial board, simply ignored Morgenthau at the National Teach-In or his televised debate with Bundy and simply failed to report what Gapp caught in his interview. As Morgenthau tells Gapp "What I have said recently I have been saying for years, without anybody paying any attention."⁹ Indeed, this is an accurate statement. For America's national leadership, particularly the President's high level advisers, namely the Bundy brothers, Rusk, Rostow, McNamara, Lodge, Taylor, and others did not pay attention to what Morgenthau was saying. And the result is the unnecessary war that evolved into the tragedy of Vietnam.

In addition to what has already been cited in these pages, there are several Morgenthau articles that deserve special attention, one of which, because it addresses specifically why the United States must negotiate with the Vietcong and its corollary, why it is senseless to bomb the North as the means to get Hanoi to come to the conference table. This article, which appeared in *SANE*, the journal of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, is titled "Why I Am Against the Vietnam War." It was published in July 1965 and grew out of Morgenthau's teach-in appearance at Madison Square Garden on June 22, 1965. The article has the usual Morgenthau cogency and appears to be indisputable because it is so precisely argued. It is also indisputable on the grounds that no one chose to challenge it. Thus, why bomb the North and why deny the Vietcong the attention it deserves? Morgenthau answers:

It is also, of course, absurd to try to end the war by negotiations through bombing North Vietnam. Let me suppose the government in Hanoi collapses tomorrow and Ho Chi Minh tells President Johnson he will sign anything which the State Department submits to him. It is still a fact that three-quarters of the territory of South Vietnam is under the control of The Vietcong. Who is going to dislodge them? The South Vietnamese army has been unable to dislodge them. We will be unable to dislodge them. And certainly Hanoi cannot be expected to send its armies out to get rid of the Vietcong. So when we say we are in favor of

negotiations without any conditions, we are in favor of negotiations with people who are not the actual negotiating partners—those who control the situation in South Vietnam.¹⁰

And those who control the situation in South Vietnam are the Vietcong represented by the members of the National Liberation Front, which, Morgenthau points out, is the political arm of the Vietcong. The NLF, Morgenthau points out, is a “relatively independent force” that has sometimes opposed Hanoi and is “independent” in its relations with China. For Morgenthau, it is the NLF with whom we must negotiate because “it is they who are our opponents in South Vietnam and nobody else.”¹¹ Indeed, what Morgenthau said in Madison Square Garden and published in SANE in 1965 accurately anticipated later events and the closing chapter of the war. Thus, in 1973, the NLF evolved into the legal arm of the Vietcong and four years earlier, in 1969, was named the Provisional Revolutionary Government that later took its place at the huge round table in Paris as one of the four signatories, including Secretary of State Rogers, all of whom signed the negotiated settlement of the war.¹² But it is Morgenthau who pointed out in 1965 that the United States had to negotiate with the NLF because, in his words, “it is utterly futile to bomb a state that has given aid to the South Vietnamese, but is not responsible for the revolution and does not control it.” As for the revolution, Morgenthau writes:

... here we are in the presence of a misunderstanding of a modern revolution which is not limited to our policy in Vietnam... For better or worse, this is a revolutionary age. Obviously, there is a Communist component in most if not all contemporary revolutions, but the Communists have not created these revolutions. They try to use them. They try to exploit them. But even if Marx had died of measles as a boy, and if Lenin had been run over by a troika as a young man, there would still be a revolution today which somebody else would exploit for his purposes ...¹³

He then adds that what was essentially “a civil war aided from outside—not only by Hanoi but by ourselves as well” has become a larger war. And, “If we speak of intervention,” he points out, “we should not forget our own massive intervention” in which we are waging a war “which is not a war of the South Vietnamese people or government against foreign aggression but which is our war against Communism.” He notes the “strong sentiment” in Saigon for a “neutralist solution” as propounded by de Gaulle, “but it is we who have essentially foreclosed such a possibility by preventing the emergence of any government in South Vietnam that is willing to negotiate with Hanoi in order to make an end to the war.”¹⁴

He then repeats what he has said repeatedly in print and in public debate: that there are “varieties of Communism” in the world and that “simple-minded opposition to Communism, as if it were one monolithic enemy, is certainly out of date” and “completely obsolete.” “We are facing today,” Morgenthau adds, “all kinds of Communisms and we ought to be hostile to them in the measure in which they impinge on our national interests.” “The Communism of Ho Chi Minh,” as he has said again and again, “is neither Chinese nor Russian” oriented. “It is,” Morgenthau says, “essentially Vietnamese,” and Ho Chi Minh “is the natural candidate for a Southeast Asian Tito,” subservient neither to China or the Soviet Union “and not hostile to the United States.” He repeats the phrase, “the simple-minded opposition to Communism,” and he says “nothing will more surely unite the Communist front again” then our policy of opposing “every type of Communism regardless of where we find it.”¹⁵

“If the present course is not reversed,” Morgenthau writes, “we are only at the beginning of our troubles.” He says we are in a position similar to that of the French with its “army of 400,000 men” that could not conquer the guerrillas “and lost the flower of its officers and its youth in Indochina.” He sees the similarity and he concludes:

This is the enormous danger which I see in the South Vietnamese war—not only that it is an unjust war, not only that it is a war which cannot be won, not only that it is a war which, if it is pursued will have the opposite effect of what we intend it to be, but it is a war which is going to affect the moral fiber of our own nation. It will brutalize us; we will get impatient and hostile with a government which imposes upon us those sacrifices with no possible end, with no possible reason. For all these reasons, I say let’s make an end to the Vietnamese War.¹⁶

To return to his conversation with Paul Gapp a month later, in July 1965, Morgenthau, in reply to the interviewer, provides additional reasons to “make and end to the Vietnamese war.” He tells Gapp that our continued presence in Vietnam takes on a fresh urgency, that “the deeper the United States becomes involved in the war, the more likely it is we will find ourselves confronted with 700 million Chinese who cannot be subdued from the air.” He repeats what he told Spivak on *Meet the Press* two days earlier, that a war with China “means not a nice little war from the air, but a ground war fought with millions of men in which hundreds of thousands—if not millions—are going to be killed or maimed”; that North Vietnam, if “faced with the likelihood of defeat . . . is going to send 100,000 of its troops south—not to fight a stationary war, but a guerrilla war”; that if it takes a ratio of “10 to 1 [a figure accepted as accurate by some military officials] to win a war against guerrillas, it will take 1 million men to counterbalance 100,000”; that if the bombing of North Vietnam is “effective,” it could mean all-out war on North Vietnam.

Morgenthau tells Gapp: "We want to bomb them, but we want to avoid an all-out war with them. We cannot have it both ways." That even if "Hanoi collapses tomorrow. So what? Where do we go from here? Are we going to reduce Vietnam to a devastated colony of the United States?" Such a victory would be "hollow" and "we would be infinitely weaker than we were before." That while the President is absolutely "sincere in his desire for a negotiated settlement," he and his advisers "ought to know what kind of dangerous, [and] senseless situation we are really in." He quips that not to negotiate with the Vietcong is "like George III 170 years ago who said he would negotiate only with the French, and not with the American revolutionaries." To leave the Vietcong out of our negotiation offers, Morgenthau says, "is just not possible." If we stay in South Vietnam "until there is a stable government," we might be there for "a couple of hundred years." "The main impetus" of our Vietnam policy "is the fear of public opinion at home and abroad." "Our leaders," he tells his interviewer, "aren't sure enough of themselves to admit a mistake and try to rectify it" and are "always hoping that the next offensive will change the fortunes of war." And, as he told a nationwide television audience in his debate with Bundy a month earlier, "In order to justify its policy, the administration has created a kind of pseudo-world [of] pseudo-facts—quite at odds with the facts of experience."

Morgenthau also offered an assessment of the President's principal advisers. On Bundy:

He is out for personal power and will always jump on the bandwagon of the guy who happens to have the ear of the President at the moment." On Defense Secretary McNamara: "It is by an accident of history that he is a most powerful member of the administration, most admired by the President *and least knowledgeable about foreign policy. He doesn't know what it is.* [Emphasis, mine] On Secretary of State Rusk: Privately, as we have seen, Morgenthau had little regard for Rusk's intellectual abilities, but publicly, as noted here, Morgenthau was far more circumspect. Rusk, Morgenthau said, was "wise" and "experienced" and "knows what foreign policy is all about, but is so weak that he is not a factor in the situation at all."¹⁷

In the *Chicago Daily News* interview, there was also included a bracketed description of "Prof. Morgenthau's 2-Phase Solution to [the] Viet Problem." Phase One is the enclave strategy, noted in the previous chapter, but here Morgenthau emphasizes that the United States "must recognize that 'there is not the slightest chance' of creating a viable South Vietnamese government" while the Vietcong must also be made aware that "there is no way U.S. forces can be driven out of their fortified positions." The next step, if this is successful, is the attempt to negotiate directly with the Vietcong "on a

realistic basis,” meaning the United States will have to accept the NLF as the legitimate legal arm of the Vietcong. Phase Two, in general terms, includes a “step-by-step program” in which the United States “works toward a withdrawal of its armed forces, [the] unification of North and South Vietnam, and [the] holding of general elections.” He adds:

Since the elections are likely to lead to a triumph of North Vietnam [and] President Ho Chi Minh, we ought to see to it that he, as ruler of all Vietnam, becomes a Southeast Asian Tito. To do this will mean use of the U.S. economic assistance program that President Johnson has outlined. It also means getting the Soviet Union into the picture, to create a new balance of power through which Chinese power can be checked in Southeast Asia.¹⁸

Morgenthau then adds: “One of the ironies of this whole situation is that our interests in Southeast Asia and the Russians’ interest are on parallel lines”; that “we both have the same interest in preventing the extension of Chinese power.” But “at the same time,” Morgenthau notes, “the ancient and now renascent power of China over Asia cannot be shrugged off. It is a fact of nature.”¹⁹

Indeed, as we have seen, the problem of U.S. relations with China is related to the heated rhetoric of America’s national leadership about China beginning with Dulles and carried on by Kennedy and later by Johnson until Richard Nixon, in March, 1972, visited China and began the process of normalizing relations. Thus, in 1972, the great fear that China was going to send its millions of peasants to conquer the countries of the South Seas and then move against the West dissipated overnight. Nixon, from whom it was least expected based on his own anti-Communist rhetoric over the years, had ameliorated the problem of America’s relations with China. This meant there was no longer any debate about the conflict in Vietnam as a civil war among indigenous Vietnamese. In his interview with Gapp, Morgenthau acknowledged the danger of war with China over Vietnam, but he also pointed out, as he did in many previous venues, that “China is the predominant power in Asia,” that China, as a great power had a natural and historic interest in what was obviously its Asian sphere of influence. But this did not negate the necessity of preventing the greater extension of Chinese power and influence on the Asian continent, which is what Nixon attempted as he began the process leading to full diplomatic relations with the Chinese government.

In 1965, the massive wave of teach-ins, conferences and public debates reflected the deep division of the American public as official spokesmen such as Rusk repeated the theme of aggression from the North as the chief cause of the war. Other official spokesmen, such as Bundy, used a different refrain

particularly in response to an unofficial commentator, both of whom contributed to that division by perpetuating confusion as to the nature of the policy that was driving the American war in Vietnam. Thus, two weeks before the Morgenthau interview, there appeared on July 3, 1965, in *Saturday Review*, a weekly journal of politics and culture directed toward an educated readership, two articles, both of which got it all wrong on the subject of the war. The first, written by one of America's most distinguished poets, Archibald MacLeish, was titled, "What Is 'Realism' Doing to American History?" which, as will be seen, had nothing to do with "Realism," the school of political thought rightly associated with its progenitor, Hans Morgenthau. Alas, the reply to MacLeish by the national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, who, because of his basic aversion to "Realism," or national interest foreign policy, similarly proceeded to demonstrate an egregious misunderstanding of the war by extolling all the wrong reasons for why we were fighting in Vietnam. Bundy's answer to MacLeish published in the same issue is titled "The Uses of Responsibility, A reply to Archibald MacLeish."

The MacLeish article is a splendid example of talented intelligence gone wrong on a subject vastly different from poetry. Thus, MacLeish wrongly accuses the Johnson administration of employing the tactics of "hard-headed" objective "realism" in fighting its war while neglecting "our old idealism," "our visionary streak," our Declaration, which promised liberty, "not alone to the people of this country, but also to the world . . ." MacLeish continues: "We have departed from our Wilsonian heritage" when "we were on the side of the angels," and wanted "to make the world safe for democracy"; we have neglected our forgotten past when we "believed in humanity and such abstractions as international justice and international organizations and the possibility of universal peace."²⁰

Indeed, the MacLeish assessment of the war is totally incorrect. Our Vietnam War policy was not based on any "hardheaded" objectivity or the realistic assessment of the geopolitical facts; rather, it was the reverse; it was the utopian promise of Wilsonian idealism to make the world safe against Communism, which was the abstraction that guided American policy in Vietnam. In fact, "hardheaded" and objective realism was the basis of Morgenthau's objections against the war. Thus, what MacLeish heralds as our "climate of abstract principle, of a high and noble rhetoric," is what got us into the war in the first place and that continues to keep us there.

Bundy's response to MacLeish was equally as foolish for Bundy defended American policy on the same grounds that MacLeish inveighed against it: they are both advocates of the same kind of utopian idealism though Bundy is more cleverly deceptive for he is, after all, the national security adviser and a chief proponent of the war. Thus, Bundy writes, the United States, since

Franklin Roosevelt's time, and following Roosevelt's World War II policy, was to use power "for the advancement of peace in the world as a whole" and to be concerned "with the interests of others, wherever they might be." He twice repeats the words, "the interests of others," and in another sentence it is "the true interests of those with whom we come in contact" and in a concluding sentence it is "our obligation . . . that serves the interests of other men as well as ourselves."²¹ This is close to Morgenthau's point about making foreign policy that considers the interests of the nation toward which that policy is directed. But it becomes clear that this is not the premise underlying Bundy's thinking for he offers no definition of the geopolitical components by which the interests of others are determined in the light of American interests. He has missed the point completely for Bundy, as previously noted, is not a student of national interest foreign policy.

Thus, having pointed to "interests" and the "interests of others," Bundy reveals explicitly what he has so far covered up with generalities. For Bundy, there is only one interest, and it is all about Communism. He writes: it is "the threat of Communist domination over peoples whose conquest by Communism would not only be deeply against our interests but also against their own." Or, as Bundy also puts it, it is necessary "to conduct ourselves in such a way as not to encourage those in the Communist world who believe that adventure pays off, and to give encouragement to those who believe that there are safer and more responsible courses for Communists than open or overt aggression." He adds: where there is a "situation of danger and difficulty" and where "the power of the United States must be applied," the "object of that exercise of power is peace because the object of our policy as a whole is peace."²²

To break down Bundy's abstractions into concrete and practical terms, it means the raw and indiscriminate use of power all in the name of fighting Communism and it is not, as MacLeish writes, the application of "hard-headed" and objective realism. Bundy does not advocate the distinction of the varieties of national Communism abroad in the world and the necessity to evaluate these in terms of America's national interest. And MacLeish is a poet and not a student of international politics. Thus, for the readership of the *Saturday Review*, the confusion remained unabated, and the paradox is striking: both MacLeish and Bundy, ostensibly arguing two different positions, are saying the same thing and speaking the same language. They are promoting Wilsonian idealism as responses to the Vietnam War.

Saturday Review editor Norman Cousins was a passionate advocate of world government. He deplored the carnage and the killing of innocent civilians caused by the incessant bombing, but his efforts to end the carnage were not

based on geopolitical or national interest reflections. As noted in his editorial of May 21, 1966, Cousins declares that U.S. interests would be served by proclaiming publicly that a major objective of U.S. policy is to support and strengthen the UN. In the same editorial, Cousins writes that the current American policy is separating the country from “the moral base on which so many of its traditions have rested,” a position that, as we have seen in these pages, is unsupported by history. In his editorial of July 2, 1966, Cousins laments the “world anarchy among the nations of the world,” a world in which “national sovereignties” in “the absence of law among nations” creates “the crises and the wars and the impossibility of a peaceful world.” “What is needed,” Cousins writes, is a “unifying principle” and that principle, he asserts, is “world law,” the principle that, he mistakenly declares, “is endorsed by history in general and the American Constitution-makers in particular.”²³

On December 18, 1965, Cousins extols the President’s announcement of a special White House conference for a world-wide project known as the International Cooperation Year initiated by the UN. Cousins, in his editorial, was ecstatic because, in his words, “It means working for and moving toward a world community instead of a world battleground.” Cousins, in his enthusiasm, was carried away by his own imagination as he writes, for example, that the conference, though it has not yet taken shape, will serve “for meeting man’s enduring problems,” for “developing the creative capacities of the human being,” for “the enjoyment of living,” for “unobstructed access to knowledge.”²⁴ The editorial, of course, has nothing to do with the problem of Vietnam.

Yet, in the same issue of December 18, Cousins commissioned three articles published under the title: “Vietnam: A Debate.” The first article, written by Sanford Gottlieb, Director of SANE, took up the question: “The Road to Negotiations.” Here, Gottlieb cites Walter Lippmann, Bernard Fall, Vietnam writers J. P. Honey, Bryan Crozier, two French observers, Philippe Devillers, and Jean Lacouture, and CBS commentator, Eric Sevareid. It is the year of the massive wave of teach-ins and public debates, and Morgenthau, who has put forward the only plan, the enclave policy, is not mentioned. The second article, written by Amherst Professor of history Henry Steele Commager, is titled “The Problem of Dissent,” which argues that dissent is right and proper and patriotic to question error especially “when it [error] is immense.” And thirdly, there is Cousins’ selection of Leo Cherne, AFV founder and Executive Director of its affiliate, Freedom House, who writes “Why We Can’t Withdraw.” There is nothing in the caption that identifies Cherne as an official of the AFV, which means the readers of *SR* are left unaware that Cherne is a lobbyist for South Vietnam. In his article, Cherne rounds up the

usual suspects—the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese—who he says are engaged in “a military assault upon a non-Communist government.” And for Cherne, Vietnam is not an isolated conflict; it is what he calls “a cockpit for world struggle.” Here, Cherne cites Morgenthau but only to denigrate what he said at the 1956 AFV convention, which Cherne misrepresents by holding that these Morgenthau statements still apply to the world of 1965.²⁵

Two months earlier, on October 30, 1965, Cousins reprinted excerpts of the statements made by all twenty-seven participants at a Symposium held at Racine, Wisconsin, which included Morgenthau and Cherne as will be seen shortly. In *SR*, Morgenthau’s central policy suggestion is quoted: “To negotiate a settlement that will allow us to disengage ourselves militarily from South Vietnam through a series of steps spaced in time,” an allusion to his enclave strategy. This is included in a brief synopsis of Morgenthau’s position, but that is all. Morgenthau, aside from a book review published in *SR* in 1964, was never commissioned by Cousins to write on Vietnam or on any other subject.²⁶ Yet Cousins, as editor of a major journal, must have known that Morgenthau was the most active of Vietnam war dissenters.

In his editorial of May 13, 1967, in response to General Westmoreland’s “blanket” condemnation of those “unpatriotic Americans who oppose the war,” Cousins asked: “Whom did the General mean to include in his indictment?” “Are we left to assume,” Cousins asked, “that the more severe the criticism of the war, the more open to question is one’s love for country?” Cousins then goes on to list an honor role of critics but one name is omitted. Cousins asks: “Could Westmoreland have meant Walter Lippmann?” For Cousins, “No one has written more effectively about the war . . .” “Did the General mean the editors of the *New York Times*?” Again, for Cousins, “No publication has questioned more sharply or knowledgeably the dangers of escalation.” As we have seen in a previous chapter, this is egregiously wrong. Cousins continues: and “no journalist has pointed more insistently to the inconsistencies and contradictions” of U.S. policy “than has James B. Reston.”²⁷

Again, Cousins is wrong for Reston stood with the Administration and, on more than one occasion, sharply denigrated the critics. Among those also on the Cousins’ honor role of dissenters are Senators Fulbright, Gruening, McGovern, Hartke, Clark and Robert Kennedy though the latter had, up to this time, questioned only the bombing, but not the basic policy of the war. And when Cousins refutes Westmoreland’s warning about “the threat of World Communism” by noting that a major factor “affecting the security of the United States” is “the ideological split between the Soviet Union and Communist China,” and that a land war in Asia against China “could chew up millions of lives,”²⁸ these arguments did not originate in the *Times* or in the columns of James B. Reston. They originated in Morgenthau’s opposition to the war.

Five months later, on October 21, 1967, Cousins commissioned Kennedy loyalist Theodore Sorensen to write "The War in Vietnam: How We Can End It." The article is useless. Sorensen has no plan; he has platitudes. He will reconvene a Geneva conference to achieve, in his words, "a neutral, peaceful, independent South Vietnam free to determine in new elections its own political, economic and social system, and its relationship or reunification with the North." Sorensen writes that he expects "a new opportunity"—without saying how—that "may be approaching in the holiday season . . . if we plan and work for it now, we can be prepared this Christmas to have the firing cease forever." He offers no specifics. He has two references to President Kennedy, whose objective, he writes, "was to gain time for the South Vietnamese, with our help and protection, to achieve a society sufficiently cohesive . . . to negotiate a balanced settlement."²⁹ In short, the Sorensen article adds nothing to the Vietnam debate.

On January 18, 1965, Morgenthau was one of eight persons queried by *Newsweek* to answer the questions: "How well or badly is the struggle for South Vietnam really going?" and "What should the U.S. do about it now?" Just as he was the sole minority voice among five to advocate an end to the war a year and a half later in *Look* magazine noted in a previous chapter, so here, too, he was the only respondent among eight to propose withdrawal. He answered, "For a year, I have seen only one alternative: to get out without losing too much face." He listed "three possible ways this could happen": South Vietnam tells us to leave, which is a "distinct possibility"; he then noted what became a consistent Morgenthau proposal, which was to convene another Geneva conference that "would neutralize all of Southeast Asia [and] which would really mean China would be recognized as the dominant power in Asia" [which was consistent with the facts]; and thirdly, again what Morgenthau repeatedly advised, to work out "a bilateral deal with North Vietnam" by which Ho Chi Minh would be recognized as a national Communist independent of either China or Russia.³⁰

What is striking is not only that Morgenthau was the only respondent among eight to advocate getting out of Vietnam, but that he proposed this a month before the Vietcong attack on Pleiku in February 1965 that initiated the beginning of the sustained bombing known as operation Rolling Thunder. That is, even before the earliest escalation occurred, it was obvious to Morgenthau that America's national interest dictated withdrawal.

Surprisingly, this was not the case for an expert such as Bernard Fall who replied that the United States "will have to stick to it militarily while the negotiations go on." Unsurprisingly, however, Henry Cabot Lodge, the former and later again appointed Ambassador to South Vietnam after August 1965, said

“We have accomplished much” and the various “military, economic, social, and information programs” we have built “will be the springboard” that will bring us “victory.” For P. J. Honey, the British linguist, historian and authority on Vietnam, the conflict simply called for “a few carefully planned bombing raids” to inflict “economic chaos on the entire country.” If Hanoi did not capitulate, the United States would warn North Vietnam, that unless it ceased its aggression on the South, the United States would escalate the bombing “on a graduated scale until Hanoi concluded it was against its best interests to continue the war.” The most preposterous reply came from Frederick Nolting, former Ambassador to South Vietnam, who claimed that the Diem government had been “legally elected” and that “the free Vietnamese were gradually winning their struggle with our help” until Diem had been overthrown and killed in November 1963. Nolting then resorted to the usual clichés that “we are going to stick to our commitment to Vietnam” and that our “strategic interest is essentially to block the advance of Communism in Southeast Asia” to prevent “the take-over of South Vietnam by Hanoi and Peking.”³¹

Almost a year later, on November 30, 1965, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations sponsored a debate on “U.S. Foreign Policy in the Far East.” The debaters were Morgenthau and Brzezinski. Similar to their last encounter on June 21, 1965, nothing had changed. Brzezinski continued to argue for American involvement on the dubious grounds that it was America’s duty to remain militarily involved in “global matters”; that without that involvement, “there would be international chaos.” Brzezinski insisted erroneously that “Our position in Vietnam has been a warning to the Soviet Union, and to further split Russia and China”; that “if our engagement in Vietnam hadn’t taken place, Russia and China could have accommodated their differences.” Morgenthau pointed out that U.S. policy was “driving North Vietnam into the arms of China”; that even if the United States destroyed “every Chinese city” there would still “be 500,000 Chinese left to fight” and “we could not win a land battle in China.”³²

For Brzezinski, there was no alternative to American involvement in Vietnam. For Morgenthau, to remain in Vietnam would prove disastrous, and there were sensible alternatives to pursue, one of which was the enclave strategy. Brzezinski, like Bundy, perpetuating the dogma that Communism had to be fought anywhere on the globe and that the United States, “as the greatest power in the world,” could not abdicate its responsibility, contributed greatly to the confusion that divided the nation on the war.

Three years later, on December 7, 1968, when it became clear that the United States could not win a military victory in Vietnam, Brzezinski had a change of mind. Answering the question, what should “the Nixon Administration do about its foreign policy?” Brzezinski answered: “The first order

of business will be to see whether the war in Vietnam can be terminated on terms acceptable to the American people ...” And “secondly,” he said, “I think it’s time to redefine our attitude toward China. The abnormalcy not only hurts American interests in Asia, but also affects negatively our relationship with the Soviet Union.” Almost a year later, in October 1969, Brzezinski advised Nixon “to remove American forces from Vietnam by a particular date (say, two years from now) and put the whole issue before Congress.”³³ Thus, in three years, Brzezinski had taken a 180-degree turn and his notion that the United States was the policeman of the world combating world-wide Communism, was quietly put to rest.

A month earlier, in October 1965, there was another debate in the form of a symposium held at the Johnson Foundation Center in Racine, Wisconsin, sponsored by the Johnson foundation, the Asia Society, and the University of Chicago. As noted above, this was the conference from which excerpts of the participants’ statements were included in *Saturday Review*. The theme of the symposium was “The Prospects for Southeast Asia,” which the *Chicago Daily News* rendered as “China: Asia’s Friend or Hungry Dragon.” Following the President’s Johns Hopkins speech months earlier in April when he offered a one-billion-dollar aid program for regional development in Southeast Asia, Kenneth T. Young, president of the Asia Society and symposium chairman, was one of the organizers who brought the three groups together. And while the symposium was informed that the Administration “welcomed constructive suggestions,” it also “let it be known,” that, contrary to what some of the critics had said, the administration “does not expect China to invade North Vietnam at this point.” Did this imply that they expected an invasion at some later point? Moreover, the administration also let it be known that it did not accept the view that North Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh “would automatically become an ‘Asian Yugoslavia’ free from and abrasive to Red China” if the United States withdrew from Vietnam.³⁴ This was obviously an indirect reply to Morgenthau, one of the participants at the Racine conference, and also the chief proponent of the idea that Ho could become an Asian Tito independent of China. That Ho could become an Asian Tito was based on the history of Vietnamese enmity toward China over the centuries and Ho’s Vietnamese nationalism that took precedence over his ideological ties to Communism. The administration was obviously listening but not paying much attention to the details of Morgenthau’s critique.

The conference participants included several American scholars and a number of United Nations’ officials. The two most prominent participants were Morgenthau and Leo Cherne, the latter noted in the *Chicago Daily News* account as the executive director of the Research Institute of America. Once

again, there is nothing in the report about Cherne's participation in the AFV lobby or his related activities as executive director of an organization known as Freedom House. Morgenthau is referred to as "one of the foremost critics of the administration's Vietnam policy, arguing that the defense of Vietnam is not necessary or efficacious for the containment of Red China." Cherne, the report noted, countered with "strong and acid disagreement": "I don't see how we can ignore explicit statements of intention from Defense Minister Marshall Lin Piao, which Cherne," like McNamara, as noted earlier, "now likened to '*Mein Kampf*.'" Cherne is appalled. He tells the conferees that "we sit here ad infinitum talking about what we think China wants . . . what China might do"; they "have spelled it all out," he says, "but it is too horrible. Like '*Mein Kampf*,'" he says, "we cannot afford not to believe it."³⁵

Morgenthau not only does not believe it, but tells Cherne, in effect, that he has missed the point on the Lin Piao manifesto. Morgenthau points out that "one must be impressed with the great restraint and very limited aims the Chinese government has tried to pursue by military means." That "what we have in Asia is not the march of the armies of China into non-Communist territories of Asia but the pressure of culture and the predominance of China on her neighbors." Thus, for Morgenthau, China appears to be, as the newspaper report put it, "a restrained and more-or-less responsible world power." Thus, Morgenthau notes, "So I have arrived at the fact that the threat of China is not in the nature of military conquest, but of relentless pressure on other countries."³⁶

What Defense Minister Lin Piao, asserted in the official manifesto and that Cherne accepted as face value, was that the Chinese peasants and later the peasants of other Asian countries together with the "peasants of Africa and Latin America will strike at America and Europe—at 'the urban centers' of today's world." For Cherne, this is what they will do. For Morgenthau, it was "obviously nonsense." "Where are the peasants to march on the American cities?" Morgenthau asked. Again, he points out, "They say these things, but they act quite differently, quite calculatedly." Moreover, he adds: "I have watched Chou-En-lai and he is one of the smartest statesmen in the world."³⁷ And to repeat, seven years later, Richard Nixon dined with Chou-En-lai in Peking, and the Chinese peasants never showed up "to march on the American cities" or any other Western or even Asian cities for that matter.

There was another series of encounters between Morgenthau and Cherne in the pages of *The New Leader* magazine from January 2 to February 13, 1967, in which Cherne, as a high official in both the AFV and Freedom House, made it his mission to support, without question or reservation, the administration's war policy. Thus, in addition to the AFV as America's chief lobby

for South Vietnam, the other organization that distracted the American public from understanding the pitfalls of America's involvement in Vietnam was Freedom House.

The inception of Freedom House in 1941 just before the onset of World War II was designed to enlist greater support for the allied cause against Hitler and later to win support for America's war efforts among those still unaligned. Its founder was former Republican Presidential candidate, Wendell Wilkie, who lost to Franklin Roosevelt in 1940. Its honorary chairlady was First Lady Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1942, Wilkie traveled the world as President Roosevelt's emissary and later published his experiences in his book, *One World*. Cherne began his association with Freedom House when he met and befriended Wilkie in 1941. After Wilkie died in 1946, Cherne became a member of the Freedom House Board of Directors and shortly thereafter, became Chairman of the Executive Committee. Cherne's leadership of Freedom House began at that moment and by 1956, Freedom House would be allied with Cherne's other organization, the AFV, which Cherne helped to found in June 1956. From this time until 1975 when the United States left Vietnam, Cherne's basic *raison d'être* was Vietnam. Earlier, in 1941, Cherne became involved in the war effort through his newly established business, the Research Institute of America. Cherne, twenty-eight years old in 1941, chose "deferment" from the war on the basis of his efforts deemed "necessary for the war effort." At the same time, he also became immersed in the business that initially made his reputation.³⁸

Cherne held a law degree, but his essential interests were economics and business. He began his career as a prolific author of business publications—*Social Security Coordinator*, 1937, 1941, *Adjusting Your Business to War*, 1940, *Your Business After the War*, 1943, *Guide to Tax Economy*, 1940, 1941, *Price Control*, 1942, *Materials for a Course in Government Contract Problems*, 1941. These and many similar business tracts authored by Cherne were published by Cherne's firm, the Research Institute, which was founded shortly after 1935. Its initial purpose was to provide tax and social security information to American businessmen following the passage of the Social Security Act. The Institute became an immediate financial success.³⁹

By 1940, Cherne had gained national prominence. By 1938, Cherne began commuting to Washington from his Institute's home in New York to confer with the planning branch of the War Department for industrial mobilization. At the end of the war, Cherne accompanied General MacArthur to Japan to work on Japan's economic recovery. In 1956, Cherne traveled to South Vietnam and conversed with Ngo Dinh Diem on how to save Saigon as a non-Communist state. Cherne returned to the United States and sent a new assistant to Saigon to assist Diem, an Austrian socialist refugee, Joseph

Buttinger. Buttinger returned to the United States and helped Cherne form the AFV.⁴⁰ As we have seen in a previous chapter, Buttinger eventually recanted publicly his mistaken allegiance to South Vietnam and America's mistaken war effort to save South Vietnam. Cherne never admitted any error in his support of the Vietnam war.

Throughout the Vietnam era, Freedom House under Cherne was on the march in its defense of the war. In its November 29, 1965, *News from Freedom House* statement sent to its membership, it urged Americans "to contribute to the voluntary agencies working in Vietnam," to address letters to their representatives in Congress, "to participate in local discussions of the issues at stake in Vietnam," and "to circulate for public signature the following resolution addressed to President Johnson": "We, as Americans, renew our dedication to the achievement of peace with freedom. To this end, we declare our support of the American commitment in Vietnam and resolve that whatever national resources are required shall be devoted to its fulfillment."⁴¹

In its November 1966 *News Letter*, it was announced that its fall, 1965 series of public lectures had been so enthusiastically received that it had been decided by the organization to do it again. In its *News Letter*, Freedom House announced that the expanded series of lectures would take place on Wednesday afternoons from February to June 1967 as an "in-service course for New York City public school teachers." The key theme for all these meetings was "freedom": "freedom and communication," "freedom and the law," "freedom and minorities," "freedom in the developing nations," "freedom and education." And Cherne, noted only as the executive director of the Research Institute of America and always without notice of his affiliation to the AFV, would "present the concluding lecture on the 'future of freedom.'"⁴²

The march of Freedom House on behalf of South Vietnam continued. In late 1967, an appendage of Freedom House made its first appearance. The event was the first conference of the newly created Freedom House Public Affairs Institute in which fourteen scholars and specialists on Asian affairs met for three days to discuss American policy in Asia. The conference was held at Tuxedo, New York in November 1967 and "was financed," according to Leonard R. Sussman, executive director of the Institute, "by contributions."⁴³

The report produced by the conference in a "6,700 word text," as reported in *The New York Times* on December 20, 1967, affirmed the basic outlook of Freedom House in its support for the war policy. The report concluded that "a Communist victory in Vietnam would be likely to lead to larger, more costly wars than to a lasting peace"; that it was "a crucial test of American political maturity" to "continue the fight" as a "limited war" to achieve other

“major objectives.” In the introduction, the authors of the report “say it is their feeling ‘that the moderate segment of the academic community must now be heard, lest other voices be mistaken for majority sentiment.’” Here, the reference is to the divisions within the United States that, the report noted, would “force the United States Administration to end the war” without securing the independence of South Vietnam. The report continued: “As long as the Communists believe this, they will take their present hard-line position.” “In this sense, the outcome is being decided on the streets and in the homes of America as much as in the jungles of Vietnam.”⁴⁴

In its coverage, the *Times* lists alphabetically all fourteen participants as “authors of the report” though the name twice referred to and who is twice quoted in the *Times* is Professor Robert Scalapino of Berkeley, recently appointed a regional director of the AFV. Scalapino, it will be recalled, as a spokesman for the government, debated Morgenthau in the afternoon session of the National Teach-In on May 15, 1965. Cherne is again prominently noted on the first page as the executive director of the Research Institute of America and again, there is no mention of Cherne as an affiliate of either Freedom House or the AFV. There is also no mention of the connection—or the collusion—between Freedom House and the Johnson Administration, particularly in the person of presidential aide John P. Roche who first proposed the plan for the conference as a public relations ploy to gain support for the government’s Vietnam policy.⁴⁵

Roche, Johnson’s intellectual in residence from Brandeis University, writes, in a memo to Walt W. Rostow on August 9, 1967, that he had taken “the initiative a few months ago to get a serious conference going on the ‘Future of Freedom in Asia.’” Roche tells Rostow that he “persuaded Leo Cherne to raise the money and, in return,” in Roche’s colorful words, “Freedom House collects brownie points as sponsor.” He then tells Rostow that “Bob Scalapino has agreed to convene” the conference, that “we picked about fifteen of the best, most responsible Asian scholars to agree to a common date for the session,” and that the meeting would be held at “Harriman’s bungalow at Tuxedo.”⁴⁶

There is an enclosure attached to Roche’s memo that is a copy of Scalapino’s letter to Asian scholar, A. Doak Barnett, of Columbia University, discussing the arrangements for the conference. The letter also affirms “that almost all of the original invitees” can attend. In addition, Scalapino writes, “John Roche, Leo Cherne and Harry Gideonse, another Freedom House official, will also attend” as will “a small group of top journalists and commentators on an off-the- record basis.”⁴⁷ Roche did not attend because a prominent White House official at the conference would suggest collusion with the Freedom House sponsored event.

In the early stages of the planning, Cherne, on March 29, 1967, tells Scalapino about the “project we had talked about” which is the projected conference of Freedom House’s new Public Affairs Institute. Cherne then tells Scalapino, “I’ve also kept our mutual friend informed of each step and he’s in agreement with the wisdom” of the “procedure we are now contemplating.”⁴⁸ The spate of correspondence between Cherne, Scalapino and Roche suggests that “our mutual friend” is Roche who also, in a November 27, 1967 memo to the President, “strongly recommends” the appointment of Scalapino as an “Assistant Secretary of State.” Roche adds that Scalapino “would be a first-rate addition” and a “great help to Bill Bundy.” And “by the purest accident,” Roche tells Johnson, “he also has an ethnic connection which would be helpful.” Scalapino politely refused the appointment.⁴⁹

The evidence that the government colluded with Freedom House is also confirmed by a draft letter to prospective invitees in which Scalapino writes that “John Roche, whom many of you know, has expressed great interest in such a conference and has encouraged me to explore it with you.” Scalapino also notes that the conference will be financed by Freedom House and “it has been made clear that Freedom House funds are not and have never been obtained from any governmental source.”⁵⁰ And in a Cherne letter to Scalapino on May 25, 1967, before the location of Tuxedo, New York had been decided, Cherne notes, that “more than funds will be provided by Freedom House” including the “costs” for “transportation” for those who will travel from distant campuses. Yet it is Roche who assisted Freedom House in soliciting contributions through an “IRS. letter authorizing tax deductibility,” which means, as he told the President, “there is money in the bank” to help finance the project. Roche also told the President, as he traveled to New York to meet with Cherne, [that] he [Roche] is good at making himself “invisible.”⁵¹ Thus, there would be no public awareness that the White House was involved in the organization of the conference in Tuxedo, New York, nor in the formation of the “Peace with Freedom in Vietnam” organization.

On November 6, 1967, shortly after the Tuxedo conference, Leonard R. Sussman, a member of the board of directors of Freedom House, dispatched a memo to his Freedom House colleagues, Harry D. Gideonse and Leo Cherne on the subject of Morgenthau’s latest contribution to the Vietnam debate. This was Morgenthau’s article cited above on “What Ails America,” which, as we have seen, noted the instability of our institutions based on the breakdown of the trust and loyalty to the government as part of the affects of the war. Morgenthau also strongly criticized the President for his failure to perform his traditional and constitutional duties as “the molder of the national will, the educator of the people, the guardian of its interests, and the protagonist of its ideals.” In this “noble and vital mission,” Morgenthau writes, “President

Johnson has completely failed” because he has employed every deception in his pursuit of an unwinnable victory in the quagmire of Vietnam.⁵²

This in itself could have aroused Sussman’s ire, but it is what Morgenthau said several paragraphs later that caused Sussman to write in his memo that “Here is Hans Morgenthau’s latest effort in *The New Republic*.” “As you can see,” Sussman writes, “he cannot get Freedom House out of his mind.”⁵³ And Sussman could not get Morgenthau out of his mind. What Morgenthau also said in his article is that the President and his supporters relentlessly “accuse the dissenters of giving aid and comfort to the enemy,” which produces official but covert approval of repression and intimidation to quell the dissenters. Then Morgenthau writes that Freedom House is involved in this repression. In Morgenthau’s words: “When the authorities decide to do openly what at times they have tried to do surreptitiously and what an organization ironically misnamed Freedom House has openly advocated,” is to “stifle” “dissent.”⁵⁴

The question posed by Sussman is essentially what to do about Morgenthau? First, he suggests an article that traces “the history of ‘disintegration,’” the disintegration to which Morgenthau referred in his *TNR* essay, but to blame the dissenters and particularly Morgenthau who, in Sussman’s view, had “initiated the dissent” making the disintegration that followed all Morgenthau’s fault. The Sussman memo is strikingly childish because he simply jumbles together what he calls the “varying motivations” of the dissenters that, he says, include “students,” a “small percentage” of “college faculties,” those who opposed “residence hall rules,” those rebelling against their parents in some sort of “inter-generational tension” and those “cleverly directed [by] New Left activity.” What happened next, he writes, was “a bandwagon press,” that “blurred” all the “varying motivations,” and that lumped all the groups under “the slogan, ‘Vietnam.’” This is the extent of Sussman’s reading of how the nation is affected by the war and what has caused the national nervous breakdown over Vietnam. “Enter again Morgenthau,” Sussman writes, “who views the whole scene and suggests the total alienation of ‘intellectuals’” that produces “a feedback effect that the press multiplies further.”⁵⁵

On what basis could Sussman have made these remarks? In his memo, he tells Cherne and Gideonse about his conversation with Oscar Handlin, the Charles Warren Professor of History at Harvard who had attended the conference at Tuxedo. Sussman asked Handlin if Morgenthau had a following at Harvard and Handlin replied that only “a surprisingly small minority of Harvard faculty would share Morgenthau’s assessment” and that the Harvard faculty does not oppose “the general commitment in Vietnam.” Sussman also tells his colleagues that a poll at the University of Michigan and a vote of students taken at Columbia and Fordham “were strongly in favor of campus-recruitment,” a key indicator for Sussman in what he calls a “focal point of

opposition to the whole complex known as ‘Vietnam.’” Sussman concludes his memo by noting optimism in the public’s support for the war. “There is a turn in the tide,” he writes: “There is a discernable shift in the attitudes of ‘intellectuals’ as reported in the press”; “There are recurring press indications” related to a recently released poll “indicating a leveling off in the opposition to Johnson and the fact that the new Douglas committee scored rather well in the nation’s press and magazines.”⁵⁶

That Sussman was greatly mistaken in his assessment of public opposition to the war was tellingly obvious. For on March 12, 1967, an advertisement in the *New York Times* covering two and a quarter pages in the “Week in Review” section was signed by 6,766 professors and teachers from around the country. The advertisement “called for an end to the Vietnam war and accused the government of withholding information about the conflict from the American people.” The *Times* reported that a spokesman for its advertising department said that “the advertisement was the largest in terms of signatures that had ever been placed in the newspaper in protest against the war in Vietnam.” The signatures included “2,654 college and university faculty members and 4,112 teachers” from “schools in twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia” as well as “several American professors in Canada, Denmark, and France.” The list of signatures was broken down by state and faculty affiliation that covered most of the two-and-a-quarter pages. The advertisement asked the American people to urge the government to “end the bombings in both North and South Vietnam,” “declare a cease-fire,” acknowledge “the National Liberation Front” as the “representative of a ‘substantial portion’ of the South Vietnamese people,” and “implement the Geneva Accords of 1954 ‘which call for the removal of all foreign troops from Vietnam.’”⁵⁷

More immediately, however, on November 14, 1967, just a week after Sussman dispatched his memo, Secretary of State Rusk addressed the Foreign Policy Association in New York while several thousand protesters gathered outside the Hilton Hotel. As Rusk spoke, traffic was blocked, eggs were thrown at police, pedestrians were harassed while, inside the Hilton, Rusk repeated the usual dogmas. There is “no turning back in Vietnam,” he said, the United States “must continue its policy of escalation.” And just before the Rusk speech, Vice President Humphrey in a statement said the United States is winning the war.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, eight thousand miles away, the United States continued to hammer North Vietnam. A week later, on November 21, U.S. Navy and Air Force planes based in Thailand bombed a large supply depot three miles from the center of Hanoi while carrier based planes struck a shipyard just outside of Haiphong. It was also reported that “paratroopers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade suffered heavy casualties” as they fought “trying to take Hill 875

against fierce resistance by the North Vietnamese.” To this day, no one knows why “Hill 875” had to be taken. On the same day, General Westmoreland told an audience in Washington that “the enemy’s hopes are bankrupt” and that American forces have reached “an important point where the end begins to come into view.”⁵⁹ A week later, on November 29, Johnson announced the resignation of Defense Secretary McNamara, effective on February 29, 1968. Shortly thereafter, McNamara was awarded the Medal of Freedom. The next day, on November 30, Senator Eugene McCarthy announced that he will oppose President Johnson in the 1968 Democratic presidential primaries for the purpose of negotiating an end to the war.

Sussman’s animus toward Morgenthau as reflected in his November 1967 memo sparked by Morgenthau’s September 1967 “What Ails America” article has deeper roots from an earlier encounter between Morgenthau and Cherne in which Sussman was a minor participant. For in a succession of back-and forth articles in January and February 1967, Morgenthau and Cherne debated their differences about the war in the pages of *The New Leader* magazine, a journal of liberal opinion that just recently closed its doors after 82 years of publishing. In the late 1960s *The New Leader* had a peak circulation of about 30,000 readers⁶⁰ and was presumably a journal for an educated public similar to that of the *Saturday Review* and *The New Republic*. Thus, the debate could not have been ignored by a segment of the American public that noticeably, though it took place in print, could be read as heated and angry. For the two participants came to the problem of the war from two diametrically opposed worldviews: Morgenthau was the fact-finding empiricist; Cherne, was the intuitionist and dogmatist; Morgenthau subjected his observations to a test in reality; Cherne believed in the infallibility of his convictions; for Morgenthau, truth was tentative and conditional; for Cherne, truth, particularly about Communism, was absolute and unconditional.

How did it all start? It began when Morgenthau published his article, “Freedom, Freedom House and Vietnam” on January 2, 1967. Cherne responded with “Responsibility and the Critic” on January 16. This was followed by another and more devastating Morgenthau piece on January 30 to which Cherne responded on February 13. Following the publication of the four articles and a letter written by Sussman in support of Cherne, Morgenthau published a letter in *The New Leader* on February 27. Here, Morgenthau refutes both Sussman and Cherne and writes, in his words, of the “unfairness of which these men are guilty.” Cherne and the leaders of Freedom House, Morgenthau notes, sent copies of “Cherne’s attack on Morgenthau” to “thousands of citizens” without “bothering” to send Morgenthau’s “original statement” or with his “reply” to Cherne.⁶¹

In his letter of February 27, Morgenthau accuses Cherne of “hypocrisy” and “distortion.” He writes that Cherne tars him with “the brush of Communism and radicalism,” “identifies him with the draft card burners,” charges him with “having vilified the President” and “imputes to him views that anyone with the slightest knowledge” of his “writing cannot believe.” He repeats that “the lengths of unfairness to which these people are willing to go,” are also “exemplified by Mr. Sussman” who, in his letter of February 13, “completely misrepresented” his position. Morgenthau concludes his letter by saying he was “appalled” by what Mr. Cherne and Mr. Sussman have done. He also adds that he was appalled but not surprised for Cherne and Sussman and the rest at Freedom House had no intention of playing by the rules of scholarly fairness.⁶²

Thus, in his opening salvo, on January 2, 1967, in *The New Leader*, Morgenthau begins: “In *The New York Times* last November 30, an advertisement covering seven full columns of a page appeared with the title in boldface: ‘LEADERS WARN THAT EXTREMISTS COULD DELAY VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS.’” The “subheading” heralded the moment as “A Crucial Turning Point!” The advertisement was “signed by 145 distinguished Americans” that included former President Eisenhower and former Secretary of State Dean Acheson. The statement urged “the responsible critics to dissociate themselves from [the] wild charges being made against the nation and its leaders.”⁶³

Portions of the advertisement in the *Times* read like a rehash of the Freedom House funded column written by Joseph Alsop and printed in a *Freedom House Newsletter* in 1965. Here Alsop writes: “The Communists cannot win their ‘war of liberation’”; that “even when negotiations are started our antagonists will at first insist on terms which would hand them a victory disguised as a peace settlement”; “they are likely to intensify their military action in the field”; they hope “that serious divisions within the United States . . . will weaken our resolve,” which will “allow them to wrest from the conference table what their soldiers and terrorists could not win by force.”⁶⁴ Thus, what the *Times* reported as a Freedom House declaration of support for the war was essentially a replication of the Alsop column published a year earlier and dispatched to Freedom House membership around the country. Alsop, thereby, in addition to his syndicated newspaper columns, had another outlet for his over-heated enthusiasm for the war, which was sponsored by Freedom House.

In his article, Morgenthau quotes the next-to-last paragraph of the November 30 advertisement that summarizes the Freedom House charge that “the responsible critics” fail “to draw the line between [their] positions and the views expressed by [the] irresponsible critics [which] could encourage our Communist adversaries to postpone serious negotiations, raising the

cost in lives and delaying the peace we earnestly seek.” The substance of the statement, repeated by supporters of the war, as we have seen in these pages, is without merit because it cannot be factually supported, which renders it a fallacy. But it is once again Morgenthau’s logic, which refutes and reduces the Freedom House statement to a shambles.

Thus, the fallacy, as Morgenthau puts it, is to maintain that it is “the ‘irresponsible’ opponents” of the war who are responsible for “the blood of our men who must die in Vietnam.” And the logical conclusion of this view is “that the policies of our Vietnamese adversaries are determined by what some Americans may or may not say about the policies of their government.”⁶⁵ Thus, it is the contention of Freedom House that the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese are influenced by what is or what is not said about the war in the United States. Morgenthau disposes of this charge by noting that this is a strange view of “the policy-making processes of any government, past or present.” For he writes: “I would have thought—and there is some evidence in history for thinking so—that a government engaged in a war will be influenced in its attitude toward peace by its estimate of the military situation and of the peace terms it thinks it can obtain.” If it thinks it can win or “get better peace terms by continuing the war, it will go on fighting; when it thinks it is likely to lose, or has nothing to gain from continuing the war, it will stop fighting.”⁶⁶

He then adds another dimension to his refutation by noting that there is also an ideological side as to why the North Vietnamese will remain indifferent to what the American dissenters are saying about the war. It is ideological because, as Morgenthau writes, Communist governments do not believe that capitalistic governments rule according to the consent of the governed. Communist governments, Morgenthau writes, hold the dogma that capitalistic governments are class societies ruled by an exploiting minority and regard dissent, whether “responsible” or “irresponsible,” as insignificant. “The dogma,” Morgenthau writes, “stands on its own feet” as “an integral part of the received Marxist-Leninist” belief system. For two decades, Communist writers “berated the ‘warmongers of Wall Street’ who drag an unwilling American people toward war, regardless of the evidence pro or con.” Thus, Morgenthau notes, “The dogma would be believed even if there were no dissent at all.”⁶⁷

Morgenthau also takes Freedom House to task for “trying to establish a political orthodoxy with regard to our policies in Vietnam.” Freedom House tells us, Morgenthau writes, “that we are morally entitled to criticize the government,” but not with “the fundamental issues” Freedom House “enumerates.” Which is to say, Morgenthau continues, that “we are not morally entitled to criticize the government in any meaningful way,” a practice

notably exercised by the totalitarian “governments of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.” Morgenthau thus equates these governments with Freedom House, which, similarly, he says, “make a distinction between ‘responsible’ and ‘irresponsible’ criticism defined as that which attacks the foundations of government.” Then, to add further insult to injury, Morgenthau points out that while the “immune foundations are much more broadly defined by totalitarianism than by Freedom House,” and while Freedom House addresses itself “only to the issue of Vietnam,” this “does not affect the principle” by which Freedom House “violates the democratic ethos.” “It is [thereby] ironic,” Morgenthau charges, “that an organization calling itself Freedom House should thus, unwittingly and misguidedly, attack the very foundations of American freedom.”⁶⁸

Morgenthau then makes it a personal issue: He writes:

The document condemns the holders of certain opinions as being responsible for the continuation of the war in Vietnam. I hold these opinions. And it is exactly because I hold them that I have consistently warned against the policies which first led to our involvement in this war, and then to our inability to extricate ourselves from it. If my advice had been followed there would be no war in Vietnam today, and our interests in Southeast Asia and throughout the world would be the better for it.

He continues:

But aside from this perverse logic, which blames the opponents of the war for its continuation, the document does not raise the question of whether the responsibility for continuing the war might not at least be shared by those policy-makers who have been consistently in their calculations and forecasts and have since 1963 repeatedly, and finally with success, urged upon the President the bombing of North Vietnam as a sure road to victory. Nor does the document raise the general question of whether those who make policy might not bear a greater share of responsibility than those who criticize it. It could dismiss the question only if it proved that the policies of the government could win the war quickly were it not for the irresponsibility of the critics.⁶⁹

The logic of Morgenthau’s reasoning is readily obvious. Fast forward to Cherne’s January 16 response titled “Responsibility and the Critic,” and Cherne has no answer. He simply accuses Morgenthau of expressing his “self-confessed vendetta with the policy-makers.” Cherne cannot answer Morgenthau because he cannot prove any vendetta. Morgenthau said that the policy-makers must share in the blame because they have been consistently wrong in their forecasts and calculations. Indeed, is this, in 1967, a matter of dispute? Cherne does not show where the policy-makers have been right. He

produces no factual answers. His lame retort is to repeat his charge that for Morgenthau, the “entire war is solely the result of the personal shortcomings of the policy-makers.”⁷⁰

Morgenthau responds on January 30 to Cherne’s article as follows: “My misgivings and forebodings about the Freedom House statement have been fully justified by Leo Cherne’s reply”; that as chairman of its executive committee, he is obviously the chief spokesmen and “speaks in the name of that organization.” Morgenthau adds and directs his accusation to Cherne: “Let me say right away that his reply is a thoroughly disreputable document” that “propounds more untruths that I can possibly contradict” given the limitations of “time” and “nervous constitution.”⁷¹

Here follows just a few typical examples of Cherne’s “untruths”: Cherne charges that the critics extol the Vietnamese Communists as “heroic” who possess “sublime attributes” while they excoriate the Administration “for every failure” and “every evil purpose” that is, on its face, the most absurd of accusations. Morgenthau replies: “Can anyone in his senses conclude” that the “many intelligent and responsible citizens” hold these views? That “is it really necessary to argue against so incredible an accusation?” Cherne also charges that Morgenthau expressed no disagreement with a fellow panelist known as a Trotskyite at the May 15 Teach-In. Does that mean Morgenthau is also a Trotskyite? For Cherne, it does; for Morgenthau it is trivial and preposterous. As Morgenthau put it, he was not going to use his “strictly allotted time to debate the Trotskyite [the historian, Isaac Deutscher] in order to prove” that he was “not a Trotskyite”; he adds that he appeared at the Teach-In to debate the spokesmen of the administration that “was the purpose of his being there in the first place”; and one last “untruth”: Cherne’s charge that Morgenthau has wrapped “his academic authority around the shoulders of the draft card burners,” which Morgenthau charitably called “pure invention” but which is simply dopey.⁷²

To return to his criticisms of the Freedom House advertisement of November 30, Morgenthau is both thorough and devastating. The advertisement contains “five criticisms” of those opposed to the war that Freedom House “calls ‘fantasies’” and refers to them “collectively as ‘irresponsible.’” Morgenthau quotes the “criticisms,” “examines them in sequence” and dispatches them to logical oblivion. Thus, Freedom House claims that it is the critics, including Morgenthau, who say it is “‘Lyndon Johnson’s War’ or ‘McNamara’s War’ or any other individual’s war.” Morgenthau points out that he has “never used such terms” though he admits that he has said that the war is “in good measure the result of the personal shortcomings of our policy-makers,” a charge made earlier in a *TNR* piece, where Morgenthau points out that it is the prestige of the policy-makers that requires them to

perpetuate error “because a liquidation of the war on terms acceptable to the other side would be tantamount to admitting they were consistently wrong in their calculations and forecasts.”⁷³

On January 16, Cherne made no factual reply to Morgenthau. Rather, he resorted to simple *ad hominem* attacks charging that Morgenthau had engaged in “low-level attacks” on the President, of “hit-and-run tactics,” which “make a shambles of rational debate,” and whose criticisms of American policies Cherne “labels” as “untrue, unjust and patently extremist.” Indeed, which debater made a mockery of “rational debate?”

A second criticism is the charge that the critics hold America’s leaders responsible for “committing ‘war crimes’ or indulging in ‘genocide,’” which the advertisement calls another “fantasy.” Cherne simply defends the administration of any indiscriminate killing and says that “targets of air and ground action have always been, and still are, selected to avoid civilians as much as possible.” Cherne adds that the bomber pilots are restricted by the careful selectivity of targets while the ground soldiers risk death by not firing on “innocent-seeming civilians.”⁷⁴ Cherne’s choice of phrase jumps out at the reader because it suggests, though obliquely, that many of the civilians only appear to be innocent and may be Vietcong sympathizers, which is why they are fired upon. It is Morgenthau’s argument that a “war fought against indigenous guerrillas ... is bound to obliterate the traditional distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, soldiers and civilians.” Such a war, Morgenthau adds, “cannot but degenerate into indiscriminate killing, and victory can be won only by incapacitating everybody, guerrilla and non-guerrilla alike.”⁷⁵ Cherne admits that whatever “precautions” are employed, they are “not entirely successful.” And then he accuses Morgenthau of what Morgenthau did not write: that “precautions are no longer being attempted.” In fact, Morgenthau did not address “precautions.” He pointed only to the lack of distinctions in the fighting of a guerrilla war.

Another criticism is vague and almost indefinable: it asserts “that military service in this country’s armed forces is an option exercisable solely at the discretion of the individual” to which Morgenthau responds: “I know of no proposition of this kind put forward in connection with the war in Vietnam.” He then adds: “I can therefore only guess what the document is aiming at.” Could it be aimed at the “draft card burner?” or those who refuse military service “without claiming the status of conscientious objectors?” or those of the “Armed Forces who would rather be relieved of their command or court-martialed than be responsible for indiscriminately killing civilians?” In this last category, of those in the military who want out, Morgenthau writes, they “are not engaging in ‘criticism’ either. But they are the real moral heroes of this war ...”⁷⁶

The fourth criticism indicts those who claim “That this is a ‘race’ war of white versus colored peoples” to which Morgenthau writes that in one sense, the statement is correct “in claiming that our white soldiers are fighting side-by-side with soldiers who are not white.” But this is not important for “what is decisive,” Morgenthau writes, “in moral and political terms is how the war is being experienced by the Vietnamese people.” And to the Vietnamese people, “we appear as the successors to the French,” who also, “by the way, included non-white soldiers.” And while there are non-white soldiers in the American army, he points out that we are making the Vietnamese hate us “as the white destroyers of their country,” and that is the “fact that counts.”⁷⁷

Freedom House criticism number five attempts to exonerate America’s national leadership and stigmatize the critics as unfair and irresponsible. This criticism is expressed this way: The critics say “that this nation’s leaders are obsessed with some compulsion to play ‘world policeman’ or to conduct some ‘holy war’ against the legitimate aspirations of underdeveloped people.” In fact, this is what the “nation’s leaders” were doing but under the rhetorical rubric of fighting Communism. Here, Morgenthau answers this charge by noting that “The president, the vice president, the secretary of state, and our military leaders have stated innumerable times that we are in Vietnam to ‘stop Communism.’” That the administration’s stated goal to “stop Communism” wherever it appears on the globe does, in fact, validate the critics, and even friends of the administration who have endorsed the idea that the United States should act as world policeman. Our leaders have said repeatedly, Morgenthau writes, “that being the most powerful nation on earth, we have a special responsibility to preserve peace and order and to oppose aggression throughout the world.” He then cites a most appropriate statement made by Rusk before a Senate subcommittee the previous August as an example of America’s willingness to use its military force to protect the world against Communism: “No would-be aggressor should suppose,” Rusk said, “that [even] the absence of a defense treaty, Congressional declaration, or U.S. military presence grants immunity to aggression.” This means, as proclaimed by the secretary of state, that the United States, “through the command of its executive power, is unrestrained in its unfettered right to oppose aggression” anywhere and militarily.⁷⁸

Finally, there is the question of how much influence Freedom House exerts in its attempt to suppress unfavorable criticism of the war. For Morgenthau, it is excessive for while it cannot curb free speech, it can, in practice, “effectively limit free speech.” It may, Morgenthau writes, “diminish as illegitimate any criticism of the administration’s war policy.” For Freedom House

distinguishes between the arguments against our policies in Vietnam that are legitimate and those that are not. The arguments just analyzed are declared to

be illegitimate. But considering the comprehensive character of the strictures, it is clear that while the document pretends to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate criticism, its purpose is really to put the stamp of illegitimacy upon most of the criticism—past, present or future—advanced against our Vietnam policies.⁷⁹

Morgenthau then amplifies his criticism. He writes that while Freedom House “does not have the power to prevent the expression of opinions it condemns” in “the legal and technical sense,” it can and does attempt to discourage freedom of speech covertly. And it does this by its “manipulation of the public mind: by avoiding inconvenient facts, by disseminating misinformation under the guise of educating the public, by convening public meetings with a pro-war policy program, by enlisting speakers who share the Freedom House agenda,” and, in consequence, by making dissent unpopular and by suggesting the dissenters are unpatriotic. So that it is not “freedom of speech” in the legal sense that is the issue. What is at issue, Morgenthau writes, is the moral question where Freedom House covertly dissembles to stifle opinion. Thus, Morgenthau argues, “for by condemning certain opinions as not only mistaken but as aiding the enemies of the United States and helping to destroy the lives of American soldiers the document removes them from the sphere of the morally acceptable . . . ”⁸⁰

As for what kind of speech is or is not legally permissible and especially in times of war, Morgenthau, in summarizing the limitations of free speech, cites “specific statutory prohibitions” including those “involving libel and slander, obscenity, blasphemy, and sedition”; he also cites the “clear and present danger to public order” prohibition. He emphasizes: “But beyond these specific legal limitations, speech is supposed to be free both on moral and legal grounds.” That “beyond these limitations, there can be no substantive limits to criticism in a free society.” As applied to Freedom House, it is thereby morally reprehensible to attempt to quietly or covertly limit the freedom of expression, which is what the November 30 advertisement attempted to do. To buttress his argument, Morgenthau then cites several authorities: James M. Landis, former dean of Harvard Law, who is quoted: “No person or group is wise enough to be trusted to discriminate between valid and invalid ideas.” Moreover, “The legitimate concern for effectiveness of the government in times of war does not override this consideration.” He then quotes former Federal Judge and author of over 150 judicial opinions, Charles F. Amidon:

The framers of the first Amendment knew that the right to criticize might weaken the support of the government in a time of war. They appreciated the value of a united public opinion at such a time. They were men who had experienced all those things in the War of the Revolution, and yet they knew too

that the republic which they were founding could not live unless the right of free speech, of freedom of the press was maintained at such a time.⁸¹

Cherne, in his rejoinder, says nothing about the moral side of the free speech issue; indeed, the word “moral,” so conspicuous in the Morgenthau literature, and in these *New Leader* essays, is entirely absent in Cherne’s articles. As recorded in the Preface of this book, Morgenthau’s earliest works establish the morality of interests as the fundamental basis of making foreign policy and hence, his frequent reference to what is moral in his exposition of whatever issue he is attempting to resolve. Thus, his criticism of the Cherne and the Freedom House attempt to stifle dissent covertly is another case in point. Cherne, however, in his reply, says nothing about morality and simply rejects Morgenthau’s claim that “the Freedom House statement ‘effectively limits free speech.’” Yet curiously, he does have a problem with Morgenthau’s style, which Cherne calls his “acerbic tone.” What Cherne also does, however, and that comes across as diversionary as well as puerile, is fault Morgenthau for failing to criticize what Cherne calls “the racist outpourings of [civil rights leader] Stokely Carmichael, the [Communist] party-oriented purposes of Bettina Aptheker, or the ‘war crimes’ trial” conducted by the English philosopher, Bertrand Russell.⁸²

Morgenthau’s reply to Cherne is simple and direct. He writes: “It is preposterous to assume that a participant in a debate who does not explicitly dissociate himself from every statement he finds objectionable thereby becomes positively identified with it.” Morgenthau also notes that the Freedom House advertisement “mentioned none of these persons” and that Morgenthau had earlier “dissociated” himself “from their positions” and thus, why should he “have mentioned them again?” He adds that even if he had made a formal disclaimer, he doubts it would have made any difference for Cherne is not vulnerable to persuasion on factual grounds. Moreover, Morgenthau calls Cherne’s proposition “absurd” because “it means that whenever someone agrees with you in some respect and disagrees with you in another, you have to rush into print to make clear the difference.” He then adds disparagingly but appropriately: “For literate people, the spoken and written record ought to make clear the differences between one kind of criticism and another.”⁸³

Moreover, to charge Morgenthau with association with extremist factions is false and ludicrous. For Morgenthau never engaged in protest demonstrations, was never seen on a picket line and never aligned himself with any of the so-called “extremist” factions cited by Cherne.

It is also coincidental that on January 4, 1967, two days after his first article on Freedom House was published, Morgenthau was interviewed by Nicholas von Hoffman in the *Washington Post*, which explored this question. Here,

Morgenthau tells Hoffman that he has little in common with his “embarrassing allies, the people of the New Left who have made the anti-war position their own” and is, in fact, highly critical of these and other extremist groups. Morgenthau tells Hoffman that “the New Left is essentially anarchistic, a still-born movement that can have no influence on American politics.” In addition, it is Hoffman who confirms that the “New Left’s moral utopianism is anathema to Morgenthau.” Hoffman also makes the point that Morgenthau’s factual assessment is essentially Morgenthau’s “moral reality,”⁸⁴ which, in the context of their debate under discussion here, sets forth a basic distinction between Morgenthau and Cherne

On February 13, 1967, *The New Leader* debate came to an end. Executive editor Myron Kolatch did not ask Morgenthau to reply to Cherne’s article, “The Realist and Reality,” in which a less impassioned Cherne attempts to criticize Morgenthau on foreign policy grounds. He identifies Morgenthau as a leading member of the “realist” school of analysis—he could well have noted that Morgenthau is the founder—but this is the extent of his accuracy on matters of foreign policy. For he then proceeds to demonstrate his complete repudiation of what he calls Morgenthau’s “preoccupation” with “spheres of influence,” “sovereign power,” “geography,” “the geography of power” and “balance of power.” In short, Cherne rejects the geopolitical essentials that must be carefully assessed when making foreign policy. And what does Cherne offer as a better standard? As noted briefly in an earlier chapter, Cherne declares that he belongs to the Freedom House school of foreign policy that is, he affirms, “more sentimental” and “more idealistic” and that seeks to oppose those “aggressors” who seek “the infringement of liberty.” Here, in two sentences, Cherne gives it all away. He is not a student of foreign policy history. He writes: “It is our belief that the spheres of influence” view has played “so important a role in the monumental catastrophes” the world “has suffered” in this century.⁸⁵

Indeed, we have been here before. We have seen it in Hamilton Fish Armstrong’s rejection of Morgenthau’s submissions of articles to *Foreign Affairs*. We have seen it in the caustic comments of various members of the Council on Foreign Relations who rejected Morgenthau’s principle of national interest. We have seen it in the correspondence exchanged between Morgenthau and Bundy. We have seen it in the article written by Columbia professor Frank Tannenbaum who claimed that “spheres of influence” and “balance of power politics” were responsible for the calamities of World War I and II.

Does Cherne have any inkling of the consequences of his reasoning? No. Does he think for a moment of the humanly cost of the war? No. He is not bothered by these questions. He is an ideologue, an official of the American

Friends of Vietnam; he is committed to fighting Communism at any cost and saving the government of South Vietnam. Thus, he is convinced that intervention on idealistic grounds is a worthy counter to Morgenthau's realism. He does not explain why because there is no way to prove it. He can only say that their divergence of views "is painful" and that the difference is "not easily resolved" because, as Cherne sees it, "we each carry the baggage of emotion and past certainties into each clash of insights."⁸⁶ But indeed, where is Cherne's insight? If sentiment and idealism are among his essential tools of reasoning, these cannot count for much because these are the essential tools of error.

Thus, on the subject of China, Cherne faults Morgenthau, not for Morgenthau's view that knowledge of Chinese history and culture and China's thousand year history of enmity with Vietnam are important in determining American policy toward China and Vietnam, but solely because Morgenthau fails to defend "liberty." In Cherne's words, Morgenthau's appraisal of China "obscure[s] the main issue" that, for Cherne, is "to defend liberty," in this case, in China. Cherne then asks: "Can *this* state, the United States *ignore* [Cherne's emphasis] the infringement of liberty?" Thus, is Cherne advocating war with China? Cherne then writes "that Morgenthau's prognosis for the Asian future has already proved faulty." And why? Because Cherne detects a momentary instability in China⁸⁷ that Cherne apparently believes will be permanent though he presents no facts, because there are no facts to support what is essentially a wild prophecy.

In his concluding paragraph, Cherne writes: "This is what divides us. In the end, only one of us will be right." He adds: "I deeply believe that if Morgenthau's view of history prevails," particularly his view that if China, because of its "physical presence and power," becomes the dominant power in Asia, "we are doomed."⁸⁸ China was already the dominant power in Asia, and no one became "doomed." Moreover, it must be repeated at this point that five years after Cherne wrote this, President Nixon, in February 1972, was in China and the normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China was underway.

In the closing sentence of the first paragraph of a Morgenthau essay in *The New York Review of Books* on September 24, 1970, there is one passing reference to Freedom House. The essay, titled "Reflections on the End of the Republic," followed, by four months, Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the tragedy of the Kent State shootings. The passing reference comes after Morgenthau ruminates about his attempt over the years to get President Johnson's attention about "the probable consequences" of his course in Vietnam and the alternative policy that would "most likely" better "serve the national

interest.” It was again a case of repeatedly saying what he had been saying for years, without anyone paying attention, in this case, President Johnson.

Morgenthau then writes that Johnson could not be persuaded and instead “used the full powers of his office to discredit and silence the voice of the dissenter.” Morgenthau continues and points out that the President had “the voluntary and sometimes enthusiastic assistance of eminent academic and institutional (for instance, Freedom House) supporters of his policy.” This was the only reference to Freedom House and a parenthetical one at that but it caught the attention of Leonard Sussman, who wrote a frenzied letter to the editor, condemning Morgenthau for once again maligning his organization. The letter was never published and is noted here as representative of a rigid mindset⁸⁹ that simply could not be altered by a realistic and accurate assessment of the facts of American society. The Morgenthau essay is, in point of fact, a detailed, six-page analysis in which Morgenthau explores how American society had departed from the purposes set forth in its earliest beginnings and had become, in Morgenthau’s words, an “unrestrained,” “hedonistic culture,” and “a society of waste.” Sussman’s letter dealt not at all with Morgenthau’s pessimistic assessment of American society and claimed, falsely, that Morgenthau “persists in playing the role of the censored, silenced victim of Freedom House.”⁹⁰ Certainly, the essay does no such thing yet Sussman remains obsessed.

In his unpublished letter, Sussman claims that Freedom House “circulated the views of Morgenthau and our reply to him” but this cannot be confirmed. What can be confirmed is that copies of the Cherne articles were requested by several White House notables who did not request copies of Morgenthau’s statements. Thus, on February 23, 1967, Vice President Humphrey asked Harry Gideonse to send him “reprints” of Cherne’s article, “Responsibility and the Critic,” published on January 16. The Vice President also thanked Gideonse for sending him a copy of the Freedom House advertisement and asked for “several hundred copies of the statement.” There is no record of Humphrey’s interest in Morgenthau’s refutation of the advertisement. On the same day, Will Sparks, Assistant to the President, asked Sussman for “six reprints” of Cherne’s first response to Morgenthau. And several weeks later, John Roche delights Johnson with the Cherne article. He tells Cherne that he showed the piece to the President and called it “your excoriation of Brother Morgenthau” and adds the President “seemed quite cheered by it.”⁹¹

In the offices of Freedom House during the closing years of the war, there was near silence about China though there is an undated and unsigned “Not For Attribution” summary written in 1972. Titled “The Problem of American Foreign Policy,” the document asserts that the Chinese “want a strong United

States for protection against a world of enemies,” namely, the Soviet Union. The report notes that Freedom House has “attempted to do all that the dissenters of the past have demanded—limit our world-wide commitments, encourage other nations to share the burdens of defense . . . and to slow the nuclear arms race.” The document calls for a “‘great debate’ to dispel misunderstandings of national policy” and “to educate the electorate,” policies, which, as we have seen, Freedom House opposed as exemplified by its attempt to suppress debate about the war. Thus, Freedom House continues to perpetuate serious misunderstandings when, on the eve of the presidential elections of 1972, as it becomes obvious that the Saigon government cannot defeat the North, the document notes that “the peace talks with Hanoi will be resumed,” that “the prospects for talks should be viewed in the light of the fact that they cannot win militarily,” that the North “may take a few more towns” [but] “this is not likely,” and that “We could end the war in two weeks if Hanoi did not insist on our agreement to their complete political control of South Vietnam. They have consistently refused to settle for anything else.”⁹²

On April 21, 1972, Sussman submitted a five-page memo to the Executive Committee where there is no mention of Vietnam or China but its purpose is to acknowledge that Freedom House is still in the foreign policy business. This takes the form of a review of future Freedom House publications that includes manuscripts written by *Washington Post* reporter Peter Braestrup, also a friend of Joseph Alsop, and an Irving Kristol essay, which, with other contributors, would result in a hardcover book ready for publication in the spring of 1973. There would also be a 30th Anniversary Manifesto to be published in four pages in the *New York Times Magazine*, and though Sussman does not use the word “advertisement,” that is what it would be because it would cost Freedom House “slightly less than \$20,000.” Sussman also tells the membership that the final draft of the Manifesto could become the “definitive, effective exposition we anticipate,” that “should be packaged as Freedom House’s ‘new image.’” Of course, he says nothing about the old image that has inspired the need for the re-packaging. The memo also includes the cost and expected revenue for the various projects such as the new Freedom House magazine titled *Freedom At Issue* to replace the old News Letters and similar publications. There would also be a series of taped lectures to be titled “Problems of Freedom in this Changing World” and one hour radio broadcasts to replace the old in-service course for teachers that focused on Vietnam and the need to continue the war.⁹³ In 1972, two years after Nixon had invaded Cambodia and after many had turned against the war, Cherne and Sussman and Freedom House continued to support the war by their endorsement of Richard Nixon for a second term.

In 1972, Cherne was Vice Chairman of Democrats for Nixon and, consistent with his pro-war sentiment over the years, believed it was imperative to defeat the anti-war candidate, Senator George McGovern. On November 4, 1972, Cherne published a letter in the *New York Times* accusing columnist Anthony Lewis of distorting his views on McGovern's foreign policy agenda. Lewis, in his column of October 16, reports on the letter Cherne had sent to several "New Yorkers" in which Cherne calls McGovern "an isolationist" who, if elected, "would 'abruptly terminate' American aid to refugees and orphans in Asia." To call one an isolationist was now recognized as the usual term of opprobrium for those who opposed the war and Cherne was up to his old tricks. Lewis rightly called this "sleazy" and a "lie so crude that the mind reels." Lewis writes: "George McGovern wants to end the American bombing that creates the refugees and orphans, and then supply humanitarian aid in large amounts." "It is Richard Nixon," Lewis writes, "who has bombed Indochina for the last four years."⁹⁴ Cherne's retort is McGovern's statements in speeches and newspaper ads that the United States is to "withdraw from Vietnam lock, stock and barrel." Cherne was also responding to McGovern campaign spokesman, Abram Chayes, who, in response to questions about whether humanitarian aid will be discontinued, simply said "We do not belong there." There is no evidence that McGovern would halt humanitarian aid and perhaps the first kind of humanitarian aid would be to liquidate the war that Cherne still insists on fighting.

Three years later, in the remaining hours of the war, on March 31, 1975, as the North Vietnamese were taking the towns and closing in on Saigon, Freedom House admitted no errors of judgment as it planned a one day conference titled "Consultation on Restoring American Will." In one sense, this was the Freedom House post-mortem on the war and its purpose, as stated in the conference program, was "to inform Americans of the critical, perhaps catastrophic consequences looming for this nation in the field of foreign affairs" and the "apparent loss of [national] will as a major power in a dangerous world." And to assist the United States in shoring up the national will, Freedom House added to its list of board members such formerly mistaken advocates of the war that included Robert Scalapino, Irving Kristol, William Bundy, Eugene Rostow, John Roche, William F. Buckley, Jr., and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Remaining as executive director was Leo Cherne.⁹⁵ All of which demonstrates that Cherne, his fellow officials at Freedom House, and their new members were psychotically unable to accept the new reality.

In 1966, the year Morgenthau presented six preliminary chapters during his fellowship at the Council on Foreign Affairs, he also published "Johnson's Dilemma: The Alternatives Now in Vietnam" in *TNR* in May and "What

Should We Do Now” in the August issue of *Look* magazine. On January 31 and February 1, he testified at the House of Representatives Sub-committee hearings on Asian politics, and on March 30 he appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings. On January 6, 1966, in the *NYRB* he published “Monuments to the Late President,” which was a favorable review of Schlesinger’s *A Thousand Days*. On March 31, 1966, in the same journal, he published “Lyndon B. Johnson: The Summit of Power,” a review of James MacGregor Burns’ book, *Presidential Government*. Also in the *NYRB*, on June 23, 1966, Morgenthau published “Room at the Top,” a very unfavorable review of Richard Goodwin’s *Triumph or Tragedy: Reflections on Vietnam*. On August 18, 1966, again in the *NYRB*, he published “The Inner Weakness,” a very favorable review of *Washington Post* editor Philip Geyelin’s book, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World*.

With few exceptions during these years, Morgenthau’s writings, including book reviews, as well as his participation in interviews and public forums dealt, invariably, with Vietnam. And Vietnam, arguably, the most dominant issue of the decade, made Morgenthau the most dominant of the nation’s critics of the war. As demonstrated in these pages, Morgenthau was everywhere in his opposition to the war. Thus, just prior to his *New Leader* debate with Cherne in January and February 1967, Morgenthau, on January 12, was interviewed by William F. Buckley, Jr. on national television on the subject of “LBJ and the Intellectuals.” The transcript reveals a respectful Buckley conversing humorously with Morgenthau who responds with wit and his usual political acumen, which seemingly delights Buckley. Buckley’s questions touch on the war only tangentially but this affords Morgenthau the opportunity to explain why there is confusion about the war both among the intellectuals and the populace at large.⁹⁶

A week before, on January 4, Morgenthau was interviewed, as cited earlier, by Nicholas von Hoffman in the *Washington Post*. 1967 was also the year in which Morgenthau published the first of two articles in the April number of *Foreign Affairs* titled “To Intervene or Not to Intervene.” His second article on European affairs appeared in 1971. On April 6, in the *NYRB*, Morgenthau reviewed Maxwell Taylor’s *Responsibility and Response* and Senator Fulbright’s book, *The Arrogance of Power*, both of which have direct relevance to the Vietnam war debate and thus provide Morgenthau with additional scope to oppose the war.

Of the Taylor book, Morgenthau writes that the author, “one of the most brilliant and learned men of the armed services,” has written what “will be remembered only as an embarrassment” because “its reasoning is casual, vague and contradictory.” For Taylor, Morgenthau writes, makes occasional “concessions to empirical reality” but “from page seven onwards, we hear

nothing but ‘Communist expansion,’ ‘Communist intention,’ ‘Communist attitude,’” which is Taylor’s recourse to dogma. But then Taylor departs from dogma as when he says the United States must be “selective in opposing” wars of liberation based on “an enlightened appreciation of the nature of our essential interests.” Dogma again resurfaces, however, as Taylor soon abandons this empirical standard when he deals specifically with Vietnam. Here, Taylor declares: “We must remain involved in South Vietnam ‘until we have exposed the myth of the invincibility of the War of Liberation’ and have assured the independence of South Vietnam.” The dogma then persists as Taylor defends the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam when he writes that “The South Vietnamese have no illusions as to who is hurting them—it is Hanoi and the Hanoi leadership.” But it is not the American bombing that is hurting the South Vietnamese. As Morgenthau puts it: “Here we are in the presence of the dogma of ‘Communist subversive aggression’ that explains the war in the South as the result of a Northern conspiracy.” Taylor then resumes, once again in “realistic terms,” as he briefly criticizes “the advocates of all-out bombing” because here he sees the risk of escalation. And then the dogma reappears when Taylor later dismisses such risks.⁹⁷ It is to be emphasized that Taylor is one of the original architects of the Vietnam war policy.

Morgenthau concludes that in the conflict of dogma and reality in Taylor’s reasoning, it is “dogma” that eventually wins out. It is complete. As Morgenthau puts it, dogma “triumphs without any reference to reality.” And it is this “conflict,” Morgenthau writes, “between dogma and reality [that] not only spoils General Taylor’s arguments, but . . . also impairs his understanding of reality and involves him in blatant contradictions and incongruities.” “What is [also] disturbing,” Morgenthau adds, is that Taylor, “a man of real substance,” can hold the views he propounds in his book “without being aware of their absurdity.”⁹⁸ Indeed, a similar criticism could be leveled at Taylor’s colleagues, notably, Rusk, Bundy, and McNamara.

In contrast, “When one opens Senator Fulbright’s book,” Morgenthau writes, “one enters a healthier intellectual world,” meaning that Fulbright is not muddled and confused. Morgenthau describes the book as “always knowledgeable, sophisticated, and fair, and frequently it is profound and wise as well.” He adds that it is the work “of a first-rate political mind” and a “dedication to the common good” without a “trace of that bitterness the Senator must sometimes feel” as a result of the shoddy treatment he has received from the President for his outspoken criticism of the war. Morgenthau also notes, by way of sharing the Senator’s view, that it is a “striking commentary on the moral climate” of the nation that “forty-odd pages” are needed to prove “the proposition that senators, intellectuals and citizens have the right to criticize the foreign policy of their government.”⁹⁹

For Morgenthau, Fulbright understands the nature of foreign policy. He particularly points out that Fulbright's proposals for new policies answer two questions: "which objectives are vital for the United States to pursue and which are only desirable"; and secondly, "which objectives can be pursued" given the resources and power available and which cannot. As for specific policies, Morgenthau points to just two minor disagreements with the Senator: one on the eventual settlement of the war: for Fulbright, it should be based on "national self-determination"; for Morgenthau, on the geopolitics of a dominant China and its sphere of influence in Asia; and secondly, on the question of foreign aid: for Fulbright, the attempt to alleviate the conditions of the poor nations by the rich nations; for Morgenthau, the rich have a responsibility to alleviate the poor within their national society "for they are in good measure responsible" for the poverty; but no such requirement exists outside the nation where the most that a "rich and benevolent" nation may do is alleviate, but not remove the roots, of "the economic distress." "Yet when all is said and done," Morgenthau concludes, "we remain in the presence of a moral and political document of the first rank."¹⁰⁰

Again, in contrast, there is Morgenthau's review of Richard Goodwin's *Triumph or Tragedy: Reflections on Vietnam* a year earlier on June 23, 1966. Morgenthau calls the Goodwin volume "an extraordinarily strange book" but before he explores the strangeness of the book, he encapsulates first the two choices facing the United States, and secondly, he shows how the President has locked himself into greater escalation to seek a military victory that he says he doesn't want. Thus, Morgenthau begins by noting:

Stripped of all pretenses, double-talk, and outright lies, two simple and stark choices face the United States in Vietnam. One derives from the assumption that in Vietnam the credibility of the United States and its prestige as a great power are irrevocably engaged, that the war in Vietnam is a test case for all 'wars of national liberation' and that in consequence the fate of Asia and perhaps even the non-Communist world at large might well be decided in Vietnam. It follows from this assumption that the United States can only tolerate one outcome of the war: victory, and never mind that victory is bound to mean the physical destruction of Vietnam, South and North. The inevitable means to the end of victory is the escalation of the war.¹⁰¹

This first choice means the unrestricted bombing of the North; in the South, it means the commitment, based on "authoritative estimates" of "a million American troops and the risk of war with China." The second choice acknowledges the war "is primarily a civil war" where "its global significance is remote" and that "the risks we are taking in pursuit of victory are out of all

proportion to the interests at stake.” Here Morgenthau repeats how the aim of our policy must be to avoid getting more deeply involved while attempting to extricate ourselves through negotiations and the “enclave” policy.

It is at this point where Morgenthau explores what the President considers “a third position,” that of “a controlled response,” by which he attempts to put distance between his policy and the policy advocated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thus, the Chiefs seek military victory; the President also wants victory but not with the all-out means to acquire it; but because he wants victory, the President is logically compelled “to increase the means to achieve the ever elusive end”; so the President becomes “the prisoner of the goal he has set himself”; and because he wants victory, “he must want escalation” and is “compelled to escalate.” Thus, Morgenthau concludes, the difference between the policies the Chiefs want and the policies pursued by the President “is one of degree and not of kind.” The result, Morgenthau writes, is “the persistent escalation of the war during the last fifteen months [which] bears eloquent testimony” to the President’s “compulsion.”¹⁰²

Morgenthau then turns to Goodwin’s “extraordinarily strange book” noting first that it is “marred by a monumental lapse of taste at the beginning, a monumental abnegation of political judgment at the end, and a number of contradictions throughout.” He calls Goodwin’s beginning “a tableau of intellectual irrelevance and mawkish sentimentality,” “the kind of journalism” characteristic of “Joseph Alsop.” The “tableau” juxtaposes Vietnam and Washington by which Goodwin attempts to cleverly manipulate the reader to support the war and to ridicule the critics who oppose it. Thus, Goodwin begins: “two American soldiers . . . stalking the jungles of Vietnam”; “Eleven thousand miles away,” the Fulbright hearings are about to get underway; Goodwin describes Fulbright: the “Senator from Arkansas, foe of civil rights, almost Secretary of State, Rhodes Scholar and backwoods politician, hero to some, demagogue to others”; then Goodwin returns to the jungles of Vietnam, just “twenty minutes before the opening” of the Fulbright hearings, and writes: “a grenade [is] flung anonymously and explodes in their bunker. They were dead . . .”¹⁰³ The full meaning is not drawn out by Morgenthau but the implication appears readily obvious: Fulbright is the villain who questions the war while the story of the two soldiers means the war must be fought.

But Goodwin is not sure, which is one reason the book is “extraordinarily strange.” The ending of the original essay published in *The New Yorker* points out that it would be “easy” and “wrong to be apocalyptic about a conflict that is still so strictly limited and so full of hopeful possibilities for settlement.” Goodwin then quotes an unnamed politician who believes that “if large-scale war ever comes,” it will not be as a result of “Strangelove madness or Fail-Safe accident” but because of “a long series of acts and decisions, each

seemingly reasonable, but which slowly place the great powers in a situation in which they will find it impossible to back down. It will be no one's fault." Thus, in a postscript, to the second ending, Goodwin writes

Comment on the appearance of this essay in its original form revealed the ending to be more confusing than I had intended. 'It will be no one's fault' but it will be the fault of many—leaders, politicians, journalists, men and women in a hundred different occupations in many lands who failed to see clearly, or act wisely, or speak articulately. There will be no act of madness, no single villain on whom to discharge guilt; just the flow of history.¹⁰⁴

Here is "the monumental abnegation" of political and historical judgment. Goodwin says the second ending is better than the first yet, Morgenthau writes, "In the first version, responsibility cannot be assessed at all; in the second, it is so widely distributed as to be meaningless. Either it is nobody's fault or it is everybody's fault." And then, of course, what possibly could be the meaning of Goodwin's "just the flow of history" phrase? For Morgenthau, Goodwin has lost sight of "the historic truth" because it is easy "to pinpoint the sources of advice upon which the President has based certain fateful decisions" and who are thus responsible for the debacle.

That Goodwin remains an advocate of the government's position is revealed in this passage. He writes:

We are under attack, and withdrawal is impossible and unwise. Here we must commit the forces needed to hold our positions, erode the enemy ranks, and clear guerrillas from the countryside. The objective, however, should not be to crush the Vietcong in pursuit of an unlikely surrender but slowly to retake key areas of the country, mile by painful mile. Neither manpower nor money nor energy should be spared in the top-priority program of pacification.¹⁰⁵

Morgenthau comments "that it remains a mystery how such an outcome, which is a limited victory rather than a standoff could be achieved ..." Goodwin, Morgenthau adds, "in accord with the Administration, 'foresees a long, bloody, inconclusive war of attrition'" until "'sanity brings a political settlement.'" The "returning sanity," Goodwin's terms, could take a long time to materialize as the killing goes on. Morgenthau then asks: "What form would a political settlement take?" Goodwin's answer is that the Vietcong would participate, but we would not accept, as part of the settlement, any government to "inflict on us what some would see as the 'humiliation of requesting our withdrawal.'" For Morgenthau, to ask us to leave would be no humiliation. Moreover, he writes, it is "virtually inconceivable that the withdrawal of our forces would not be part" of that or any settlement that would end the war.¹⁰⁶

The contradictions are readily apparent. They stem from Goodwin's residual ties to the current Administration who "may well be a member of another Administration yet to come." Morgenthau adds that as a detached observer, Goodwin might have written "a straightforward critique or a defense of our policies in Vietnam." "He has written neither," Morgenthau writes, though he assumes in his book, that he is "an intellectual with a critical mind of his own," which he is not. The combination in an individual who feigns an independent and critical mind but who really is a determined supporter of the war is, in Morgenthau's judgment, "psychologically revealing but politically calamitous."¹⁰⁷ In short, with all the feigning and double-talk, Goodwin remains a supporter of the war.

On August 1, 1968, two months after his assassination, Robert F. Kennedy was the subject of a Morgenthau article in the *NYRB*. It is simply titled "On Robert F. Kennedy." Three weeks later, on August 22, Morgenthau published in the same journal, "A Talk with Senator McCarthy."

"Most public men," Morgenthau writes, "play roles" that "compel them to make it appear that they are different from what they are." He cites, as examples, "Humphrey, Nixon, Reagan, Rockefeller, Wallace"; they play "in different mixtures, the roles of leader, savior, man of action." What strikes him about McCarthy is that there is no "visible contrast between the public role he plays and the man himself." "There is no pretense," no "attempt to impress"; rather, there is "an extraordinary measure of poise, serenity, and inner strength."¹⁰⁸

On November 30, 1967, Senator McCarthy announced to the Washington press corps in the ornate Senate caucus room that he intended to challenge President Johnson for the Democratic nomination for President. He said his decision had been based on recent administration pronouncements "to escalate and intensify the war" without any "indication or suggestion for a compromise." After itemizing the cost of the war, he said: "I am not for peace at any price, but for an honorable, rational and political solution to this war." He asked for questions. One reporter asked: "Sir, hasn't the administration sought the rational solution you suggest and offered to meet with Hanoi?" To which McCarthy replied: "To suggest a meeting anytime, anywhere is not an offer. An offer would be, 'Let's meet next Tuesday morning in Warsaw.'"¹⁰⁹

When McCarthy won over 40 percent of the primary vote in New Hampshire, Mrs. Ethel Kennedy, wife of Robert F. Kennedy, called Arthur Schlesinger and shortly thereafter, Robert F. Kennedy announced his candidacy for the nomination.¹¹⁰ In his essay "On Robert Kennedy," Morgenthau explored the Kennedy character and his record on Vietnam over the years.

For Kennedy, political life was always a matter of winning, which was a chief legacy derived from his father, Joseph P. Kennedy. As Morgenthau puts it, Kennedy would allow nothing, not “a cause, or even an emotion, to stand in the way of his personal success.” That even “his hatred of Johnson did not prevent him from actively seeking the vice-presidential nomination” and after he was refused, he still sought the ambassadorship to South Vietnam. Morgenthau adds that Kennedy would be “cautious, calculating and ambiguous rather than indignant if such a posture appeared to enhance his chances for personal success.”¹¹¹

As a case in point, Morgenthau cites Vietnam. That while Senators Morse, Gruening, Church, and Fulbright opposed the war, “Kennedy was not among them.” That when the first wave of teach-ins struck the country in 1965, Kennedy “did not join it.” That Kennedy “did not go on record as opposing the war as such, but only raised doubts about its tactics.” That Schlesinger, a prestigious Kennedy adviser, “took the side of the Johnson Administration.” That another principal adviser, Richard Goodwin—noted above—published a book that advocated continuing the war. That in 1966 when “sixteen Senators addressed a letter to the President asking for a continuation of the bombing pause, Kennedy’s name was not among them.” That while Kennedy “spoke out clearly against administration policies for the first time in February 1966, he then kept silent on Vietnam until March 1967” when he advocated “modifications” to policies rather than “clear-cut alternatives.” Morgenthau cites William V. Shannon’s book, *The Heir Apparent*, who writes: “the controlling criterion” governing Kennedy’s motivation on what position he should take including Vietnam, is “to size up a proposition” or a situation and “decide whether it looks like a winner.” Thus, what motivates Kennedy, Shannon writes, is essentially “self-interest.”¹¹²

In great contrast, Morgenthau’s *NYRB* article, “A Talk with Senator McCarthy” reveals an entirely different kind of politician who, following his success in the New Hampshire primary and before Robert Kennedy declared his candidacy, “tried to persuade Kennedy to stand aside, arguing that he wanted the presidency only for one term and that Kennedy would have his chance four years later.” Kennedy would not hear of it. Based on what McCarthy told Morgenthau, the offer was “was met with startled disbelief” that, for Morgenthau, means that Kennedy’s “conception of supreme power” was quite different from that of McCarthy’s.¹¹³

It is not, Morgenthau notes, that McCarthy had “no sense of power”; he would have accepted the vice-presidential nomination in 1964. But whereas those who seek the presidential office must “make it appear” that they seek power “not for its own sake” but only “as an instrument for the public good,” McCarthy’s pursuit of the 1968 nomination is based on “the three functions”

he thinks he can perform that “no other candidate appears able to perform.” First, McCarthy believes “he can restore a philosophy of government which suits the genius of the American people”; he can “move large masses of Americans” and particularly those of the younger generation “into active participation in the democratic process”; and thirdly, “he presents clear-cut alternatives to the policies of the present administration as well as his competitors, especially in the field of foreign policy.”¹¹⁴

McCarthy’s foreign policy is set forth and indicated in the title of his book, *The Limits of Power*. Its principal theme, McCarthy notes, is that “foreign policy should be more restrained and insofar as prudent judgment can determine, more closely in keeping with the movement of history.” He does not see the United States “standing outside history,” “a chosen nation” possessed of unique “virtue and power to reform the world.” He sees the United States as part of the “creation of history, as are the other nations.” His is thus not an advocate of what Henry Luce called “the American Century” by which American power and supremacy would be used to provide stability and order to the world. Nor does he subscribe to the “American supremacy” position propounded by Brzezinski who, until recently, was “an enthusiastic supporter of the war.”¹¹⁵

The McCarthy position, Morgenthau writes, “is common sense restored to its rightful place.” It is the measured and thoughtful analysis of what is required to avoid “the neglect and misguided” policies of “the present administration that results from the lack of a sense of national priorities” that has produced “a bloody anti-Communist crusade in Asia . . .” It is the return to an earlier “concept” that is for America to serve “as a model for other nations to emulate.” The United States, which has made Vietnam a “test” case of “American power,” has failed and in the process has “squandered a most precious and uniquely American asset, the moral attractiveness of America.”¹¹⁶

It is August 22, 1968. On March 31, 1968, Lyndon Johnson informed the nation that he would not seek re-election. Vietnam, and the Tet offensive had forced him to leave office. Morgenthau writes that “it has become *de rigueur* to speak out” and “sound ‘reasonable’ to support ‘a political instead of a military solution,’ to advocate an ‘honorable compromise.’” He adds that “it has also become a political requirement” for those official and “academic supporters of the war to make it appear that either they never supported it or at least they haven’t done so since March 31, 1968.” Thus, he continues, Brzezinski has now turned against the war and is an adviser to Vice President Humphrey. Humphrey, formerly a “genuinely committed supporter” of the war, is now the most recent “defector” on the “Vietnam ship that is now sinking.” As the election approaches, Humphrey is “compelled to make it appear that this is Mr. Johnson’s war” but not necessarily his.¹¹⁷

And then there is Nelson Rockefeller, advised by Henry Kissinger who is also quietly advising Richard Nixon and the Johnson Administration at the same time. Of all the candidates, there is only one whose “honesty” and “courage” sets him “apart from his peers.” And this is McCarthy, whose “historic achievement,” Morgenthau writes, is “to have made active and visible” those “qualities of goodness and sanity latent in the American people” and “to have given an intimation of what the American people could be if they had a leader worthy of them.” In great contrast, and in the same *NYRB* piece, Morgenthau has only ridicule for Governor Nelson Rockefeller and his chief adviser for their “four-stage plan” to end the war. For the plan, Morgenthau adds, “is reported to be the brainchild of Professor Kissinger.”¹¹⁸

On January 14, 1968, the *New York Times* reported on its front page that New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, at a news conference the day before, called the war a “tragedy” that had been “conducted without a coherent plan for peace.” The *Times* noted that the four “proposals were developed over a month by Henry A. Kissinger” and that “the governor’s plan resembled the enclave theory put forth by General Gavin two years ago.” Rockefeller called his proposals “a concrete plan for peace” and that “if accepted by the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong,” the war could end “within six months or so.”

Morgenthau called “the Rockefeller-Kissinger” proposals “deceptive and unworkable” because they proceed from the same “basic assumptions” that are “identical with those that moved its authors until recently to support the war.” For the plan assumes that Saigon is the “legitimate government of South Vietnam, threatened by foreign aggression and internal subversion.” The plan simply “invites the aggressors [the North] to leave and the subversives [the Vietcong] to disarm politically and militarily,” and in return, “they are ‘guaranteed a role in South Vietnamese politics.’” The plan also “proposes to de-Americanize the war” by letting the South Vietnamese army do most of the fighting.¹¹⁹

Morgenthau then demonstrates the fallacies of their proposals. Thus, Morgenthau asks, “Is it not obvious that if the South Vietnamese army were able and willing” to “bear the burden” of the fighting, “and if the Saigon government could rely on its support, would it be necessary for more than half a million American troops to keep the government in power?” He continues: “Can the Vietcong really be expected to lay down their arms and deliver themselves to the tender mercies of the Saigon government, which is armed to the teeth and of proven determination to use its arms against its political opponents?” And would Ho Chi Minh, “sold down the river twice before, in Paris in 1945 and in Geneva in 1954, put his trust” in Rockefeller’s free elections and in an international peace-keeping force that are “meaningless terms

in Vietnam?" And why should the government of Hanoi and the Vietcong surrender "for unenforceable paper promises" what "they have gained by force of arms?"¹²⁰

For Morgenthau, writing in *Current History* in January 1968, the war is already lost. Citing Harvard Professor Reischauer and quoted by Morgenthau, if measured by our original objectives, "we have lost the war." Even Reston of the *Times* wondered on February 7, "What is the end that justifies this slaughter? How will we save Vietnam if we destroy it in the battle?" On February 8, a *Times* editorial declared that "Neither side is entitled . . . to illusions about military victory."

What Morgenthau sees in the Rockefeller-Kissinger plan is the implicit assumption "that we have won the war, an assumption shared by the administration," which, he writes, "is of course fictitious." He sees in Senator McCarthy's plan, one that is unencumbered of self-deception and "the deception of others," the goal of which is "the establishment of a broadly based civilian government" that must then "negotiate the liquidation of the war with the Vietcong." Morgenthau attributes no such honesty to the Rockefeller plan, which, as he said, was "the brainchild of Professor Kissinger." And Kissinger, who knew Morgenthau since his graduate school days at Harvard in 1950 when Morgenthau was a visiting professor, was stung by the criticism.

On October 9, 1968, six weeks later, Kissinger wrote to Morgenthau. He did not respond substantively to Morgenthau's charges. He responded with hurt feelings. Thus, he found "the tone and content" of the article "extremely painful." He says they "have been friends for long enough" so that when "writing about each other we would avoid the crudest interpretations that can be made." He tells Morgenthau that to write about Rockefeller as one of those "supporters of the war" who must "cover" his "tracks" is "really unworthy." Kissinger then resorts to prophecy. He predicts that Rockefeller's position on foreign policy over the years "will stand up fairly well." That his, Kissinger's record, is also "clear"; that when "the history of the peace negotiations is written," Morgenthau will be proved wrong. Kissinger does not deal with the facts of the Morgenthau charge except when he writes that Rockefeller does not "require the Vietcong to disarm" but he offers no supporting evidence. He offers no real defense of the proposals and says only that he would not be "associated with a plan that had no chance of being accepted." He then makes the outlandish point that "Hanoi's reaction . . . was more temperate than yours and really criticized only the lack of reference to a bombing pause." He also sees no point "in debating the relative merits of the McCarthy and Rockefeller positions," and he doubts that "the quick way to end the war is through a coalition government."¹²¹

Morgenthau replied on October 22. He apologizes for the “pain” caused by his article. He says he did not intend to question his and Rockefeller’s motivations, only “your political motivation.”

He tells Kissinger he reread Rockefeller’s proposals as presented in the *Times* and he sees “no reason to change my original evaluation.” He tells Kissinger that both he and Rockefeller “have supported the war in public and lent your considerable prestige to it.” He adds that “both of you realize now, as does almost everybody else, that the war cannot be won and must be liquidated” but this cannot be done if one maintains “one’s original justifications for the war.”¹²²

In his lengthy third paragraph, Morgenthau repeats what he included in his article. What is worth reemphasizing here is Morgenthau’s refutation of Kissinger’s single reference to a matter of fact. Here, Morgenthau writes, in telling “the Vietcong to stop acting like guerrillas,” you then “divest them of the main source of their political and military strength”; that if the Vietcong did this, “they would admit they have lost the war” and Saigon therefore is recognized as “not only the legitimate but also the effective government of South Vietnam.” Thus, the Vietcong have “no intention to surrender at the negotiating table what they have been able to defend on the battlefield ...” Hence, Morgenthau concludes,

that your proposal is as unrealistic as all the others which have been advanced by the supporters of the war. For they try to combine the faulty assumptions upon which the support for the war was based with attempts at liquidating it. This inner contradiction negates the practical effect of the proposals. It can be overcome only by admitting the faultiness of the original assumptions. By not doing this while advocating peace now, one indeed tries to cover one’s tracks in an intellectual sense: one seeks to appear to be wise now, while actually whatever wisdom one might have acquired through bitter experience is vitiated by the insistence on one’s original errors.¹²³

On November 13, 1968, Kissinger replies. Again, he begins by pointing to their friendship: “One is always more sensitive to attacks from friends.”

This time, the letter is a short, almost a one-paragraph statement. It is mostly pure poppy rot. He tells Morgenthau that he “never supported the war in public,” but he forgets his August 1966 defense of the war in *Look* magazine. Before 1963, he says he did not know enough about the war and “tended to believe the official statements.” He tells Morgenthau that after his first visit to Vietnam in 1965, he became “convinced that what we were doing was hopeless”; thus, he adds, he “decided to work within the government to attempt to get the war ended.” He adds: “Whether this was the right decision, we will never know,” again forgetting that what he said in his previous letter

was to give himself and Rockefeller a clean bill of political health. His record was “clear,” he said, and Rockefeller’s would “stand up fairly well.”¹²⁴

In the movie, *The Hunt for the Red October*, the story of a Russian submarine commander who wishes to defect and hand over to the Americans the most advanced technologically developed vessel that is designed for preemptive strikes, the American national security adviser tells the CIA analyst: “Look, I’m a politician, which means that I lie and cheat and steal lollipops from little children when they’re not looking.” The real-life embodiment of this fictional character is Henry A. Kissinger, an intellectually dishonest politician who served, for four years, from 1969 to 1973, as Richard Nixon’s national security adviser; and then, from 1973 to 1975, as Secretary of State. The war, which Morgenthau and others said was already lost in 1968, had no affect on either Kissinger or Nixon. The war dragged on for another six years, needlessly and tragically. In the words of William Pfaff, an international affairs writer for *The New Yorker* magazine,

... Mr. Kissinger was ultimately a failure as Secretary of State. He left Washington with the United States weakened, its prestige and authority diminished. The Vietnam war was lost when he was Secretary of State, as the outcome of policies he conceived or carried out. There were no balancing successes. There were curiously few successes at all. Yet Mr. Kissinger is thought a success.

Mr. Pfaff goes on to say that if Kissinger’s policy to abandon South Vietnam to its enemies had been carried out four years earlier, as was possible, Cambodia would have remained intact, and about a million people, including 20,000 Americans, would still have been alive when Kissinger and Nixon left office. He adds that “The result for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos could not possibly have been worse than what actually happened.”¹²⁵

In a letter published in *Time* magazine on April 21, 1972, Morgenthau writes that “It is obvious that American foreign policy is in a shambles.” That while Kissinger is able and qualified to conduct foreign policy, his “conspicuous failure” is the result of “assumptions and conceptions” that have “burdened the conduct of our foreign relations for decades” and that he has been “unwilling or unable to replace with sounder conceptions and assumptions.”

What were those “assumptions and conceptions” by which Kissinger conducted foreign policy? Another commentator, Princeton University history Professor Arno J. Mayer, detected an ideological mindset that closely resembled the world view of Kissinger’s predecessors, “McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow.” Writing in the *Times* on December 18, 1969, Mayer doubted their “world historical understanding” and their “intellectual wisdom” particularly in regard to Vietnam. He also noted that Kissinger “still stressed” the view

“that a Communist regime anywhere in the non-Western world, including Latin America, would ‘inevitably become a center of anti-Western policy,’ and therefore should be prevented.” Indeed, as we have already seen in these pages, as soon as he took office, his memos called for increased bombing and the strategy that he repeatedly proclaimed was nothing more than securing a military victory over the North Vietnamese and the insurgent South Vietnamese Vietcong. As he notes in his defense of his Vietnam war policy published in 2003 titled *Ending the Vietnam War*, he calls his anti-Communist crusade in Vietnam “a whole new moral issue.” As for his involvement as Nixon’s national security adviser, the disingenuous Kissinger declares that “unexpectedly, I was drawn into the vortex” of Vietnam,” that he “was beset by ambivalence” but “convinced that Hanoi would settle only if” it “was deprived of all hope of victory by a determined military strategy.”¹²⁶ In short, the “ambivalence” disappeared and the bombings escalated.

In the ensuing paragraphs, he reveals himself a believer in “America’s exceptionalism,” the Henry Luce brand of American imperial order on a global scale based on the inherent goodness and virtue of the American republic. He accuses the critics of the war of challenging “the worthiness of America, not just in Vietnam, but globally as well.” He adds that “the attacks on America’s fitness to conduct a global policy ... originated in the universities and intellectual community,” which, prior to Vietnam, “had produced the dedicated defenders of America’s international idealism.” He accuses the critics of “challenging the assumptions of twenty years of bipartisan foreign policy” in which “the radical wing of the Vietnam protest movement ridiculed anti-Communism as being archaic.” He says that “in the post–World War II period, America had been fortunate to have never had to choose between its moral convictions and its strategic analysis.” He adds: “Moral relativism was unacceptable to a nation brought up on faith in the absolute distinction between good and evil.”¹²⁷

Indeed, Kissinger is a moral absolutist whose “strategic analysis” is equivalent to his conception of America’s “moral convictions.” It is essentially Kissinger’s simple morality to fight Communism wherever it appears on the globe. He makes no distinction of the varieties of communist states that pursue national goals. He sees America’s involvement in World War II as part of some “strategic analysis” as if the attack on Pearl Harbor and Germany’s declaration of war against the United States the next day required a strategic analysis to determine what had to be done. He deplores the absence of what he calls bipartisan foreign policy following World War II as if there must be automatic agreement in fighting local wars that are questionable in the light of American national interests. And this is because, as a moral absolutist, he is uninterested in the geopolitical calculation of interests to determine foreign

policy. Instead, he believes in what he calls “the universal application of American values,”¹²⁸ a position he shares with his White House predecessors who began the misadventure in Vietnam.

As foreign policy analysis, Kissinger is grossly deficient. And his book, *Ending the Vietnam War*, is a despicable cover-up to conceal the errors, particularly his own, which produced the tragedy of Vietnam.

And who does Kissinger cite in the early pages of his book as the leader of “the radical wing” of the ant-war movement? His answer is Morgenthau. Here Kissinger writes: “No less a figure than Hans Morgenthau, the doyen of American philosophers of the national interest was moved to a proclamation of America’s immorality.” Kissinger then quotes Morgenthau: “When we talk about the violation of the rules of war, we must keep in mind that the fundamental violation, from which all other specific violations follow, is the waging of this kind of war.” The quote is not from the actual text, which is Morgenthau’s 1968 *New Republic* article on the My Lai massacre, but from Norman Podhoretz’s 1982 defense of the war in his book, *Why We Were in Vietnam*. In Kissinger’s book, there is only one reference to Morgenthau. And in his 1994 book titled *Diplomacy*, Kissinger, in his only reference to Morgenthau, repeats the same quote he used in his *Ending the War in Vietnam* book.¹²⁹

In his *Ending the Vietnam War* book, Kissinger lauds Podhoretz and writes that his treatment of the critics of the war is “a brilliant analysis.”¹³⁰ For the chief critic of the war and the man he calls his friend since his graduate school days at Harvard, he has only disparagement. And it is disparagement based essentially on the question of the war’s morality: for Kissinger, to fight in Vietnam is moral; for Morgenthau, it is immoral. And where there is no disparagement, there is almost total neglect. Thus, in his massive three volume memoirs, *The White House Years* (1979), *Years of Upheaval* (1982), and *Years of Renewal* (1999), in close to 4,000 pages of text, there is only one reference to Morgenthau.¹³¹ Yet Kissinger left an entirely different view of his relationship to Morgenthau when the editors of *The New Republic* asked him to write a eulogy shortly after Morgenthau’s death on July 19, 1980. The eulogy is instructive as a further measure of the dissembling qualities of the Kissinger persona. The war had ended five years earlier well before Kissinger had embarked on his memoirs and his deplorable *Ending the War in Vietnam* book published in 2003. The eulogy is vintage Kissinger. It is a compendium of lies and half-truths that are borne out not only by Kissinger’s Vietnam policies, but also by his previous writings that spell out the premises of his foreign policy thinking that are totally at variance with those of Morgenthau’s.

Thus, Kissinger’s essay begins with the words: “Hans Morgenthau was my teacher. And he was my friend.” While this may be considered a *pro*

forma requirement for a eulogy, it is false. Kissinger continues: "We knew each other for a decade and a half before I entered office. We remained in sporadic contact while I served the government. We saw more of each other afterward." He adds: "We remained close through all the intellectual upheavals and disputes of two and a half decades."¹³² Did he, in fact, remain close to the man he called his "teacher" and mentor?

In 1974, Ralph Blumenfeld and the editors and staff of the *New York Post* published *Kissinger: The Private and the Public Story*. Interviewed for the book, Morgenthau tells his interviewer that "he hadn't seen" Kissinger "for a few years when they encountered each other in Washington some months ago." Morgenthau continues: "He embraced me as a long lost friend. He asked me to call him and I replied rather coolly that he was such a busy man, perhaps he should call me when he had a free moment." Kissinger replied and "insisted that I should call and we should get together. I called him and never heard from him." Blumenthal then writes that Morgenthau "did get a letter on White House stationery inviting him to call ... for an appointment so they could discuss policy." The letter, in the Morgenthau papers at the Library of Congress dated March 23, 1974, indicates Kissinger's disagreement with Morgenthau on "the premises and objectives" of his and Nixon's Middle East policies. Kissinger writes that he "would very much welcome a chance to talk about this with you" and then issues his invitation to call for an appointment. To repeat, Morgenthau informed Blumenthal that he "called" and "never heard from him."¹³³

In his eulogy, Kissinger notes that while they disagreed, "they shared identical premises," that while they "both believed America was overextended, we both sought a way out of the [Vietnam] dilemma," a statement that is patently false. Morgenthau, on several occasions, as we have seen, proposed a plan for liquidation of the war and from the beginning warned of the dangers of U.S. involvement in Vietnam whereas Kissinger offered no plan to get out short of total military victory and North Vietnamese surrender. Indeed, as early as 1961, in one of his infrequent letters to Morgenthau, Kissinger emphasized the military containment of Communism in Asia. That while Morgenthau warned that Vietnam could become another Korea, Kissinger, when he served as a part-time consultant to Bundy in 1961, tells Morgenthau that the United States will have to fight "close" to the "borders" of "Communist power"; that Kissinger "cannot for the world imagine what places they are going to attack if not the ones close to them."¹³⁴

Thus, Kissinger, in 1961, is ready to fight in Southeast Asia. And there follows, in abridged form, Kissinger's veiled allusion to falling dominoes; that while Morgenthau discredited the domino theory as unsupportable in history, Kissinger has no such doubts. He tells Morgenthau: that "If we give up Indo-

China, Malaya will then be close to the Communist frontier, and so on.” He adds: “Moreover, it seems to me that the side that is on the defensive has to pay the price of fighting in places of its opponent’s choice, and these are not likely to be selected from the point of our maximum convenience.”¹³⁵

In citing their differences in *Look* magazine in 1966, Kissinger implies that Morgenthau proposed “unconditional abandonment,” meaning unconditional military withdrawal from Vietnam, whereas Kissinger writes that “the size of our commitment had determined our stake” and “we had an obligation to seek our way out . . . through negotiation.” He conveniently fails to mention that Morgenthau in *Look* had proposed once again the enclave strategy as a way to begin negotiations and that unconditional withdrawal was never proposed by Morgenthau. But the key difference is that Morgenthau had an actual plan to liquidate the war while Kissinger had no such plan other than some undefined “grand strategy” repeated continuously as his “global” policy, all of which amounted to nothing more than fighting Communism. But it is where Kissinger writes that “through all these disagreements I never ceased admiring him or remembering the profound intellectual debt I owed him,”¹³⁶ but as we have seen, there is little or no trace of Morgenthau in Kissinger’s writings.

Moreover, if judged by the dedications in his books, it is obvious that Morgenthau is not one of Kissinger’s heroes. Thus, *Ending the War in Vietnam* is dedicated “To the memory of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and General Creighton Adams who manned the ramparts of freedom in a difficult time.” *White House Years* is dedicated “To the memory of Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller,” Kissinger’s patron and financial benefactor since his post-graduate days.¹³⁷

That they disagreed on Vietnam is borne out by the evidence: that they disagreed on first principles, their assumptions, and conceptions on which their Vietnam positions are based as these are developed in their earliest writings, is also borne out by the evidence. For Morgenthau, in *Politics Among Nations*, 1948, and in his *In Defense of the National Interest*, 1951, the key principle is the primacy of national interest, based always on strict empirical grounds, on the patient calculation of the observable and verifiable facts, on the importance of making careful and painstaking distinctions, and always, the respect for doubt because there are imponderables and uncertainties in the making of foreign policy the miscalculation of which may easily lead to unnecessary war and ensuing tragedy.

Kissinger’s key principles are buried in the several articles he published in the journal, *Foreign Affairs* from 1956–1961. These served as the basis for his 1957 book, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, and they all derive from his association with Hamilton Fish Armstrong and his colleagues who

make up America's foreign policy establishment. It will be recalled that it was McGeorge Bundy and Arthur Schlesinger who first recommended Kissinger to Armstrong and that Armstrong published a total of eleven Kissinger articles from 1956 to 1969 while Morgenthau's submissions were rejected out of hand until 1967.

In this context, it is also interesting to note that when Kissinger had a falling out with Bundy in 1961, Kissinger, with characteristic guile, told Armstrong how difficult it must be "to make a judgment on the difficulties of two [Armstrong] friends," that is, Kissinger and Bundy. The falling out came as the result of Kissinger's complaint that as a part-time consultant, Bundy had dealt with him unfairly and unprofessionally. When Kissinger whined to Armstrong and noted that he wanted "to keep open the possibility" of returning to office, Armstrong reassured Kissinger in a letter on November 13, 1961. He tells Kissinger: "I'm sure you will have a very great influence in the long run putting your views before the public *and you know that the pages of Foreign Affairs will be open to you, as in the past, for this purpose. I count on you to use them as soon as you feel ready.*"¹³⁸ [Emphasis added]

What did Kissinger advocate as foreign policy principles in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*? Buried in these articles are the most incredulous, even bizarre assumptions about the nature of foreign policy and those, Kissinger believes, who are somehow gifted intuitively to foresee events before they occur. And it becomes readily obvious that it is Kissinger who Kissinger has in mind as one of those specially gifted people.

Thus, in his October 1956 piece titled "Reflections on American Diplomacy," Kissinger derides empiricism in foreign policy, for it leads only to what he calls "*ad hoc* solutions" whereas Kissinger prefers long-term solutions. And by rejecting empiricism that leads to short-term solutions, Kissinger thereby does not rule out "dogmatism" in foreign policy because dogmatism does not "postpone committing ourselves until all the facts are in." "By the time the facts are in," Kissinger writes, "the crisis is usually upon us and it is too late to act." But Kissinger is not so sure. On the one hand he rejects empiricism as he questions objective truth based on experience; but then he maintains, which contradicts his former statement, that "nothing is 'true' unless it is 'objective' and it is not 'objective' unless it is part of experience."

Kissinger then extols the "creative statesman," one gifted intuitively, "whose greatness" lies in his "conception" of a "grand strategy" and that cannot be understood even by the "experts" presumably because they are inferior to the great statesman. The "experts," Kissinger writes, are primarily concerned with "safety and minimum risk." Kissinger, obviously, is not averse to danger and greater risk. Our problem, he writes, is "one of leadership" because there is a "present crisis" [Communism], which we must confront. But then he

changes direction and says that nations “learn only by experience,” disregarding his earlier denigration of empirical judgment and history. But all this is obviated, in the Kissinger view, by a real leader: someone who knows what to do without the benefit of experience. To repeat, ordinary leaders “know” only when it is too late to act; creative “statesmen must act as if their intuition were already experience, as if their aspiration were truth.”¹³⁹ These are all harmless thoughts unless the person holding them eventually becomes a practitioner such as a national security adviser or a secretary of state.

He then tells us more about himself. Kissinger likens “the creative statesman” to the “heroes of classical tragedy,” to those who have “an intuition of the future, but who cannot transmit it directly to his fellowmen and who cannot validate its ‘truth’”; he adds, “This is why statesmen often share the fate of prophets” who “are without honor in their own country and *that their greatness is usually apparent only in retrospect when their intuition has become experience.*” [Emphasis added] In other words, the intuition of the creative statesman is prerecorded truth verifiable only later through experience. As such, the statesman must educate the public to “bridge the gap between a people’s experience” and the “vision” of the statesman “who too far outruns the experience of his people” Uncertainty therefore is out for uncertainty becomes “an excuse for inaction,” a “moment of paralysis” in confronting Soviet designs. The creative statesman is a man of action and this is how Kissinger wants to be seen. “We must find the will to act,” he writes, and “run risks in a situation which permits only a choice among evils.”¹⁴⁰

He concludes his “Reflections” article with the same paragraph that closes his *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* book. He writes:

This is not to say that we should imitate Soviet dogmatism. A society can survive only by the genius that made it great. But we should be able to leaven our empiricism with a sense of urgency. And while our history may leave us not well enough prepared to deal with tragedy, it can teach us that great achievement does not result from a quest for safety As the strongest and perhaps the most vital Power of the free world we face the challenge of demonstrating that democracy is able to find the moral certainty to act without the support of fanaticism and to run risks without a guarantee of success.¹⁴¹

In his first *Foreign Affairs* article in April, 1955, Kissinger wrote about “Military Policy and Defense of the ‘Grey Areas.’” Here he is worried that the American public is uninterested in “strategic thinking” while the Soviets are developing powerful nuclear weapons. He wants to “create a level of thermonuclear strength to deter the Soviet bloc from a major war” or “from aggressions” in peripheral areas where the indigenous population cannot defend

itself. Here is the prelude to Vietnam in the form of the “gray areas” where the United States must “shore up the indigenous will to resist.” The prospective dominoes include “the Philippines,” “Malaya,” “Burma,” Thailand,” “Laos and Cambodia.” He writes: “We cannot cast off the ‘gray areas’ without dire consequences”; it is again part of “the defense of the Free World.”¹⁴²

In his second article of April 1956 titled “Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age,” Kissinger advocates fast action and not careful deliberation. The United States must be able “to fight local wars” that, he says, “is a central factor which cannot be sacrificed without impairing our strategic position and paralyzing our policy.” To think too hard about a “calculus of risks” would “paralyze” American policy and “remove a powerful brake” on Soviet actions and “lessen [Soviet] incentives to make concessions.” Five times in his concluding paragraph, the word “paralysis” or “paralyzed” is employed, for Kissinger writes that we should be ready “for a final showdown,” and by overcoming our “induced paralysis,” we should show “our willingness to face up to the tasks of Armageddon.”¹⁴³

In his fourth article of October 1958 titled “Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace,” he questions, in his words, “whether a complete suspension of nuclear testing is desirable, whatever the possibilities of inspection.” He issues the caveat that “the desire to avoid a nuclear holocaust and to achieve a lasting peace should be taken for granted in any debate on this problem.” But Kissinger is disingenuous. He wants to make it appear that his quest for peace goes without saying and that this should be beyond question, but the substance of his article indicates that he is being coy. He does not offer even a momentary conjecture about any possible conditions whereby nuclear testing may be suspended and what safeguards may be used to insure compliance with any agreements made. Indeed, he writes, on the first page, that “the very intensity of our desire for peace may increase our peril.” He worries that our desire for peace may “divide the non-Communist world and undermine its resolution.” He believes the Soviet insistence on the “unconditional end of nuclear tests” is a ploy to “paralyze” the United States and “the free world.” And most bizarrely, Kissinger writes, we must not “stigmatize as more immoral than other weapons,” the “central weapon around which we have built our defense of the world.” He says “we are falling behind in the over-all strategic equation.” We must inject “a greater sense of purpose into our over-all performance.”¹⁴⁴ There is nothing in the article that even remotely suggests the use of diplomacy to halt the nuclear arms race. There is no hint that the destructiveness wrought by a nuclear war obliterates not only the distinction between victory and defeat, but also mankind on a global scale. Kissinger, thus, from the beginning, is a hard-line ideologue obsessed with Soviet Communism and willing to risk nuclear war. His mindset based on the first principles of his foreign policy thinking

elaborated in the formative period of his intellectual development is pathologically oriented toward conflict. Indeed, Richard Nixon must have quickly understood that in Henry Kissinger, he had a comrade-in-arms.

In December 1971, Richard Nixon told the nation that “Vietnam will not be an issue in the campaign as far as this Administration is concerned because we will have brought the American involvement to an end.”¹⁴⁵ Four years later, on April 30, 1975, the illusion that North Vietnam would eventually surrender to the superior might of the United States was finally shattered. When he took office in January 1969, he accepted the advice of his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, that the United States could bomb the North Vietnamese into settling the war on American terms. The Kissinger policy failed, the North Vietnamese stormed into Saigon, the United States lost the war, Nixon had resigned in disgrace two years earlier and President Gerald Ford presided over what he called a “humiliation” for the United States.

Writing in *TNR* on October 11, 1975, Morgenthau notes the “spectacular defeats” under Kissinger’s “stewardship,” the first of which is “South-east Asia”; others include American support of “a military dictatorship in Greece,” “our participation in the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile,” the mistaken rationale for our war in Vietnam, the failure to prevent a German-Brazilian treaty “opening the door to nuclear proliferation.” These are Kissinger failures but Morgenthau displays a strange loyalty to Kissinger about whom Morgenthau writes that he regards Kissinger as “the best Secretary of State since Dean Acheson and one of the six or so best” in U.S. history. Yet, Morgenthau also notes, that Kissinger is ideologically ready “to stop communism by whatever means short of nuclear war wherever it threatens to extend its control.” [Though judging from Kissinger’s earliest writings, one cannot be sure he would refrain from using tactical nuclear weapons.] Kissinger, Morgenthau writes, also demonstrates a baffling “ideological tolerance” of the Soviet Union, “the fountainhead of Communist ideology” and mainland China while at the same time Kissinger displays an “ideological combativeness against local communisms” that, as Morgenthau put it, Kissinger was willing to fight “to the death in Chile and Indochina.”¹⁴⁶ Morgenthau does not explain this large inconsistency. But to judge from his earliest writings and his lifelong objective to achieve national office, intellectual honesty and logical consistency were not Kissinger’s strongest traits.

Of all the major failures of U.S. policy in the twentieth century by which, as Morgenthau writes, we attempted “to wage war to end all wars, to make the world safe for democracy, to wipe out totalitarian tyranny, to build a new world order through UN auspices,” it is a fact that “none of these idealistic

purposes” were achieved. To account for these failures, the United States could blame a variety of reasons such as “the wickedness of the world” or “some particular nation” or “some accidental personal or collective shortcomings.” But “the sole exception, Morgenthau writes, “is Vietnam” where the “failure is all our own.” And he attributes that failure to the moral absolutisms expressed “as a noble crusade on behalf of some transcendent purpose” that “clashed with the reality of things that not only refused to be transformed by our good intentions but in turn corrupted our purpose.”¹⁴⁷

As we have seen in this chapter and throughout the pages of this book, those “transcendent purpose[s]” in the form of a gross misreading of history by which a utopian idealism was falsely heralded as the basis of the American foreign policy tradition, is what got us into the Vietnam quagmire. We lost the war, which we could have avoided. We lost over 58,000 American lives in the war and estimates of two to three million Vietnamese killed. In *The Bitter Heritage*, Arthur Schlesinger writes that the Vietnam war is “a tragedy without villains,” that each step was followed by another step with each step promising victory. But someone was responsible for each of those steps, and there were those outside the administration who supported those steps. There are indeed villains in the Vietnam tragedy.

Writing in *TNR* on January 22, 1977, a year and a half after the fall of Saigon, Morgenthau titled his article “Defining the National Interest—Again, Old Superstitions, New Realities.” It was another far-ranging analysis of the errors and defects of American policy since the Dulles years, but it was also a reiteration of the national interest principle that informed his earliest works. Here, Morgenthau writes that “our modes of thought must be brought into harmony” with the new realities of our age, that we must forego any “demonological interpretation of political reality,” that we must try to understand “the depersonalized objective issues” and divest ourselves of conceiving reality as comprised of “evil persons,” that “we must stop substituting pleasant but illusory verbalizations for a threatening reality.”¹⁴⁸

Indeed, foreign policy, as Morgenthau sees it, “imposes itself as an objective datum upon all applying their rational faculties to the conduct of foreign policy,”¹⁴⁹ and this is what was lacking in the Vietnam war debate. Cherne, Kissinger, Cousins, MacLeish, Bundy, Rusk, Rostow, McNamara, Alsop, Brzezinski, America’s three Vietnam presidents; these are indeed the villains of the Vietnam tragedy. For they failed to be guided by the “objective datum” of the war that the most relentless critic of the war relentlessly pointed out to them over the entire span of the fifteen year period. As he told his interviewer, what he has been saying recently, he had been saying for years but nobody was paying attention. This is indeed part of the tragedy of the Vietnam war.

NOTES

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2. "China Peril Cited," *New York Times*, 13 October 1967, 1.
3. Roger Kahn, "The Quiet Man," Op-Ed, *New York Times*, 19 December 2005, A33.
4. "Debate Over Asia," *New York Times*, 22 October 1967, 199.
5. Hans J. Morgenthau, "What Ails America," *The New Republic*, 28 October 1967, 17.
6. Morgenthau, "What Ails America," 19.
7. Morgenthau, "What Ails America," 21.
8. "Peace Teach-Ins Held Across America," *New York Times*, 11 May 1967, 9.
9. Clippings of articles in Morgenthau Papers, Box 95 & 184.
10. Morgenthau, "Why I Am Against the Vietnam War" (Address at Madison Square, Garden, New York, 22 June 1965, reproduced in weekly newsletter of National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, July, 1965), Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.
11. Morgenthau, "Why I Am Against the War," Morgenthau Papers, Box 184.
12. "Vietnam Peace Pacts Signed; American's Longest War Halts," *New York Times*, 28 January 1973, 1. The *Times* noted "The gigantic round table . . . where the four parties to the Paris Peace Congress have been . . . often vilifying each other." Indeed, after needless delays attempting to determine who would sit where signifying power and recognition, it was finally resolved that the delegates would be seated at a round table symbolically demonstrating equality among the participants. There were also two sets of ceremonies: in the morning, the participants included the United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the Vietcong. Because South Vietnam did not wish to imply recognition of the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, "all references" to the PRG "were confined to a second set of documents" that were signed in the afternoon by the United States and North Vietnam. The atmosphere, *The Times* noted, was "glum"; after the morning session, "the four foreign ministers, their aides and guests filed wordlessly through separate doors . . ." The delegates toasted "peace and friendship" as they drank champagne but the cease-fire was yet to be arranged and the question of American prisoners of war was still to be worked out. The war between North and South Vietnam continued until the spring of 1975.
13. Morgenthau, "Against the War," *Newsletter, Sane*, July 1965.
14. Morgenthau, "Against the War," *Newsletter, Sane*, July 1965.
15. Morgenthau, "Against the War," *Newsletter, Sane*, July 1965.
16. Morgenthau, "Against the War," *Newsletter, Sane*, July 1965.
17. Morgenthau interview with Paul Gapp, *Chicago Daily News*, 17 July 1965, 21.
18. Gapp interview, *Chicago Daily News*, July 17, 1965, p. 21.
19. Gapp interview, *Chicago Daily News*, July 17, 1965, p. 21.
20. Archibald MacLeish, "What Is Realism Doing?" *Saturday Review*, 3 July 1965, 10.
21. McGeorge Bundy, "Reply," *Saturday Review*, 3 July 1965, 13.

22. Bundy, "Reply," 14, 47.
23. Norman Cousins, "The Trouble beyond Vietnam," *Saturday Review*, 21 May 1966, 20; Cousins, "The Four Centers of U.S. Foreign Policy," *Saturday Review*, 2 July 1966, 18.
24. Cousins, "Icy," *Saturday Review*, 18 December 1965, 24.
25. Leo Cherne, "Why We Can't Withdraw," *Saturday Review*, 18 December 1965, 19.
26. Morgenthau's review of several books is titled "Who's Running the Country," *Saturday Review*, 25 April 1964, 30–31, 70. Years earlier on 13 October 1952, Morgenthau asked Cousins if he could respond to an article titled "Guest Editorial" by Professor Foster Rhea Dulles of Ohio State University which was critical of both Morgenthau and Kennan and the "Realist" school of politics. Dulles declared that "alliances and spheres of influence and balance of power have always failed." Cousins replied "we should be glad to publish a reply." Morgenthau welcomed the opportunity and told Cousins his article would reach him before the end of the year. The correspondence, Morgenthau to Cousins, 13 October 1952, Cousins to Morgenthau, 20 October 1952, and Morgenthau to Cousins, 23 October 1952, is in Morgenthau Papers, Box 53, Folder 6. I examined the next 5 months of *Saturday Review* and found no Morgenthau article. There is no record that Morgenthau sent his reply to Cousins or that he did and Cousins did not publish it. What is clear is that Cousins, a staunch utopian promoter of world government, never commissioned Morgenthau, the proponent of interest constrained by power, to write for *Saturday Review* after 1964.
27. Cousins, "Patriotism and Vietnam," *Saturday Review*, 13 May 1967, 26.
28. Cousins, "Patriotism," 70. Throughout his editorials on Vietnam, Cousins makes no mention of Morgenthau. Yet, when he writes that a land war in China would cost "millions of lives" or says that increased American escalation would have "a unifying effect on the Communist world, making it stronger, not weaker" he is borrowing from Morgenthau without attribution.
29. Theodore Sorensen, "The War-How We Can End It," *Saturday Review*, 21 October 1967, 22. Sorenson quotes Kennedy, that "it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it . . . the people of Vietnam," 20. But he omits Kennedy's next sentence, that the U.S. will not give up its effort to assist the Vietnamese in their war against the North.
30. Morgenthau, "Any Way Out," *Newsweek*, 18 January 1965, 36.
31. The response of Lodge, Honey, Nolting, "Any Way Out," 18 January 1965, 35. Of particular interest is the reply of Bernard Fall who says: "... it is probably unavoidable that the U.S. continue the fight in order to win a better position at the bargaining table," 35.
32. "2 Profs View Vietnam and See Opposites," *Chicago Daily News*, 30 November 1965.
33. "Experts Urge Complete Review of U.S. Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, 8 December 1968. Brzezinski statement on p. 76; "Intellectuals Divided Over Effectiveness of Vietnam Moratorium Promoting Peace," *New York Times*, 17 October 1969, 20.
34. "Symposium's Great Question," *Chicago Daily News*, 2 October 1965, 47.

35. "Symposium's Question," 47.
36. "Symposium's Question," 47.
37. "Symposium's Question," 47.
38. Smith, *Rescuing the World*, 81, 24–25, 45.
39. Smith, *Rescuing the World*, 25–26.
40. Smith, *Rescuing the World*, 44. Also noted in a previous chapter.
41. *News from Freedom House*, 29 November 1965.
42. *News Letter*, Freedom House, November 1966, 4. In its July 1966 *News Letter*, it was also announced that Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski had joined the Board of Freedom House, 3. The *News Letter* also reaffirmed "its support" of the Vietnam war policy and noted that "suggestions that the U.S. pull out of Vietnam are a counsel of despair . . ." 1, which it repeated on p. 3.
43. "14 Scholars Warn a Vietnam Defeat Means Bigger War," *New York Times*, 20 December 1967, 1. Sussman's statement that this conference "was financed by contributions" is on p. 14. This is partially inaccurate since, as is noted in the following pages, the administration quietly provided additional funding.
44. "14 Scholars," 14.
45. Memo, Roche to Johnson, Confidential File, Box 73, ND19CO312 [Vietnam], LBJ Library. Roche tells the President, "For several months, I have been working to create an 'intellectual' response to the 'liberals' attack on our Asian policy." He adds specifics to his "program": Scalapino will organize 15–20 "distinguished scholars"; "Freedom House has agreed to sponsor a 3 day session"; that he and Scalapino will select "participants very carefully . . . to insure that they all share the same fundamental outlook."; the conference "will prepare a report which can then be used . . . for a public pronouncement"; that "Cherne and Scalapino talked for some time last night and are moving ahead."
46. Memo, Roche to Rostow, 9 August 1967, Confidential File, Box 73.
47. Scalapino to A. Doak Barnett, 4 August 1967, Confidential File, Box 73.
48. Cherne to Scalapino, 29 March 1967, Confidential File, Box 73.
49. Memo, Roche to Johnson, 27 November 1967, Confidential File, Box 73.
50. Scalapino to Roche, draft letter, 23 May 1967, Confidential File, Box 73.
51. The draft letter to Roche, predated, and enclosed in Cherne's letter to Scalapino, 25 May 1967; Roche memo to the President, 12 July 1967, mentions getting tax deductibility; Roche memo to the President, 19 May 1967, indicates he will travel to New York and meet with an intermediary to speed up the formation of the committee. Roche asserts he "will leave no tracks . . . I can be remarkably invisible." And later, in another memo to the President, 15 June 1967, Roche comments after another meeting in New York, "at that point, I will return to obscurity," Confidential File, Box 73.
52. Morgenthau, "What Ails America," 20.
53. Memo, Sussman to Cherne and Gideonse, 6 November 1967, Freedom House Papers, Box 13, Folder 2, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton, N.J.
54. Morgenthau's one sentence comment is buried on the fifth and last page of "What Ails America," 21.

55. Memo, Sussman to Cherne and Gideonse, 6 November 1967, Freedom House Papers, Box 13, Folder 2.

56. Memo, Sussman to Cherne and Gideonse, 6 November 1967, Freedom House Papers, Box 13, Folder 2.

57. "An Appeal to End Vietnam War Is Signed by 6,766 Educators," *New York Times*, 12 March 1967, 17.

58. "War Foes Clash with Police Here as Rusk Speaks," *New York Times*, 15 November 1967, 1.

59. "Relief Reaches U.S. Unit in Battle on Peak," *New York Times*, 21 November 1967, 1; "Last of Foe Quit Hill Near Dak to; G.I.'s In Control," *New York Times*, 24 November 1967, 1.

60. Morgenthau's article, "Freedom, Freedom House & Vietnam," *The New Leader*, 2 January 1967; Cherne's article, "Responsibility and the Critics," *The New Leader*, 16 January 1967. On the demise of *The New Leader*, see Charles McGrath, "A Liberal Beacon Burns Out," *New York Times*, 23 January 2006, Arts section, 1, 7.

61. Morgenthau, "The House That Cherne Built," *The New Leader*, 30 January 1967; Cherne, "The Realist and Reality," *The New Leader*, 13 February 1967; Sussman's letter, *The New Leader*, 13 February 1967. Morgenthau, letter, *The New Leader*, 27 February 1967, 33–34.

62. Morgenthau, letter, *The New Leader*, 27 February 1967, 33–34.

63. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House and Vietnam," *The New Leader*, 2 January 1967, 17. The Freedom House advertisement was published in *New York Times*, 30 November 1966.

64. Alsop's column, "Peace, But Not Appeasement," Freedom House Reprint Series, no. 16, appeared as an advertisement, *New York Times*, 9 May 1965.

65. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 17.

66. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 17.

67. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 17.

68. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 18–19.

69. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 19.

70. Cherne, "Responsibility and the Critic," *The New Leader*, 16 January 1967, 12.

71. Morgenthau, "The House That Cherne Built," *The New Leader*, 30 January 1967, 17.

72. Morgenthau, "House," 17–18.

73. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 17–18.

74. Cherne, "Responsibility," 12.

75. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 18.

76. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 18.

77. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 18.

78. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 18.

79. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 18.

80. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 18–19.

81. Morgenthau, "Freedom, Freedom House," 19.

82. Cherne, "Responsibility," 12.

83. Morgenthau, "House," 17–18.
84. Nicholas Von Hoffman, "Top Vietnam Policy Critic Spurns New-Left Allies," *Washington Post*, 4 January 1967, A8.
85. Cherne, "Realist and Reality," *The New Leader*, 13 February 1967, 7.
86. Cherne, "Realist and Reality," 7.
87. Cherne, "Realist and Reality," 7.
88. Cherne, "Realist and Reality," 7.
89. Sussman to Editor, *NYRB*, 22 September 1970, Freedom House Papers, Box 48, Folder 14.
90. Sussman to Editor, *NYRB*, 22 September 1970, Freedom House Papers, Box 48, Folder 14.
91. Humphrey to Gideonse, 23 February 1967; Sparks to Sussman, 23 February 1967; Roche to the President, 6 March 1967, in Freedom House Papers, Box 13, Folder 2.
92. "The Problem of American Foreign Policy," undated and unsigned, though scribbled on top right is "c.1972," Freedom House Papers, Box 5, Folder 5.
93. Memo, Sussman to Executive Committee, 21 April 1972, 1–5, Freedom House Papers, Box 5, Folder 5. The five-page, single-spaced memo indicates that Freedom House remains unrelenting in its attempt to foster an aggressive American foreign policy. Three years later, a Sussman memo to Cherne, 13 June 1975, noted that Freedom House was asking the Lily Endowment for funding a \$100,000 expansion of programs, one of which was "On Restoring the American Will and Applying it to Public Policy," in Freedom House Papers, Box 6, Folder 2.
94. Anthony Lewis, "The Wallace Factor," *New York Times*, 16 October 1972, 37. Cherne's reply, letter, *New York Times*, 4 November 1972, 32.
95. Sussman to Scaife Family Charitable Trust (addressed to Daniel McMichael), 31 March 1975, Freedom House Papers, Box 6, Folder 2.
96. "LBJ and the Intellectuals," Guest, Prof. Hans Morgenthau, transcript, *Firing Line* #41, 12 January 1967, Hoover Institute Archives, Stanford California, Box 51 (28), Folder 041.
97. Morgenthau, "Time for a Change," *NYRB*, 6 April 1967, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/12729>, 2, 4.
98. Morgenthau, "Time For A Change," <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/12729>, 4.
99. Morgenthau, "Time For A Change," 1.
100. Morgenthau, "Time For A Change," 6, 7.
101. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top" *NYRB*, 23 June 1966, <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/12426>, 1.
102. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top," 2.
103. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top," 2.
104. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top," 2–3.
105. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top," 3–4.
106. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top," 4–5.
107. Morgenthau, "Room at the Top," 5.
108. Morgenthau, "A Talk with Senator McCarthy," *NYRB*, 22 August 1968, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/11593>, 14.

109. Quoted in Roger Kahn, "The Quiet Man," *New York Times*, 19 December 2005, Op-Ed, A33.

110. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Journals, 1952–2000*, eds. Andrew Schlesinger, Stephen Schlesinger (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007), 285. Schlesinger's favorable treatment of the Kennedy advisers, Fred Dutton, Allard Loewenstein, Bill van den Heuvel and others pointing out the merits and liabilities of Kennedy entering the race since it was Eugene McCarthy who demonstrated the courage to challenge the President and following Kennedy's "unsatisfactory" meeting with Eugene McCarthy, is captured by Schlesinger, 279–285. Schlesinger describes Kennedy as seriously perplexed: Schlesinger at Hickory Hill writes, "I was awakened again [first by Ted Kennedy] this time by Bobby wandering in rather gloomily in pajamas with short pants." Bobby then asked Schlesinger: "What do you think I should do?" Schlesinger replies: "Why not come out for McCarthy? Every McCarthy delegate will be a potential Kennedy delegate. He can't possibly win, so you will be the certain inheritor of his support." Kennedy, looking at Schlesinger "stonily" said, "I can't do that. It would be too humiliating. Kennedys don't act that way." On the morning of March 17, Kennedy had made up his mind.

111. Morgenthau, "On Robert Kennedy," *NYRB*, 1 August 1968, <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/11615>>, 3.

112. Morgenthau, "On Kennedy," 4.

113. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 14.

114. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 14.

115. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 14–15.

116. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 14.

117. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 14–15.

118. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 15.

119. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 15.

120. Morgenthau, "Talk with Senator McCarthy," 15.

121. Kissinger to Morgenthau, 9 October 1968, Morgenthau Papers, Box 33.

122. Morgenthau to Kissinger, 22 October 1968, Morgenthau Papers, Box 33.

123. Morgenthau to Kissinger, 22 October 1968, Morgenthau Papers, Box 33.

124. Kissinger to Morgenthau, 9 October 1968, Morgenthau Papers, Box 33.

125. William Pfaff, "Kissinger's Failures," *New York Times*, 9 December 1979, E21.

126. Henry Kissinger, *Ending the War in Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 17, 10–11.

127. Kissinger, *Ending the War*, 44.

128. Kissinger, *Ending the War*, 44.

129. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 668. In *Ending the Vietnam War*, Kissinger writes that this book is "drawn from texts heretofore scattered through his "three volumes" of "memoirs" and his "study, *Diplomacy*." Indeed, portions such as chapter 5 of *Diplomacy* are verbatim replications found in *Ending the War in Vietnam*, 620–732.

130. Kissinger, *Ending the War*, 584, 47n, and Podhoretz, *Why We Were in Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1982), 113–114. In his book, Podhoretz

compliments Kissinger for “Perhaps the best short statement” on the military bureaucracy “unfiltered for the kind of war” they were fighting in Vietnam.

131. The sole reference is in Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, the concluding volume of his memoirs (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 1088.

132. Kissinger, “A Gentle Analyst of Power—Hans Morgenthau,” *TNR*, 2–9 April 1980, 12–13.

133. Ralph Blumenfeld and the staff and editors of *The New York Post*, *Henry Kissinger: The Private and Public Story* (New York: New American Library, 1974), 271.

134. Kissinger, “Morgenthau Eulogy,” *TNR*, 2–9 April 1980, 13. Also, Kissinger to Morgenthau, 17 August 1961, Morgenthau Papers, Box 100.

135. Kissinger to Morgenthau, 17 August 1961, Morgenthau Papers, Box 100.

136. Kissinger, “Morgenthau Eulogy”, 13.

137. This is well known but the extraordinary details of Rockefeller’s munificence and Kissinger’s financial rewards are in Isaacson, *Kissinger*, particularly, 90–93.

138. Armstrong to Kissinger, 13 November 1961, Armstrong Papers, Box 39, Folder 2.

139. Henry Kissinger, “Reflections,” *Foreign Affairs*, Oct 1965, 38, 40, 55, 48, 53.

140. Kissinger, “Reflections,” 53, and repeated almost verbatim in Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, 431.

141. Kissinger, “Reflections,” 53 and Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons & Foreign Policy*, 436. The Kissinger quote about “the will to act” and running risks is on 42.

142. Kissinger, “Military Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 1955, 419, 421–422, 427–428. He concludes with the sentence: “... our capacity for local war is therefore indicated not only by considerations of national strategy but as our best chance to preserve the peace.”

143. Kissinger, “Force & Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 1956, 350. The words “paralysis” and “paralyzed” appear on 350, 351, 354, 360, 366. In his “Reflections” article “paralysis” is noted on 44. Another favorite Kissinger term, again in “Reflections” is “concept,” 37, and “conceptual”, 54, where the word appears no less than 5 times.

144. Kissinger, “Nuclear Testing,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1958, 1, 8. Again, the word “paralyze” and “paralyzing” are used 4 times on 8, 11, 15, 17. Kissinger fears that Soviet intransigence is designed, as he puts it on 17, “to paralyze the West’s will to use” nuclear weapons, 8, and “which can only paralyze the free world” to defend itself, 17.

145. Quoted in Anthony Lewis, “‘In the Name of God, Go,’” *New York Times*, 8 August 1972, 29.

146. Morgenthau, “Explaining the Failures of U.S. Foreign Policy,” *TNR*, 11 October 1975, 16–17.

147. Morgenthau, “Explaining the Failures,” 21.

148. Morgenthau, “Defining National Interest—Again,” *TNR*, 22 January 1977, 51.

149. Morgenthau, “Defining National Interest,” 50.

Epilogue

What have we learned from *The Vietnam War Debate*? That the war could have been averted, that Morgenthau was ignored, that American policymakers misunderstood the nature of the civil conflict in Vietnam, that no vital American security interests were involved in Vietnam, and that no one, including such luminous officials as Bundy and Kissinger, disproved this. Thus, Vietnam is the unnecessary war, the great moral calamity of American foreign policy history to that time, and the efforts of the predominant critic of the war in hundreds of public debates, teach-ins and in published articles did not halt the slide into disaster.

On May 6, 1970, shortly after Nixon had invaded Cambodia, Morgenthau replied to a question at a University of Chicago conference, about what advice he would offer to those who shared his “moral position.” Morgenthau said he had asked himself that question again and again and had concluded tentatively that he had “wasted” his “time for the last ten years—first warning against getting into Vietnam, then urging a succession of administrations to get out of it.” He then added: “But I don’t see what else you can do. You can protest, you can make your voices heard,” you can withhold “your votes” or “transfer your votes to somebody who runs on a peace platform” but this is all one can do.¹

In the “Prologue” of his anthology of essays titled *Truth and Power* published in 1970, Morgenthau noted that he no longer believed in “the power of truth to move men,” that one of “the main tenets of liberal philosophy,” that “power positions” would yield to “arguments rationally and morally valid,” had now been definitively refuted.² He writes that “the new mood of discouragement and foreboding was already present in qualified form,” which he noted in his 1963 book, *The Purpose of American Politics*.³ In 1970, he writes, the discouragement continues.

“The great issues of our day”: “the Vietnam war,” “the militarization of American life,” “race conflicts,” “poverty on a large scale,” “the decay of the cities,” “the ruination of the natural environment,” are an organic extension of the previous decade. His criticism of the war remains the same, but here he expresses it as the “demonological conception of the free world, which assigns to the United States the mission to defend the ‘Free World’ against aggression and subversion from the Communist conspiracy.”⁴ It is the same story repeated *ad infinitum*: the hackneyed clichés of fighting Communism against aggression from the North which Morgenthau inveighed against throughout the course of the war and to which nobody had paid attention.

In the decade of the 1960s, power had corrupted truth and this trend, Morgenthau writes, was likely to continue in the 1970s as would the disintegration of American society. Here, Morgenthau tells us, “For those who have made it their business in life to speak truth to power,” though power is immune to proof and argument, what is there left to do? Morgenthau’s answer is “to continue so to speak, less frequently perhaps than they used to and certainly with less confidence that it will in the short run make much of a difference in the affairs of man.”⁵ Indeed, as Morgenthau continued to make his voice heard, as he attempted to speak truth to power during the 1960’s, it did not make much of a difference as the war continued to evolve into full-fledged disaster evident as early as 1965, 1968, and 1969.

The “Prologue” reflects despair, but Morgenthau wants to end on a less pessimistic note. Thus, he writes, “In the long run, however, the voice of truth, so vulnerable to power, has proved more resilient than power.” It is thereby possible, Morgenthau tells us, that “historical experience reassures us that truth can indeed make people ‘see a lot of things in a new light.’ And when people see things in a new light, they might act in a new way.”⁶

The new light did not dawn on many commentators and, as the war came to a close, there was considerable soul-searching which took the form of a lessons’ industry. Success in matters of foreign affairs does not require lessons, but failure, especially on a massive level, produces the need for catharsis, an expiation of what can be learned or salvaged from the tragedy which should have been avoided.

The lessons came in articles: on June 14, 1972, Leslie Gelb in the *Washington Post*, discovered “Six Lessons We Should Have Learned in Vietnam.” A year earlier, on September 17, 1971, Gelb published, in *Life* magazine, “Today’s Lessons from the Pentagon Papers.”⁷

The lessons came in books: in 1971, the Council on Foreign Relations commissioned Saigon Vice-Consul Anthony Lake to commission others for a volume of essays that were published under the title, *The Legacy of Vietnam: The War, American Society and the Future of American Foreign Policy*. With

few exceptions, Lake selected safe defenders of the government's Vietnam policies that included Maxwell Taylor, Hubert Humphrey, Irving Kristol, Adam Yarmolinsky, John Roche, and Senator John Tower among others. Lake, the editor, who later rose to prominence as national security adviser to President Clinton, contributed an essay and also wrote the introduction in which lessons abound. Thus, Lake found "lessons 'we have learned,'" "lessons in the form of popular myths," "emerging lessons," "conscious lessons," "tactical lessons," "simple lessons," "lessons for the future," "lessons to amend and replace the Munich analogy," "lessons of the cold war," "lessons from," and "lessons of the Vietnam experience."⁸ This is a book in which the several essayists attempted to outbid each other in compiling a myriad of lessons that have little relevance to what went wrong in Vietnam.

The lessons also came in interviews. On November 27, 1972, *U.S. News and World Report* printed an exclusive interview with General Maxwell Taylor, formerly, as we have seen, a chief strategist of the war, and, in 1972, a private citizen. The interview is titled "The Lessons of Vietnam," and Taylor's response, when asked what is the chief lesson of Vietnam was simply "to learn from our mistakes and have the wisdom to analyze and correct the national weaknesses exposed by the war." Following this analysis, Taylor adds, "The Vietnam experience will [then] have been of enormous value to us."⁹ It is an absurd response. It was not "national weakness" that produced Vietnam; it was national stupidity particularly on the part of the smart men who failed to understand what they were doing in a remote corner of the world ten thousand miles from American shores.

More recently, there is the previously noted *In Retrospect* book subtitled *The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* by Robert S. McNamara, which appeared in 1995, three decades after Morgenthau published in April 1965 the definitive argument against the war titled "We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam." A month later, on May 15, Morgenthau presented the same arguments against the war at the Sheraton just a few miles from McNamara's Pentagon. On June 21, Morgenthau, on national television, repeated his arguments in his debate with Bundy. In 1965, McNamara was unmoved. Thirty years later, in 1995, McNamara agreed but did not cite Morgenthau in his book. As we have seen, in 1995, McNamara concedes that the "facts" in 1964 and 1965 indicated the U.S. should have withdrawn from Vietnam and so convinced is he that his eleven lessons are the be-all and end-all of how to avoid future Vietnams, he responds to a Brian Lamb question on C-SPAN's *Book Notes* by telling the viewers incredulously—and childishly—"Please, Mr. Audience, read the last chapter of my book."¹⁰

And still more recently, and noted earlier in these pages, Gordon M. Goldstein published in 2008 new lessons supplied by McGeorge Bundy, in

collaboration with Goldstein who completed the book after Bundy died in 1996. The title of Goldstein's book is *Lessons in Disaster, McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam*. It is based on a series of meetings Goldstein had with Bundy when the former national security adviser decided he wanted to review, "to understand more clearly," he told Goldstein, what he had not understood when he directed the war. At one point, Bundy tells Goldstein: "Why did I not understand it? . . . What can we learn from this episode that will help us do better in the world ahead?"¹¹

On the last page of the book, Bundy ruminates about presidential leadership and concludes that "the Vietnam war could have been averted by President Kennedy's determined choice,"¹² an awkwardly phrased comment to suggest that Kennedy had become a strong enough leader to reject the advice of his advisers. But Kennedy, as we have seen, appointed those advisers with whom he shared the same mental outlook on fighting communism in Vietnam. "I think," Bundy tells Goldstein, that "he would not have expanded the war," but in fact, as we have seen, he had already expanded it. Bundy tells Goldstein, "He would have found a way to negotiate it," but there is no evidence to support what is basically unfounded speculation. Bundy tells Goldstein, "He [Kennedy] would not have a U.S. ground war," but he had already made it a ground war. Bundy tells Goldstein, that Kennedy did "not have to prove himself in Vietnam," which is to invidiously compare Kennedy's combat record in World War II with Johnson, who served in the Naval Reserve. This is a book which obviously seeks to mythologize Kennedy while attempting to alter the image of Bundy for finally questioning the war that he had unconditionally counseled both Kennedy and Johnson to wage. When Bundy tells Goldstein that Kennedy would refuse "to make it an American war," Goldstein then tells his readers that this "is perhaps the most important lesson that we can derive from a great disaster."¹³

In fact, Goldstein stumbles on the most important lesson of the war but doesn't realize it when, on pages 194 to 196, he discusses Bundy's televised debate with Morgenthau. Goldstein acknowledges Morgenthau as "one of the preeminent theorists of international relations." He cites Morgenthau's objections to the war: "Vietnam was not a vital interest to the United States"; "the domino theory was a dubious foundation on which to base American foreign policy"; "nationalism was among the most potent phenomena of political life"; it had disrupted "British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman" colonial "empires"; "If the United States persisted in its commitment to Vietnam, it would suffer a similar fate." Goldstein then cites additional Morgenthau arguments made in the debate with Bundy: that America's pledge to Vietnam was not "binding on all future administrations"; that the U.S. "had installed the Diem regime"; that in our support of Diem,

“we had made a contract with ourselves.” Goldstein even quotes Morgenthau who quotes Alexander Hamilton to the effect that “no nation is obligated to endanger its own interests, let alone its own existence, in order to come to the aid of another nation.”

We have been here before, and we have seen that Bundy had no answer to Morgenthau’s arguments which Goldstein chooses to ignore. In the last paragraph of his book, Goldstein writes of Bundy: “To his enduring credit, and despite his own self-proclaimed failures of advice and counsel, Bundy’s retrospective struggle to understand the path to war in Vietnam may help current and future generations to better understand the indispensable centrality of the commander in chief’s leadership.”¹⁴ The centrality of intelligent presidential leadership is without question. As Morgenthau put it in June 1980, a month before his death, our “system of government depends in the last analysis on the greatness of its president. It will find success in foreign policy to the degree that it succeeds in selecting a man who comes close to that greatness.”¹⁵

Indeed, as we have seen in chapter 2, there is very little in the Bundy corpus of writing on Vietnam that can be of use in avoiding future unnecessary conflicts. It is not only that Bundy did not understand foreign policy, but that he did not *want* to understand it, which is the *sine qua non* of a dogmatic mindset. And because his belated attempts to understand what he says he did not understand do not include any review of the voluminous Morgenthau writings on Vietnam, Bundy thus remains untrustworthy as a witness to history.

Yet it is the Goldstein book that was chosen as required reading for President Obama and his foreign policy advisers. As I write these words, the President must find a way out of two wars: the Afghanistan war, which began in the winter of 2001 in the attempt to capture Osama bin Laden and is now in its tenth year; the Iraq war, which began in 2002 when the United States diverted its attention from Afghanistan, did not pursue bin Laden in Tora Bora, moved troops from Afghanistan to Iraq, where it launched its unnecessary war on the false grounds that Hussein had developed weapons of mass destruction. This was an outright lie based on false intelligence deliberately contrived in a morally shameless manner in which the highly respected secretary of state, Colin Powell, delivered the worthless message to the United Nations and the American people that Hussein’s Iraq was a direct threat to the United States. Thus, both wars, but especially the Iraqi war, should never have been fought, while the Afghanistan war and the attempt to capture bin Laden should not have been abandoned to fight in Iraq.

And this is the dilemma faced by President Obama: he cannot just leave Iraq and Afghanistan and thereby repudiate the policy established by the

previous administration. The policy inherited by Obama remains the policy of the United States, and to withdraw American troops entirely and all at once is to declare that the human cost of Iraq and Afghanistan have been in vain. Thus, what Morgenthau called “saving face” is the necessity to find some formula, some reasonable exit strategy, that does not seriously damage the honor and prestige of the United States as it gradually withdraws from Iraq and Afghanistan and thereby reverses the policy that was flawed from the beginning. Indeed, it is not Goldstein who should be on Obama’s “new must read books”; it should be Morgenthau, and it should include *Politics Among Nations*, *In Defense of the National Interest*, and *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*. Here in these books are the general principles which define and explore what the statesman must consider when making foreign policy decisions. To my knowledge, there is no other source that does this with the scope and depth of historical knowledge that illuminates Morgenthau’s subject. As for avoiding future Vietnams, the must-read books are Morgenthau’s anthology of essays titled *Truth and Power* published in 1970 and a much briefer reprint of essays in his 1965 book, *Vietnam and the United States*.

The surreal quality of events and commentaries on the war noted in an earlier chapter did not greatly diminish during the closing years of the war. Thus, in December 1971, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker returned to Saigon following his 55th Yale reunion in New Haven and assembled, journalist Gloria Emerson reports, thirty-three Yale colleagues in his villa in Saigon, where they sat around and sang verses of the Whiffenpoof song.¹⁶ Thus, tragedy is unfolding all around them, as Bunker and his Yalies are singing “We’re poor little lambs who have lost our way, Baa, Baa, Baa”; “We’re little black sheep who have gone astray, Baa, Baa, Baa,” etc.

On February 10, 1975, in a *Newsweek* essay titled “Flashbacks,” Bill Moyers selects Kissinger, of the twenty-six participants at the Adlai Institute of International Affairs conference to discuss what went wrong and how to avoid future Vietnams. Moyers quotes Kissinger who says: “I don’t know whether there will be ‘another Vietnam.’ But I feel that we have to make a really prayerful assessment of what we went in there for ... to assess the whole procedure and concepts that got us involved there.” He adds: “We have to do this if we are not going to have another disaster that may have a different look but will have the same essential flaws. ...”¹⁷

The essential flaw in the Moyers’ piece in February 1975 is that Kissinger said this in 1968, which Moyers points out but omits, or has forgotten, that Kissinger, in 1968, was carefully concealing his position on Vietnam. As we have seen, Kissinger was advising Rockefeller while he was also counseling Humphrey and Nixon and thereby promoting his appointment to national

office to serve whoever won the election. And the surreal nature of the Kissinger statement quoted by Moyers is that Kissinger had no intention of reassessing Vietnam and no interest in finding out the essential flaws which got us into Vietnam. As he told journalist Oriana Fallaci in a December 1972 interview, "No, I have never been against the war in Vietnam."¹⁸

Ironically, it is Kissinger who was commissioned by *Newsweek* to review Goldstein's *Lessons in Disaster*, since Kissinger, over the years, has studiously avoided answering questions about his role or about what lessons we might learn from the war. As we have seen, Kissinger, at a press conference on May 12, 1975, when asked if "the war was in vain?" replied: "What lessons we should draw from it, I think we should reserve for another occasion." Similarly, at the conference on "Vietnam and the Presidency" at the JFK Library in 2006, when asked if he should apologize, Kissinger answered: "This is not the occasion for this sort of question," which he repeats moments later, that "this is a sort of question that is highly inappropriate."¹⁹

His review of the Goldstein book appeared on November 3, 2008, the day Obama was elected President. It is titled, "What Vietnam Teaches Us." It is another opportunity for Kissinger to disturb the national amnesia on Vietnam but he doesn't do this. The sub-title of the review is "A new look at the brilliant yet flawed McGeorge Bundy illuminates mistakes we're still making today." Yet there is nothing in the review which informs us about today's mistakes. As for Bundy, Kissinger writes that "the implication of Goldstein's book" is that Bundy should have concluded years earlier that the war was a mistake. But Bundy cannot do this, Kissinger writes, for then "he would have had to abjure the views of a generation avowed" since the Korean war that force based on "American principles" could be applied incrementally "in an undifferentiated manner globally" and that these principles had become "established maxims of a successful policy."²⁰

Here is another of the root causes of the Vietnam debacle: the indiscriminating use of force to be applied anywhere on the globe to fight a mythical monolithic communism oblivious to the requirement of concrete geopolitical analysis. Bundy cannot repudiate the false premises of his sweeping anti-Communism and neither can Kissinger, for this is to admit mistakes and complicity in the Vietnam tragedy.

Indeed, the Kissinger review is another display of the sleight-of-hand verbal legerdemain in which Kissinger excels. Thus, he tells us that it is only within "the perspective of nearly four decades," that we may now challenge the assumption that "Communism has proved to be not monolithic." But this was well-known as far back as 1961. He tells us that "the dominoes did not fall with the collapse of South Vietnam," but he also contends that "the 10 years of effort may have helped steady them" which cannot be substantiated for the

theory of falling dominoes has no basis in historical fact either before or after Vietnam; indeed, he misses the entire point that the domino theory has meaning only if the monolith is intact. And his explanation for the American failure to defeat the Vietcong insurgency is a masterpiece of rhetorical obfuscation. Thus, he writes, that “guerrilla war in a developing country,”—the allusion must be South Vietnam—“is engaged in elaborating its political institutions,” distorts history since the development of institutions, particularly free institutions, cannot take place amidst war and civil strife and the political instability of multiple Saigon governments over the years. And when he writes that “civil war is ultimately about legitimacy and legitimacy is unachievable without security,” he is justifying American military involvement as the source of that security. He exonerates America’s early “policymakers” who, he writes, are the “best of their generation” and though they “lacked perspective,” it is “their critics who lacked compassion.”²¹

What could possibly be the meaning of “their critics” lacking “compassion?” This is vintage Kissinger. He does not argue, he does not explain. He disparages, though obtusely, by leaving the reader with the preposterous notion that the critics are at fault for arguing against the war.

It is November 2008, and Kissinger, age eighty-five, had been given another opportunity to instruct the American people on “What Vietnam [Really] Teaches Us.” He did not do this, and thus he remains the great dissembler. He is perhaps the classic exemplar of what Morgenthau called the intellectual corrupted by power, which directs us to another surreal moment almost a decade after the Vietnam war came to an end. For on September 29, 1983, three years after Morgenthau died on July 19, 1980, the “Third Hans J. Morgenthau Memorial Award” was presented to Kissinger at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. The award honors the person, who, in the words of the organization conferring the award, has made “practical contributions to United States foreign policy” that “have been judged exemplary in the tradition of Professor Morgenthau.” The organization conferring the award was the National Committee on American Foreign Policy which was founded by Morgenthau in 1974. Its objectives included the re-education of the American public on foreign policy by challenging the orthodoxy of the foreign policy establishment and the triumvirate of administrations—Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon—which failed to understand national interest and were responsible for our military involvement in Vietnam.²²

Thus, the irony of the Kissinger award was thick and palpable. Kissinger’s Vietnam policy executed by Nixon was diametrically opposed to what Morgenthau had advised throughout the course of the war. Morgenthau wanted to liquidate the war; Kissinger wanted a military victory and was willing to bomb the Vietnamese into oblivion in order to achieve it. Morgenthau

saw the tragedy as it unfolded, and did everything in his power to end it. Kissinger perpetuated the tragedy in his six years of public office from 1969 to 1975. Based on the public record, it is nothing short of bizarre that the Committee founded by Morgenthau conferred on Kissinger the Morgenthau Memorial Award.

And the surreal continues. For the presentation address was delivered by Arthur Schlesinger, who had never been a friend of the critics, including Morgenthau. As we have seen, Schlesinger had opposed excessive bombing but not the war until its closing days. Moreover, as we have also seen, Schlesinger had not only ignored Morgenthau's arguments against the war in his writings and in his public appearances, but, as he told his friend Alsop, that to equate Morgenthau's views with his, as Alsop had done in one of his columns, was, in Schlesinger's words, "grotesque." Though the "grotesque" appellation was unknown to the public, the omission of Morgenthau from Schlesinger's writings could not be missed.

Schlesinger, as the keynote "speaker of the evening," titled his address "Foreign Policy and the Intellectual," which, two weeks later, on October 12, 1983, he published as "Truth and Power" in the *Wall Street Journal*. As we have seen in the closing pages of chapter 4 above, Schlesinger writes that "we require both the Hans Morgenthaus and the Henry Kissingers" as "we salute the trouble makers." He repeats this in his speech honoring Kissinger.

In a letter to the *New York Review of Books* on September 25, 1969, Morgenthau pointed out that dissent on Vietnam never appeared in the Kissinger vocabulary. Indeed, Morgenthau refers to Kissinger's piece in *Look* magazine on August 9, 1966, which also included Morgenthau's and Schlesinger's advice to President Johnson on what to do in Vietnam. On September 25, 1969, Morgenthau writes that the first section of Kissinger's August 1966 article is titled "The Impossibility of Withdrawal" and ends with Kissinger's summation quoted by Morgenthau that, "In short, we are no longer fighting in Vietnam only for the Vietnamese. We are also fighting for ourselves and for international stability."²³ In his advice to Johnson, Morgenthau advocated liquidation of the war and proposed, as we have seen, an enclave strategy as a military prelude to invite further negotiations and an end to the war.

Schlesinger, as "speaker of the evening," was obviously chosen for his celebrity status. And his linkage of Morgenthau and Kissinger as "trouble-makers," if troublemaker is defined as opposing official authority, then Schlesinger is egregiously wrong. And Morgenthau, the consummate empiricist, would have been the first to point this out.

Over the years, the Morgenthau award recipients included such eclectic notables as labor leader Sol Linowitz, UN Ambassadors Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick

and Thomas R. Pickering, former Secretaries of State George Schultz and James E. Baker III, former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and King Hussein of Jordan. In another ironic twist of circumstance, the first Morgenthau award recipient was Angier Biddle Duke, scion to the Duke tobacco family and the former Ambassador to El Salvador, Denmark, Spain, and Morocco. Duke had also been an executive official of the American Friends of Vietnam in the late 1950s who proclaimed, in the edited version of the AFV's conference booklet, that "a free Vietnam" and "a Free Southeast Asia" are "deeply involved in the safeguarding of our own freedom."²⁴ His name remained on the AFV letterhead as a member until its demise in 1975.

In his speech on June 2, 1981, accepting the first Memorial Award, a year after Morgenthau died, Duke was very gracious in his remarks about Morgenthau to whom he paid tribute by noting that the award "deemed" his "name worthy enough to be linked with that" of Morgenthau. He then explained his own change of mind about international politics. He had "been brought up," he said, "with the ideals of Woodrow Wilson" and the rejection of international politics as a struggle for power. Duke had gotten to know Morgenthau since the mid-1970s and had become a convert. He concluded, as he noted in his address, that Wilson's ideas "have limited applicability," that "our abhorrence of war will not enable us to banish it," that "power must not be dissociated from diplomacy," and that "we have indeed accepted Hans' understanding of international politics." He called attention to Morgenthau's attempts in "books, pamphlets, on radio and television, at the University of Chicago," and "the City University of New York," where he taught after he moved to New York in 1968, to persuade "hundreds, nay thousands" to rethink their positions on America's involvement in Vietnam." And then Duke noted, "And who, my friends, in the American foreign policy establishment still asserts today that participation in the conflict in Vietnam, was in our national interest?"²⁵

In the early 1970s, Morgenthau continued to voice his opposition to the war in a series of *New Republic* articles. Thus, on March 21, 1970, he ridiculed Nixon's explanation of American foreign policy in his "119 single-spaced" report to the Congress on "the state of the world." Morgenthau notes that "Nixon quotes himself thirty-one times directly" and that the "tone is one of magisterial authority and imperial decisiveness" designed to conjure up "the image of the great leader fully informed, unflinching in judgment." The document, Morgenthau writes, says nothing substantive and basically repeats "what has been the policy of the United States all along."²⁶

Several months later, on May 23, 1970, the criticism is directed at "Mr. Nixon's Gamble." Here, Morgenthau refers to "the tragedy present

and impending” as Nixon is driven by “two irreconcilable impulses”: the desire to “disengage from Vietnam” but to disengage only if it conveys “the appearance of a political victory,” which means the stabilization of the Thieu government. Morgenthau notes that as long as Nixon is wedded to the Thieu regime, the President is faced with “the worst of both worlds”: “the chase after an ever-elusive victory” through an “ever-expanding war without end or the liquidation with the undisguised admission of defeat.” What Morgenthau advises is “a face-saving withdrawal and the establishment of a government able and willing to come to an understanding with the other side instead of one that has a vested interest in the continuation of the war.”²⁷

On February 20, 1971, Morgenthau titled his essay “The Nuclear Option: What Price Victory?” Here Morgenthau speculates that the administration cannot afford to wait until “the systematic year-in and year-out bombing” brings the war to an end, because it has “in its armory a weapon that can expedite dramatically the process of destruction and, hence, victory.” Here Morgenthau worries that because the administration has not won its victory with conventional armaments, and because it is committed to leave only after it has won a victory, it may resort to “tactical” nuclear weapons, and he notes also that “the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs are now categorized as ‘tactical.’” He points out as well that “Nixon as vice president recommended in 1954 the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam.” “The only rational denouement” to the Vietnam quagmire, Morgenthau writes, “is unconditional disengagement,” which he realizes is “unobtainable” given “the insistence by a succession of administrations” determined to achieve victory.²⁸

On August 11, 1973, Morgenthau wrote about “The Aborted Nixon Revolution, Watergate and the Future of American Politics.” Watergate, Morgenthau writes, was an attack on the American system of government. It violated its basic principles, it has deprived the minority to compete on equal terms with the majority, it has established unofficial agencies exempt from constitutional and legal restraints. Watergate, Morgenthau notes, has unmasked the “conservative pretenses” of the Nixon Presidency and has revealed its propensity to “nihilistic destruction” and its likeness to fascism.²⁹

On November 9, 1974, Morgenthau published “Power and Powerlessness, Decline of Democratic Government” where he examines “the decline of democratic government throughout the world” and particularly “and most importantly,” in the United States. Here he begins where he left off in his August 11 article, noting that “the United States has experienced two presidencies in succession whose arbitrary, illegal and unconstitutional rule” have reduced “democratic choice to exercises in futility.” And here he repeats his observation that Nixon, especially, has introduced “practices of a distinctively Fascist character.”³⁰

He points out that while we have a new President [Gerald Ford], “we are still governed by the same people who governed us before Nixon’s downfall.” He is “amazed at the chumminess between the disgraced former President and his successor.” He notes that “the former attorney general who appears to have committed perjury,” has gone, “for all practical purposes scot-free.” In ancient Athens, Morgenthau writes, politicians deemed dangerous were ostracized without formal charges against them. In the United States, he writes that “an administration whose prominent members are accused or convicted of common crimes and guilty of subverting the public order, blends easily into its honorable successor without a drastic change in personnel.”³¹

And finally, as noted in a previous chapter, Morgenthau makes specific reference to Vietnam when he writes that “shame, the public acknowledgment of a moral or political failing, is virtually extinct” in the United States. He points out that “the members of the intellectual and political elite whose judgments on Vietnam proved to be consistently wrong and whose policies were a disaster for the country remain members of the elite in good standing.” He cites Nixon, in particular, “a disgraced President” who “moves easily into the position of an elder statesman receiving confidential information and giving advice on affairs of state.” He writes that the “line of demarcation between right and wrong,” is “both morally and intellectually blurred.” “It is a distinction without lasting moral or political consequences.” It is like “a minor accident” which is “temporarily embarrassing and better forgotten.”³²

Six months later, on May 3, 1975, he writes how “The Elite Protects Itself” by hiding “their personal deficiencies and the misdeeds resulting from them” by inventing and then bemoaning “the decline of America’s power and credibility.” He adds that this “deflects attention from the real causes of the disaster and, by doing so, preserves the credit of [the] ruling elite and protects its hold on power.” Here he repeats: “The Indochina debacle is rooted in moral and intellectual deficiencies in which, regardless of the party or administration in power, the members of the ruling elite of America share.”³³

A week later, on May 12, 1975, *Time* asked several of the ruling elite and some critics about the end of the war and their reactions to the fall of South Vietnam. The surreal quality continued. General Westmoreland said “It was a sad day in the glorious history of our country” but that “elements in this country have been working for this end.” In his last sentence, Westmoreland said: “People who dismiss the domino theory are all wet.”³⁴

Dean Rusk, now teaching international law at the University of Georgia law school, referred to mistakes, but not those he or his colleagues made, but to the critics whom he labeled with “an isolationist attitude.” He then,

wandered off, irrelevantly, when he remarked that “both the Republicans and Democrats should suspend politics for the rest of this year.”³⁵

William P. Bundy, now editor of *Foreign Affairs*, at first said, “On balance the war must surely be judged a tragedy with devastating consequences for the people of both Vietnam and the United States.” But then the tragic consequences are forgotten as Bundy lapses into the question of “choices,” which he says “have been very hard ones” as he asks: “How much is it worth to give a nation a chance?” And “because we lost,” he says, “we shouldn’t beat our breast. It was a close choice” he adds, “with moral factors on both sides.” Then he proves that he has learned nothing from the “tragic consequences” when he says that “on a wider view,” we were “buying time for the [other] nations of Southeast Asia to stabilize their governments,” which “was the major reason for our actions.”³⁶ In short, though he doesn’t say it, William P. Bundy is still fighting to halt the spread of communism.

Time quoted Thomas Hyland, thirty, who served in Vietnam in 1968 and was severely wounded. Hyland said: “When I hear Ford say let’s forget about the past, I get more enraged. My brother-in-law wakes up every day without legs. How can he forget? I suffered a great deal . . . I can think of days when I lived from one morphine shot to the next. Is it true that this was a waste?”³⁷

The editors at *Time* did not think to ask the chief critic of the war. And neither did the authors of some recent additions to the scholarly literature on Vietnam think it important enough to include Morgenthau in their narratives of the war and what went wrong.

Thus, Robert Mann, a former U.S. Senate aide published in 2001, an 821-page “political history” of the war titled *A Grand Delusion: America’s Descent into Vietnam*. There is no reference to Morgenthau though the title of the book and the several delusions listed by the author bear some resemblance to Morgenthau’s April, 1965 *Times Magazine* article, “We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam.” In Mann’s words: “From beginning to end, America’s political, military, and diplomatic leaders deluded themselves, accepting a series of myths and illusions about Vietnam that exacerbated and deepened the ultimate catastrophe.” Then, in the concluding sentence of his “Introduction,” Mann tells us: “My hope is that this book will shine a beacon of light on the nation’s future path that may help prevent another tragedy like Vietnam.” Four paragraphs earlier, he says that if his book does nothing else, he hopes it will “point to the need for a Congress and an electorate” to be “better informed about foreign policy” and “the importance of rational, informed public debate about the means, objectives, and possible consequences” of foreign policy decisions.³⁸

But to do that, it is necessary to establish some criteria of evaluation and then to explore how that standard defined in terms of fundamental principles

may be used to better inform and perhaps produce greater rationality in the making of foreign policy. It is not enough to proclaim rhetorical platitudes about shining “a beacon of light on the nation’s future” to avoid “another tragedy like Vietnam.” What is required is the careful exploration of the rudiments of sound foreign policy decision-making and how these were never applied to Vietnam and how they may apply to our current dilemmas in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Mann book does not do this.

Similarly, historian Robert Dallek in his 2007 book, *Nixon and Kissinger, Partners in Power*, is “convinced” that what he writes has “relevance for current and international problems” including “the wisdom of the war in Iraq and how to end U.S. involvement there.” Yet he does not tell us how the war in Iraq may be ended and why it was an unwise war to begin with. And when he asks, “Could the war [in Vietnam] have been ended sooner?” he betrays either an ignorance or a basic dishonesty since it is now well known that the war could have been ended before Nixon and Kissinger acceded to office. He also heralds as one of “the great events of Nixon’s presidency—ending the Vietnam War”³⁹ though it is well known that the terms of the 1973 settlement could have been achieved four years earlier while the war between the North and South continued for another two years. Moreover, as we have seen, it was Morgenthau who pointed out how Nixon, as the newly elected President in January 1969, could have liquidated the war and provided at the same time an acceptable rationale for America’s withdrawal. Like the Mann book, Dallek issues rhetorical platitudes. He does not explore any standard of evaluation by which future Vietnams or Iraqs may be avoided. He does not raise the question of national interest and the centrality of concrete geopolitical facts on which it is based.

Another study published in 1999 is titled *Choosing War, the Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* written by historian Fredrik Logevall of the University of California at Santa Barbara. Here, Logevall cites Morgenthau’s remark in a January 1965 *Newsweek* report that the United States should withdraw because the war is unnecessary and unwinnable. There are no further citations of Morgenthau’s anti-war activities, no mention of the Washington Teach-In or Morgenthau’s televised debate with Bundy, no reference to the enclave strategy outlined by Morgenthau in 1965. The book is essentially a criticism of the Johnson Administration for plunging into what Logevall calls, similarly to Morgenthau, “an unnecessary war.” And in the concluding paragraph of Logevall’s 413 pages of text, he calls the war “America’s avoidable debacle in Vietnam” and warns “that something very much like it could happen again,” though “not in the same way,” but “potentially with equally destructive results.” “This,” he writes, “is the central lesson of the war.”⁴⁰ But he, too, fails to produce any standard of evaluation

by which foreign policy may avoid such probable future catastrophes. In short, though he cites Morgenthau, he makes no reference to Morgenthau's principles of national interest foreign policy. And the "central lesson" he cites appears as an afterthought, another rhetorical flourish, without substantive explanation.

There are additional studies which similarly ignore Morgenthau's voluminous criticisms of the war and the principle of national interest on which that criticism rests. Thus, David Kaiser's *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson and the Origins of the Vietnam War*, in 497 pages of text published in 2000, makes no mention of Morgenthau; Howard J. Langer, *The Vietnam War, An Encyclopedia of Quotations*, in 383 pages published in 2005, there is no Morgenthau quotation to be found; in Melvin Small's, *At the Water's Edge, American Politics and the Vietnam War*, 216 pages of text published in 2005 there is just one brief reference to Morgenthau; as noted earlier, there is Leslie H. Gelb's *Power Rules, How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy*, which lists *Politics Among Nations* in the bibliography but no reference to Morgenthau in the body of the text; in Michael Lind's 1999 *Vietnam, The Necessary War*, in 284 pages of text, there is unsurprisingly, in the light of the author's misreading of the war, only two references to Morgenthau; in Michael H. Hunt's *Lyndon Johnson's War*, 128 pages of text published in 1996, there are no references to Morgenthau; in Arnold R. Isaacs, *Vietnam Shadows: The War, Its Ghosts and Its Legacy*, 199 pages of text published in 1997, there is no reference to Morgenthau; in Lloyd C. Gardner, *Pay Any Price, Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* published in 1995, there is only one brief reference to Morgenthau; and then there is Kissinger's *Ending the War in Vietnam*, 562 pages of text published in 2003, where there is one brief but unfavorable reference to Morgenthau, whom Kissinger described, as noted earlier, as his friend and mentor to whom he said he owed a debt of gratitude.

Indeed, here is the great failing of Vietnam scholarship. The books proclaiming that what they have to say can avoid future disasters but that make no further reference to the specifics of their claim. The books and articles and interviews that proclaim they have found the magic elixir, the central lessons and meaning of the Vietnam tragedy, but they are hollow and suggest a gross misunderstanding of the nature of the Vietnamese civil war. All of which means there will probably be future Vietnams and future Iraqs unless American officialdom and the American public interested in foreign policy discover where the real lessons of Vietnam are to be found. As this book demonstrates, they are to be found in the hundreds of Morgenthau's articles and speeches opposing the war. And for the present moment, as noted above, it would be wise for President Obama to discover Hans J. Morgenthau.

NOTES

1. Morgenthau, "Vietnam: Which Way to Peace?" Morgenthau Papers, Box 106, 16–17.
2. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 5.
3. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 5. Morgenthau's quote is on the third page of his unpaginated Introduction in the 1964 paperback edition, *The Purpose of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).
4. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 6, 7.
5. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 8.
6. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 9.
7. Leslie H. Gelb, "Six Lessons," Washington Post, 14 June, 1972, A 26; Gelb, "Today's Lessons," *Life*, 17 September 1971, 34–36.
8. Anthony Lake, ed. *The Vietnam Legacy* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), xi–xiii, xvi, xxiii.
9. "Lessons of Vietnam," *U.S. News and World Report*, 27 November 1972, 22.
10. McNamara interviewed by Brian Lamb, *Book Notes*, C-SPAN, 23 April 1995, Public Affairs Video Archives, The C-SPAN Archives at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.
11. Goldstein, *Lessons*, 26.
12. Goldstein, *Lessons*, 248.
13. Goldstein, *Lessons*, 247–48.
14. Goldstein, *Lessons*, 194–96, 248.
15. Morgenthau, "Constraints on Presidential Leadership in Foreign Affairs," transcript of roundtable discussion held 1979–1980 at the Miller Center of Public Affairs, Charlottesville, Va., 34.
16. Gloria Emerson, "The Mission Council, Saigon, April 27, 1971, 'The Symbol of Immense American Power in Vietnam,'" *New York Times*, 7 April 1975, Op-Ed, 31.
17. Bill Moyers, "Flashbacks," *Newsweek*, 10 February 1975, 76.
18. "Kissinger, an Interview with Oriana Fallaci," *The New Republic*, 16 December 1972, 19. Two months earlier Anthony Lewis titled his column "The Kissinger Mystery," *New York Times*, 2 October 1972 and quoted two people who have known Kissinger as follows, ". . . in his focus on application of power in the world, he failed to understand that foreign policy has moral consequences." The other person tells Lewis, "He does not care enough about killing people."
19. "Vietnam and the Presidency Inside the White House," transcript of a symposium, 10–11 March 2006, JFK Library, 24.
20. Kissinger, "What Vietnam Teaches Us," *Newsweek*, 3 November 2008, 44–46.
21. Kissinger, "What Vietnam Teaches Us," 44–46.
22. See *Newsletter*, National Committee on American Foreign Policy, August–October 1980, 6–7; and *Newsletter*, August 1981, remarks by Angier Biddle Duke, 6–7.

23. In Morgenthau's letter published two weeks later in the *New York Review of Books*, 23 October 1969. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/11173>.
24. Duke, forward to booklet, *America's Stake in Vietnam*, 1 June 1956, 4.
25. Duke, "Remarks on Receiving the First Hans J. Morgenthau Award," *Newsletter*, National Council on American Foreign Policy, 6–7.
26. Morgenthau, "Evasive Ambiguity, Mr. Nixon's Foreign Policy," *The New Republic*, 21 March 1970, 23.
27. Morgenthau, "Saving Face in Indochina, I—Mr. Nixon's Gamble," *The New Republic*, 23 May 1970, 15, 17.
28. Morgenthau, "The Nuclear Option, What Price Victory?" *The New Republic*, 20 February 1971, 21–23.
29. Morgenthau, "The Aborted Nixon Revolution," *The New Republic*, 11 August 1973, 17.
30. Morgenthau, "Power and Powerlessness," *The New Republic*, 9 November 1974, 13–14.
31. Morgenthau, "Power," 15.
32. Morgenthau, "Power," 15.
33. Morgenthau, "The Elite Protects Itself," *The New Republic*, 3 May 1975, 20–21.
34. "After the Fall: Reactions and Rationale," *Time*, 12 May 1975, 20.
35. "After the Fall," 20.
36. "After the Fall," 20.
37. "After the Fall," 23.
38. Robert Mann, *A Grand Delusion: America's Descent into Vietnam* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 1–5.
39. Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger, Partners in Power* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), x–xii.
40. Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), 406, 407, 411, 412.



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. is a polished black granite wall extending 492 feet in length engraved with the names of over 58,000 Americans who died in the War. There are no words, only names on the Memorial. A short prologue reads: "In honor of the men and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order they were taken from us."

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