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**Andrew Preston**. *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC and Vietnam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

**Review by John Prados**, National Security Archive

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**Review by John Prados,** National Security Archive

### *Dangerous Counsel*

The recent resignation of General James L. Jones as national security adviser to President Barack Obama brings that White House official's role back into the spotlight. To judge from Bob Woodward's latest tome,<sup>1</sup> Jones both proved unable to generate much traction with the president and managed to initiate the call for the Afghanistan force posture review that led to the sandbagging of Obama into approval of an escalation to America's latest conflict. Its prospects remain clouded at this writing. The jury is out on the performance of Jones's predecessors, Condoleezza Rice and Stephen Hadley, who served President George W. Bush, but the handling of national security, in particular war policy, in that administration was so bollixed up that the verdict is not likely to be favorable.

The contributions of national security advisers and their helpers, the National Security Council (NSC) staff,<sup>2</sup> are central to policymaking in the United States government and merit close attention. The best window through which to view the role of national security advisers in a conflict remains the Vietnam war. Here we benefit from a pair of studies of McGeorge Bundy, who worked for John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson during the high years of U.S. escalation.<sup>3</sup> These works are Gordon M. Goldstein's *Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 2008), and Andrew Preston's *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The National Security Council (NSC), created by the National Security Act of 1947, actually represents a corporate board of advisers to the president. The 1947 Act provided for a staff to be headed by an Executive Secretary. Nowhere in that law or in any subsequent amendment was provision made for a "National Security Adviser," so that position in fact has no legal standing. Consequently, this paper will refer to the "national security adviser" in lower case but use "NSC staff" for the unit that assists the president in national security matters.

<sup>3</sup> Studies of Bundy's successor, Walt W. Rostow and Henry A. Kissinger are also relevant to the Vietnam case but will be excluded here because this reflection is aimed at the period of initial escalation rather than at the war as a whole or the conflict at full intensity. However, for Rostow see David Milne's fine study *America's Rasputin: Walt Rostow and the Vietnam War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2008). There are many works on Kissinger. A broadbased account is Jussi Hanhimaaki's *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Goldstein's work aims directly at McGeorge—or "Mac"—Bundy, who served as national security adviser from January 1961 through January 1966. Indeed *Lessons in Disaster* is of special interest because it began as a scholar's collaboration with Bundy on what started out as Bundy's own Vietnam book. McGeorge Bundy passed away in 1996, before the collaborative effort had gone much beyond research. Gordon Goldstein took notes from his interviews with Bundy, fragments Bundy had written for their project, and some other material to complete the book, which is more nearly an interpretation of Bundy's role than a memoir. Quite different in approach, Andrew Preston's *The War Council* is a synthesis of extensive inquiry into the records of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations along with many supporting materials. Preston's study has the virtues of a much wider net cast for evidence as well as a deeper analysis of the role of the NSC staff working alongside Bundy. Together the two books enable us to examine a national security adviser's role in these events as well as revisit classic decision points on the road to war in Vietnam.

For some diplomatic historians events are of greater interest than institutional factors, so this paper will begin with history and later discuss the impact, pernicious or otherwise, of the NSC staff and adviser. Viewed broadly there were probably a dozen key U.S. moves between early 1961 and the end of 1965, starting with expanding the advisory effort to support a larger South Vietnamese military, on to the fateful choice of sending American ground forces to fight the war. There were also extraneous events (the Tonkin Gulf incident, August 1964), at least one important non-choice (failure to take seriously French proposals to neutralize Southeast Asia, 1964-1965), and one critical counterfactual (whether JFK would have withdrawn from Vietnam, 1963 and after). Central decisions include those to support a coup to overthrow South Vietnamese leader Ngo Dinh Diem (August-November 1963), to initiate covert operations against North Vietnam (January 1964), to begin an air campaign against the North (February-March 1965) and to send troops who would actually fight a war (taken in several stages between December 1964 and July 1965). All the major choices are illuminated by Goldstein and Preston in focusing on Bundy. Though there are other aspects that could be discussed, for this commentary we shall have to cover just a few key ones.

Both authors sketch McGeorge Bundy's life in some detail, though *Lessons of Disaster* has the advantage of the author's exposure to Mac himself. Indeed Goldstein is at his most fascinating where he deploys "fragments" Bundy wrote to guide the actual drafting. For all that, Preston actually does better at distilling Bundy's views, showing that these coalesced around beliefs in the indispensability of military power in diplomacy, rejection of the utility of appeasement, and a pragmatic but fervid anticommunism. The man who arrived at the White House in January 1961—along with his chief—was soon warned by the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and then haunted by the specter of nuclear annihilation in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Preston's Bundy evolves into what he calls a "soft hawk," supporting the commitment to Vietnam while espousing nation building and counterinsurgency in preference to raw force. Goldstein's Bundy, who had spent little time on Vietnam during

Kennedy's early months, comes out in favor of sending a combat division to South Vietnam when General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow recommended dispatch of a more limited force in November 1961. This Bundy is portrayed as taking aggressive stances but regretting them in retrospect.

Bundy's retrospectives can mislead as well as enlighten. In conjunction with the Taylor-Rostow proposals, Bundy credits President Kennedy (67) for adopting an unstated policy against sending combat forces to Vietnam. Goldstein takes this as the first brick in a posture that he believes led JFK to step back from war. But Kennedy's decision had a different character: with Taylor-Rostow the president actually *approved* U.S. regular forces (including combat support formations such as helicopter assault units, covert aerial bombardment units, Special Forces, plus military advisory teams extended down to battalion level in the South Vietnamese army). These actions put GIs into combat and in harm's way.<sup>4</sup>

Gordon Goldstein and Andrew Preston take opposite sides on the thesis that Kennedy would have withdrawn. Goldstein terms this "official administration policy . . . announced publicly" (83). That's not quite right but it can be debated elsewhere. It was McNamara, not JFK, who had a withdrawal project he had pressed within the Pentagon for more than a year, McNamara who put the idea on the table at the White House in the fall of 1963, and McNamara again who emphasized withdrawal in his own mid-1990s memoir. It can only have seemed a good idea to him to draw the mantle of Kennedy support over the withdrawal thesis. Preston observes that responsibility for committing U.S. troops to battle was of enormous historical consequence and points out that with such stakes "it is not difficult to understand why this battle for history . . . has been waged on this singular issue" (130). He cites evidence that Bundy and other senior officials were not sure this was the case, and even Goldstein quotes Bundy to that same effect.

The major evidence on withdrawal is not conclusive: a pair of White House meetings and a national security action memorandum (NSAM) that simply approved language in a McNamara-Taylor recommendation. The tape recordings of the meetings show JFK asking questions, not affirmatively declaring approval; the relevant NSAM does not even contain the word "withdrawal." The signature on the document is that of McGeorge Bundy, not the president. Only days before these events, meanwhile, Kennedy *had* approved—and signed—a different NSAM on Laos which ordered actions escalating that

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. combat deaths in South Vietnam tripled from 1961 to 1962, and doubled or nearly redoubled in each of 1963 and 1964. This is not to say that these were very large numbers (16, 52, 108, 206), only that the statement that Americans were not "in" battle is mistaken. Kennedy himself appreciated this, according to Kenny O'Donnell's recitation of JFK's parting comment to McNamara: "Tell them that means all the helicopter pilots too" (Kenneth P. O'Donnell and David F. Powers, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 17). McNamara was about to inform the press of a decision to withdraw some U.S. troops before the end of 1963, and NSC conversations marked that out as the first tranche of a McNamara-Taylor withdrawal plan.

front of the war. On withdrawal JFK accepted the McNamara proposal but he seems to have been tentative, while more directly involving himself in a simultaneous escalation. And the number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam after the 1,000-man “withdrawal” would in fact be *greater* than before the measure was ever proposed. The evidence better sustains a view that Kennedy supported an early version of what would be called “Vietnamization.”

In his concluding chapter (238-239) Goldstein makes a great deal of a conversation with Kennedy related by NSC staffer Michael Forrestal. I myself interviewed Forrestal in March 1988 and discussed this matter among others. When he offered his account of that Kennedy conversation, I asked about the Laos NSAM. Forrestal, Bundy’s responsible staff officer, had no explanation that could reconcile the conflicting evidence.

A related dispute centers on U.S. policy in the coup that overthrew Saigon leader Ngo Dinh Diem and led to his murder. This includes the celebrated incident of the “Hilsman cable,” a dispatch sent by Assistant Secretary of State Roger Hilsman to Saigon stating a policy that the U.S. could no longer support Diem if he did not implement reforms. The cable was drafted and approved for dispatch while most top officials—Kennedy himself, Bundy, McNamara, Dean Rusk (Hilsman’s boss), and John McCone (CIA director)—were all out of town. Here Andrew Preston construes the action essentially as a plot by NSC staffer Forrestal, and even Goldstein terms the instruction a “Forrestal cable” (79). In *Lessons in Disaster* the author quotes Bundy as viewing this episode sympathetically, and Goldstein includes it in a chapter he titles “Never Trust the Bureaucracy to Get It Right.” That sense is important to Andrew Preston, whose central proposition in *The War Council* is that Bundy’s NSC staff supplanted other agencies of the U.S. government, in this case the State Department.

Most discussions of the Hilsman cable episode have focused on the play-by-play of the alleged end-run rather than what the policy actually was. Last year, after both Preston and Goldstein had published, new evidence emerged in the release of audiotapes covering the succession of NSC meetings that deliberated on a coup—these reinforce Bundy’s observations (quoted by Goldstein) that JFK approved the policy. (Incidentally, the tapes contain a passage in which President Kennedy discusses political losses he would suffer in Congress from a Vietnam withdrawal, adding fire to the debate on that issue also.) The tapes include lengthy discussions among Kennedy and the officials allegedly aligned against the Hilsman cable. They consider how U.S. forces and resources could help the Vietnamese generals overthrow Diem.<sup>5</sup> *Every* top administration official (with the exception of the outgoing U.S. ambassador) initially backed an eventual coup. The issue was proper alignment of South Vietnamese forces. At the first of these meetings, on

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<sup>5</sup> National Security Archive, “Kennedy Considered Supporting Coup in South Vietnam, August 1963,” Electronic Briefing Book no. 302, December 11, 2009. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB302/index.htm>.

August 26, 1963, the tone belies the conventional picture of officials infuriated at Hilsman—and they *did not even discuss* countermanding the supposedly insubordinate cable, whether the alleged end run had been made by Hilsman, Forrestal, or anyone else.

The coup came in early November. Historians widely agree that backing the coup locked the United States into the Vietnam conflict. Goldstein pointedly rejects this as a “questionable historical premise,” one “predicated on the expectation that U.S. policy would thereafter be driven by a sense of guilt” (95). This is interesting, but it is speculation, and it is unnecessary to infer guilt as motivator to arrive at the consensus analysis. It was Colin Powell who said—of Iraq, not Vietnam—that if we broke it, we would own it, and we have now been in Iraq for eight years and Afghanistan for nine. Equally to the point, in other places where the American bull charged through the china shop—Europe and Korea two decades *after* the Cold War, even Bosnia—U.S. troops remain. The instances where this is *not* the case are countries from which the United States was *ejected*—Somalia, Lebanon—or were sharp crisis interventions. Bundy himself came to that realization, as Goldstein quotes one of Bundy’s fragments: “You can begin with the presumptive negative, that we ought not to *ever* be in a position where we are deciding, or undertaking to decide, or even trying to influence, the internal power structure” of another nation (95).

The Diem coup is relevant to our previous discussion of the Kennedy withdrawal thesis. The meeting memos, tapes, decision documents, and public statements—the mass of records—show an American drive to pursue the conflict more efficiently. That was the way in which supporting a coup made any sense. An argument, though an awkward one, can be made that this goal might serve the cause of U.S. withdrawal, but there is a much more direct one that runs the other way. In his summation of JFK’s dedication to withdrawal, Goldstein quotes the president telling his advisers he would engineer it quite simply: “Put a government in there that will ask us to leave” (238). Diem, as it happens, had threatened to demand U.S. withdrawal on earlier occasions, and had developed sharp differences with Washington. Indeed, during the months before the coup his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu had organized crowds to protest at the American embassy, and U.S. intelligence knew Diem was pursuing contacts with North Vietnam. Kennedy could have attained his demand scenario simply by continuing the Diem dispute. Why back a coup at all?

An alternate path out of quagmire would have been accepting French proposals to neutralize Southeast Asia, so ably documented by Fredrik Logevall.<sup>6</sup> President Kennedy had little love for French President Charles de Gaulle and showed antipathy for French warnings, though his assassination left it to President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) to stonewall the French mediation. Either American president, had he been serious about

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<sup>6</sup> Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

withdrawal, could have stoked the path to negotiations. Neither did. Instead they planned an escalation by initiating covert operations against Hanoi. This was not just an artifact of LBJ's presidency. At the moment Kennedy was shot, Mac Bundy was just returning from a staff planning conference at Honolulu which designed these "graduated pressures." There was another NSAM involved here, one refined at Honolulu—already in draft before JFK's death—that would be issued by LBJ a few days after the tragedy. The main differences between the draft and final versions were to place more emphasis upon U.S. unilateral measures—again moving toward war rather than withdrawal. Andrew Preston deals with the resultant program (Goldstein barely touches on it)—the notorious OPLAN 34-A—but both could have elaborated on Bundy's specific role in its approval. Preston does more—mentioning both Bundy and Mike Forrestal—but regrettably the discussion is not fuller.

*Lessons in Disaster* takes 1964 as the year that "Politics is the Enemy of Strategy" (chapter 3). Goldstein's teaching is plain enough: Lyndon Johnson's fixation on winning election as president in his own right trumped any effort at a considered strategy for Vietnam. Tonkin Gulf was played a certain way, guerilla "spectaculars" were handled a certain way, to maximize LBJ's political clout. But that insight is limited and does not differ from what Daniel Ellsberg wrote in 1972. Rule Number One of Ellsberg's "Stalemate Machine" was "Do not lose the rest of Vietnam to Communist control before the next election."<sup>7</sup> The thing about that was it *required* a strategy. It was in 1964 that the Joint Chiefs of Staff created their target list for bombing North Vietnam. It was also then that an interagency committee laid plans for escalation and drafted the text for a congressional resolution that would hopefully provide a legal framework—and indeed at one point Goldstein has LBJ walk into Bundy's office and ask for the text (125-126). Johnson was not interested in Bundy's advice to think over his course, he simply demanded action. President Johnson had many misgivings about the war, as his own tapes make clear—and I have written elsewhere that Johnson should be viewed as ambivalent about this conflict<sup>8</sup>--but there can be no doubt that despite political preoccupations LBJ was perfectly aware that things were being done on Vietnam strategy. Perhaps a better formulation of Goldstein's aphorism would be that politics is the enemy of *good* strategy.

Mac Bundy's last full year in the White House was 1965, the time of the monumental decisions to bomb North Vietnam and to commit American troops to combat operations. Bundy's retrospective discomfiture at this whole evolution is apparent from *Lessons in Disaster*. But as both Goldstein and Preston make clear, the national security adviser functioned at the time as an effective ally of those who sought escalation. Bundy barred the Oval Office door to George Ball's dissent—Ball resorted to smuggling his papers to LBJ by the hand of Bill Moyers—and advised the president to listen hard to Ball and then

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), pp. 98-100, 105-110.

reject what he had to say. Goldstein records Bundy expressing certain doubts to McNamara and others, but to the president he wrote a paper explicitly knocking down Ball's most effective argument, an analogy to the French war in Indochina. Goldstein sees the year as emblematic of "conviction without rigor" and continues that this approach is a recipe for disaster, as indeed it is.

Ranging back over this history, several tragedies of Vietnam are well illuminated by using Bundy as prism. But there is another set of questions about agency which Andrew Preston engages more directly. He is concerned about the evolution of policymaking structure and focuses on the role of the security adviser and NSC staff. Preston is quite right to single out Bundy's tenure as a watershed for the governmental structure that generates U.S. policy (244). The national security adviser acquired a role as presidential counselor and operational facilitator at least as important as that of traffic cop outside the Oval Office, which is how Bundy liked to describe himself. Every one of Mac's successors has acted in the same fashion.

Under President Kennedy the NSC staff was transformed from a procedurally focused unit to a substance-oriented one where each professional staffer held responsibility for activity within a policy area. The phrase "Little State Department" has been used in connection with the Bundy staff, but where I think *The War Council* goes too far is in imputing to the Bundy staff an ability to supplant the bureaucracy and conduct a White House-based foreign policy. Briefly, Preston argues that the Bundy staff quickly became a policymaking center, concentrated power in the White House, and marginalized the State Department, with Lyndon Johnson later vesting even more power in McGeorge Bundy. Bundy and Michael Forrestal are pictured as "soft hawks," and fellows like Walt Rostow, Robert Komer, and Robert H. Johnson have supporting roles, first attempting to implement a counterinsurgency and nation building approach in Vietnam and then progressively shifting to force as the situation worsened. They did this by putting in their own hands the responsibility for major speeches, approval of cable traffic, the decision documents (in this case, NSAMs), and so on. Preston agrees that presidents themselves were the primary actors, but he credits the Bundy staff with institutional authority.

In my view this construction misconstrues the place of the national security adviser. Preston argues that institutional standing elevated McGeorge Bundy above the level of the president's personal aide and was thus a source of power. Yet, because the post of national security adviser *does not exist in law*, the adviser's *only* power flows from his relationship with the president. He serves at the pleasure of the president. This has been, at times, an advantage or a curse—LBJ is quoted in both books as voicing concern in 1965 that his national security adviser not be summoned to testify before Congress. Johnson spent political capital to ensure that Bundy never was called, but the ambiguity of the security adviser's status gave LBJ a case to argue. It was the opening of a chasm between Bundy and President Johnson that made Bundy's continued service increasingly difficult and led to his departure.

The same factor invalidates some of Gordon Goldstein's criticisms. He faults Bundy for not managing the president's advisers better (96) and for passing up "significant opportunity" to order a top-to-bottom review, an NSC "EXCOM" held over months, not days (137). But beyond Mike Forrestal, Bundy *had no authority* over the advisers—and when Forrestal was sent to State in 1964, it was LBJ, not Bundy, who did it. Fire Dean Rusk? McNamara? Not going to happen. And *their* subordinates were not in Mac's chain of command. Just what "institutional authority" did the security adviser have? As for a Vietnam EXCOM, the president's approval was required. If Lyndon Johnson wanted to avoid dealing with Vietnam in 1964, that was not going to be forthcoming. The national security adviser was, in fact, a creature of the president.

*The War Council* also minimizes the extent to which Eisenhower's NSC machinery had performed functions similar to those of the JFK era and it accelerates the point in time at which the NSC staff attained policy authority, as opposed to advisory and coordinating functions. With the Nixon-Ford, Carter, and Reagan presidencies and their successors, with staffs of 50 or 150 professionals and multiple office chiefs each holding the title "deputy assistant to the president for national security for (fill in the blank)," the NSC staff did acquire institutional strength. Indeed a foreign *operation* (the Iran-Contra affair) could be carried out from behind its doors. But in Bundy's day, when the names of the entire professional staff could be fitted on a single (and not large) rubber stamp for routing memoranda, it is too soon to speak of institutional authority. In addition there was a competing center of power within John Kennedy's own White House, the staff of General Maxwell Taylor as Special Military Representative of the President. Andrew Preston is actually quite sparse on the Taylor staff, as if he'd not quite decided how to fit it into his analysis.

My first contact with McGeorge Bundy illuminates how the White House role in setting policy by means of speechmaking did not originate in Kennedy's presidency. Bundy telephoned me one day to ask about something I had written in a study of American decisionmaking for the 1954 battle of Dien Bien Phu—that President Dwight D. Eisenhower had personally edited the text of a key John Foster Dulles speech (the "united action" speech) to make it more, not less, interventionist, in contrast to the view that Ike resisted action to enter the French war.<sup>9</sup> Preston notes, among other things, that the Bundy staff wrote all letters addressed to heads of state. But the Eisenhower White House reviewed the drafts of such letters for precisely the same reason. During the Dien Bien Phu crisis, Ike and his staff played the principal role in crafting a letter to Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill soliciting British support for intervention in the strongest possible

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<sup>9</sup> This was in the middle 1980s, when Bundy labored on the book he would publish as *Danger or Survival* (New York, Random House, 1988, p. 264). I told Bundy the speech was edited in Eisenhower's handwriting with text that was in the speech Dulles actually presented. Bundy, typically, checked with NSC secretaries and a former Eisenhower secretary who confirmed what I had said. The original statement appeared in *The Sky Would Fall* (New York: William Morrow, 1983), most recently republished as *Operation Vulture* (New York: iBooks, 2002, p. 112-113).

terms (making an explicit Munich analogy). Eisenhower's NSC files are stuffed with copies of State Department, Pentagon, and other cables, and Ike's NSC staff intervened on at least some of them. One of the outgoing staffers actually warned the Kennedy transition team to arrange early for receipt of cables.

Another assertion in *The War Council* is that the Bundy staff took over cable approvals throughout the government. In fact this control of cables emerges in the book as a major tool of NSC staff dominance. This is a considerable oversimplification. Having failed to clarify the matter of cable distribution early on, the Bundy staff discovered military cables which they had not seen. President Kennedy ordered all cables be copied to the NSC staff. The Pentagon installed half a dozen teleprinters in the Situation Room that flooded the White House with paper and filled Bundy's working space with infernal noise. There was zero possibility that a dozen professional staff could even read all that paper much less control the traffic. Bundy had all the teleprinters save one taken away.<sup>10</sup> What the Bundy staff received was a cross-section of key cables, while staffers kept feelers out to learn of other important ones. The NSC staff advocated certain cables be prepared in their given portfolio areas and *those* telegrams would be viewed in draft, critiqued, and sent back for reworking or dispatch. "Approval" pertained to only some of the traffic. Moreover, much of the approval was done directly by NSC principals, not staff.

The Diem coup and the "Hilsman cable" perfectly illustrate the realities of cable "approval." The Hilsman cable was critical because it contained a change of policy and *that* was why it needed review. The required concurrences were those of NSC principals and thus the paper chase. The NSC meeting tapes mentioned earlier also reflect top level discussions of cable language. Equally interesting, Kennedy's very last NSC session before the Diem coup took place (October 29, 1963) *centered on* principals' deliberations on language for a cable to Henry Cabot Lodge. The tape and a full transcription show exhaustive parsing of the text.<sup>11</sup>

These things are important to a nuanced view of the structure for policymaking during the Kennedy and Johnson years. Andrew Preston educates us on the inner workings of the NSC staff, and both Preston and Gordon Goldstein on the character and views of McGeorge Bundy. But presidents remained supreme. Both Kennedy and Johnson, in their own ways, worked like ship captains tacking among the shoals of political, policy, and programmatic interests. A good analogy for the system might be the president surrounded by a constellation of senior colleagues whose roles varied. The NSC principals were the presidents' executive collaborators but also occasional obstacles. The NSC staff

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<sup>10</sup> John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> John Prados, ed., *The White House Tapes: Eavesdropping on the President* (New York: The New Press, 2003), pp. 92-150 and CD disc 3. This set also contains copies of the draft language that was discussed as well as the final cable that was sent.

functioned as the president's operatives, giving expert advice, warning of impediments and consequences; identifying centers and individuals to whom presidents could reach out for allies, and setting up gambits that enabled JFK or LBJ to outmaneuver those who opposed their courses. *The War Council* shows all these kinds of activity. *Lessons in Disaster* demonstrates the impact of this on one main participant.

Were John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson well-served by their national security advisers and NSC staffs? McGeorge Bundy the adviser pushed a certain view of United States interests. Andrew Preston maintains that Bundy's advocacy emerged only over time. Walt Rostow was an advocate from day one. Subsequent presidents employed security advisers who have been, for the most part, advocates as well. There is a sense that this turned with the millennium, but the NSC role in the wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century still awaits analysis.

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