

Triumph Forsaken Roundtable *Review* Response from Mark Moyar



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Roundtable Editor: Thomas Maddux

Reviewers: Jessica Chapman, Lloyd Gardner, James McAllister, William Stueck

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Author's Response by Mark Moyar

I would like to express thanks to Professor Thomas Maddux for organizing this roundtable and to H-Diplo for hosting it. I would also like to thank the four commentators for their time and effort in writing the commentaries. With this response, I had hoped to concentrate on large historiographical questions and the broad ramifications of new histories of the Vietnam War. Some of the reviews, however, consisted primarily of accusations about the accuracy of my evidence and interpretations, and therefore in the interest of history the preponderance of this response must be devoted to refuting those charges. When working on the book, I anticipated most of the objections raised by the four reviewers and wrote the book in such a way as to counter them, but owing to space considerations, I did not specifically address all of them directly. This response therefore provides a good vehicle for defending the book more explicitly on certain counts.

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I will address the reviews one at a time, starting with Jessica Chapman's, which contains the greatest number of accusations. Near the beginning of the review, Chapman states that "the literature on the Vietnam Wars is vastly more complex and nuanced than [Moyar's] liberal orthodox/conservative revisionist dichotomy implies." I should begin by noting first, that this dichotomy is not something I created. David Anderson, Marc Jason Gilbert, Stephen Vlastos, and many other well-known scholars have accepted and analyzed this dichotomy. In *Triumph Forsaken*, moreover, I note that not every book fits into one category or the other. (xii) (All subsequent page references are from *Triumph Forsaken*) All of the major works that address the war's biggest questions—such as the merits of U.S. intervention and the viability of alternative American strategies—clearly can be placed within either the orthodox or revisionist groupings.

Chapman states, "I believe the historical profession welcomes solidly researched, well argued work of any ideological persuasion." This assertion is only partially correct. It accurately characterizes a significant portion of diplomatic and military historians—the fact that many scholars are discussing *Triumph Forsaken* seriously is evidence of that. But other diplomatic and military historians, such as David Anderson and Robert Buzzanco, have not been welcoming to books on Vietnam that diverge sharply from their views, as I discuss in the book's preface. More significantly, academic historians in most other fields have displayed an unwillingness to welcome research, such as mine, that directly challenges their ideological beliefs. Evidence can be found in the *New York Sun* of April 30, 2007, the *Dallas Observer* of May 24, and the *Cincinnati Enquirer* of June 7 and June 19.

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According to Chapman, “Moyar contributes little of substance to what he has termed the revisionist perspective.” The review by James McAllister, which calls *Triumph Forsaken* “an original work of scholarship that can rightfully claim to be the most consequential revisionist book ever produced on the Vietnam War,” does much to undermine Chapman’s assertion by enumerating some of the major original points in the book. Later, Chapman states, “rather than bringing up new veins of argument, [Moyar] revived a number of old debates that most scholars were all too happy to replace years ago with more sophisticated lines of inquiry.” She appears to believe that old debates are off limits. Chapman does not mention the military history in the book, which, as McAllister notes, provides a significant portion of the book’s original conclusions. As I pointed out in a recent journal article (“The Current State of Military History,” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, March 2007), military history can be far more complex than the uninitiated often believe. Some of the other sophisticated lines of inquiry that Chapman missed are the nature of conflict in Vietnamese history, Vietnamese political culture, the impact of the militant Buddhist movement, North Vietnamese strategy, American intelligence, and international opinion about Vietnam.

Chapman asserts, “Moyar’s sources consist mainly of heavily mined US archives.” Most of the US archives I used have, indeed, been used widely, since they are known to contain the most extensive collections of documents on the war. I was nevertheless able to obtain a great deal of new information from those archives by looking in new places or looking at old documents in new ways.

Chapman next states, “Despite his claim to have rooted his work in Vietnamese sources, he does not appear to read Vietnamese, and makes only limited use of Vietnamese materials in translation.” The suggestion that the book does not rely extensively on Vietnamese sources is untenable. In the endnotes can be found over two hundred citations of Vietnamese-language sources, many of which have never before been cited. I am not aware of any general history of the war that contains so many references to Vietnamese-language sources. Chapman also appears to fault me for not having spent time in archives in Vietnam. She is correct in noting that she, Edward Miller, Philip Catton, and Matthew Masur have done research in Vietnamese archives for extended periods of time. They have produced noteworthy works from this research, as I mention in *Triumph Forsaken*. What she fails to say is that most of the information presently available to foreign researchers in Vietnam is not relevant to the big questions of the Vietnam War, though this fact may be inferred from the absence of any statement from Chapman about specific information that would contradict my interpretations. As my endnotes attest, the works of Miller, Catton, and Masur (Chapman had not published any of her research by the time I finished *Triumph Forsaken*) contain only a handful of sources from the archives of Vietnam that illuminate the big picture in ways that other sources do not.

Chapman, and another reviewer, criticize me for relying on a translator in using Vietnamese sources. I do not see how reading voluminous translations from a world-class translator, Merle Pribbenow, is less effective than reading Vietnamese sources when the

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Vietnamese of many scholars is inferior to that of Pribbenow. A substantial number of other scholars of the Vietnam War, including some who read Vietnamese, have employed Mr. Pribbenow's translations because of their reliability, though I am not aware that any of them has been criticized for it as I have. No one has offered any evidence that the numerous translations Mr. Pribbenow provided me were inaccurate in any way.

One might expect a historian with Chapman's interests to welcome the introduction of so many new Vietnamese sources into the history of the Vietnam War, particularly since my Vietnamese sources offer many new insights into the thoughts and actions of the war's Vietnamese participants, which in turn help us evaluate American policy and strategy much more effectively. Most previous historians who have covered policy and strategy during the war have not used any such sources—for example, David Anderson, Larry Berman, Robert Buzzanco, George Herring, Michael Hunt, Seth Jacobs, Howard Jones, David Kaiser, Jeffrey Kimball, Fredrik Logevall (Chapman's dissertation advisor), Andrew Preston, and Robert Schulzinger. These historians have seldom been criticized for the absence of Vietnamese sources. They have received excellent book reviews and coveted prizes, and some have been rewarded with jobs at top universities. It is therefore very curious that Chapman tries to turn my use of Vietnamese sources into something negative.

Chapman alleges that I am guilty of "fragmentary and often questionable use of evidence," and charges that there is "a disturbing lack of critical analysis throughout the book." Those are serious charges, not to be made lightly. Yet Chapman provides little evidence to support them. She provides only five specific supporting points, and all are incorrect.

Chapman states the first of the five points as follows: "I would certainly welcome clarification from Moyar on why Vietnam was of such vital strategic importance to the United States in 1954." In *Triumph Forsaken* I do not state that Vietnam was of vital strategic importance in 1954. I note that Eisenhower did not consider Vietnam to be strategically vital in 1954. (27-8) Eisenhower had changed his views on the subject by 1961 (125), and later in 1961 Kennedy concluded that Vietnam was strategically vital (137-42), a conclusion that had considerable merit in my estimation.

Second, Chapman accuses me of inconsistency for accepting Ho Chi Minh's supplications to the Chinese as evidence that he was pro-Chinese while not accepting his entreaties to the United States as evidence of pro-American sentiments. Contrary to how Chapman expressed it, I did not rely primarily on Ho Chi Minh's overtures to China and the United States in analyzing his true sentiments. Rather, I studied Ho Chi Minh's actions, beliefs, and circumstances in depth to assess how he viewed the two powers. On many occasions, Ho Chi Minh professed that he had been inspired by Lenin, and his ideological writings and his actions as a national leader all show the influence of Lenin's ideology, including Lenin's internationalism. (8-10, 14) Ho repeatedly advocated temporary alliances with non-Communists against other non-Communists followed by destruction of the surviving non-Communists. (10, 14, 104) He never advocated destruction of other Communists (save for Trotskyites), whether foreign or domestic, and on numerous occasions he urged his followers to remember that they were not just fighting for their own country but for their

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fellow Communists across the world. (11, 83, 359) Ho lived in China for many years, serving in both the Comintern and the Chinese Communist Army. (9-11, 14-15) He never lived in the United States and never served in the U.S. government or army. During the Franco-Viet Minh War, Ho let Chinese leaders dictate strategy and revolutionary policy (22-3) and during that war and the war against the Americans, he invited Chinese troops onto Vietnamese soil. (27, 362-3) In the Sino-Soviet dispute, Ho usually stayed closer to the Chinese position while trying to get the two sides to patch up their differences in the spirit of international Communist solidarity. (60-61, 102, 138)

Third, Chapman contends that I depict “total unity” between the Chinese and North Vietnamese prior to 1963, and in this context asserts that I overlooked the works of Sophie Quinn-Judge, Ilya Gaiduk, Qiang Zhai, and Chen Jian. Chapman does not state specifically what pre-1963 problems between the Chinese and North Vietnamese I missed. If she is referring to the end of the Franco-Viet Minh War in 1954, that subject is addressed below. As far as the period between 1954 and 1963, I do spend considerable time describing amicable relations between China and North Vietnam and offer supporting evidence from a variety of sources. But disagreements also receive mention. I note that the land reform debacle caused the Vietnamese Communists to lose their veneration for radical Chinese policies (62), that in 1958 the Chinese refused a Vietnamese request to begin the armed insurrection (79), that the Chinese told the Vietnamese to limit the scale of the insurgency in 1960 (101-2) and again in 1961 (146). Concerning the contention that I overlooked Judge, Gaiduk, Zhai, and Jian, a quick look at the endnotes will show that I refer repeatedly to all four of these historians, frequently with respect to relations among the Communist countries.

Fourth, Chapman asserts, “Ho Chi Minh was at once a communist and a nationalist, a duality which has long been recognized to pose no contradiction.” In the book, I remark that Ho was a nationalist only in a very limited sense, noting that “Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist in the sense that he had a special affection for Vietnam’s people and favored Vietnamese unification and independence, but, from his reading of Lenin’s Theses onward, he firmly adhered to the Leninist principle that Communist nations should subordinate their interests to those of the international Communist movement.” (9) What is at issue is not the existence of Ho Chi Minh’s nationalism but its nature, for many Westerners have claimed that his nationalism was such that it would have caused him to turn against China had the United States been smarter, as Tito’s nationalism had caused Tito to turn against the Soviet Union. Lenin, Ho Chi Minh, and many other communists and non-communists recognized a fundamental contradiction between communism and a nationalism that put national interests before all else, for the communism of Lenin and Ho demanded that the national interests of Communist countries had to be subordinated to the interests of the world Communist movement. The issue is very clear-cut. Either Ho Chi Minh would have been willing to turn against China for nationalist reasons, or he would have been unwilling to turn against China because of Marxist-Leninist internationalism. The evidence strongly supports the latter.

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Fifth, Chapman contends that I did not produce compelling evidence that Diem was an effective leader. I find it hard to understand how she arrived at this conclusion, because the book is packed with information about Diem's effectiveness. The early chapters show how Diem consolidated control over a badly fractured country and defeated the underground Communists. The middle chapters show how Diem, after initial problems in countering the insurgency, led a very effective counterinsurgency effort in 1962 and 1963. The latter chapters show how the removal of Diem crippled South Vietnam's ability to fight the Communists. I provided an enormous amount of new information on the war in 1962 and 1963, much of it from Communist sources, showing how the South Vietnamese were winning the war. Chapman does nothing to show that any of this information is untrustworthy.

I find Lloyd Gardner's review to be significantly more insightful and productive than Chapman's. He uses his review to make some interesting observations about the book's implications, and to build upon some of the book's components to draw new conclusions. He does raise some objections to the book, each of which I will answer.

Gardner asserts that American policymakers and journalists disdained Diem's regime not because it was illiberal but because it was corrupt and economically inept. Yet Diem's chief American critics all laid great stress on Diem's unwillingness to liberalize. These Americans, as I note in the book, viewed liberalization as essential to improving the South Vietnamese government's performance in numerous areas—including not only combating corruption and bolstering the economy but also reducing public opposition and executing counterinsurgency programs and maintaining the approval of American onlookers. In 1954, Ambassador Heath introduced the complaints, often heard later, that Diem needed to "broaden" his government by bringing in people who were more representative of the population as a whole, and that he needed to give more authority to others. (43) Heath tried to get Diem to compromise with his enemies rather than vanquish them. (44) Heath's successor, J. Lawton Collins, pressured Diem to broaden the government, tolerate dissent, and compromise with his opponents. (45-8) In 1960, Ambassador Durbrow and other influential Americans faulted Diem for both illiberalism and ineffectiveness in prosecuting the war. Durbrow repeatedly pressed Diem to make liberal reforms, such as permitting the creation of an opposition political party, removing restrictions on the press, and giving more power to the national legislature. (105-8, 115) Concern about liberalization subsided in 1961 when Frederick Nolting became ambassador but returned in mid-1963 as Nolting was departing. Diem's detractors in 1963, such as Roger Hilsman, Averell Harriman, William Truehart, and Henry Cabot Lodge, contended that Diem's principal shortcoming was his heavy handedness in dealing with the Buddhists. They urged him to make conciliatory speeches, offer concessions to the Buddhist protesters, and release demonstrators who had been jailed. (218-25, 228, 236, 242, 244, 250, 260) The American press corps in Saigon shared these views. (214-6, 222, 233-4, 250-1).

Gardner quotes a 1959 National Intelligence Estimate that contends that North Vietnam's economic planning was superior to that of South Vietnam. At that time, Westerners had an overly optimistic view of the North Vietnamese economy because of false information

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issued by the North Vietnamese government. In the late 1950s, the North Vietnamese focused on industrial development while the South Vietnamese focused on agricultural development, based on advice from the Chinese and Americans, respectively. The Chinese and Soviets helped fund and construct North Vietnamese factories, but these factories performed poorly because of poor management and lack of skilled workers. Thanks to collectivization and the persecution of the former rural elites, North Vietnamese agriculture produced much less than South Vietnamese agriculture. (64, 73-4)

Gardner suggests that there exists a contradiction between my assertion that the Chinese threatened all of Southeast Asia in the early and mid-1960s and my assertion that the Chinese during the same period wanted to avoid war with the United States. But these two points can be reconciled, and in fact they are reconciled in the book. I state that Mao “was seeking to destroy Southeast Asia’s anti-Communist nations through subversion and pressure, avoiding the use of conventional forces so as not to produce another major war with the United States.” (138) Mao hoped that by supporting Communists in North Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries he could promote the spread of Communism without provoking an American attack on China. He did avoid an American attack on China and enjoyed success in spreading Communism in Indochina. Had the United States not intervened in Vietnam, he likely would have enjoyed success in Indonesia and a variety of other countries as well.

In Gardner’s view, Lyndon Johnson’s failure to get other countries to contribute ground troops to the war undermines my argument that other countries deeply feared the fall of South Vietnam. In truth, some of South Vietnam’s neighbors did make significant contributions. The Australians, who were more aggressive than the Americans in advocating foreign troop insertions, were the first foreign country besides the United States to send combat troops. (386) New Zealand, which had a large portion of its army in Malaysia helping the Malaysian armed forces, made a contribution that was significant in size for such a small country. (387) On their own initiative, the South Koreans sent a combat force that eventually reached a strength of 50,000. (384-5) The Thais sent troops to South Vietnam, and also sent troops into Laos to counter North Vietnamese forces. (383) Other countries wanted to send troops but did not send them because of external constraints. The United States rebuffed repeated Taiwanese offers of combat troops for fear that their deployment would be interpreted by the Chinese as a resumption of the Chinese Civil War (p. 384) The United States determined that the Philippine armed forces were too weak to send troops to Vietnam. (385) The Malaysians were not asked to provide troops because they had their hands full combating Indonesian guerrillas. (384)

Concerning an American invasion of North Vietnam, Gardner states, “Rather than isolating and cutting off the lifeline of the North Vietnamese, a more likely scenario would find the Americans without support among the populace and without allies in the wider world for such a move.” I argue against this claim on pp. 321-2. Gardner does not offer any justification for dismissing my points.

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William Stueck calls into question my assertion that the Viet Minh were in serious trouble at the time of Dien Bien Phu, and argues that unless the Communist forces at Dien Bien Phu had been annihilated, the Communists would have occupied a favorable military position across Indochina after the battle. He asserts that my argument is based primarily on Khrushchev's memoirs and Janos Radvanyi's book. The two endnotes supporting this interpretation (p. 426 notes 63 and 64) cite six different sources. One of the sources is a book by Ilya Gaiduk, for whom Stueck elsewhere expresses respect. Gaiduk portrays Dien Bien Phu in a way similar to my own. Two of the other sources, written by North Vietnamese leader Le Duan and North Vietnamese witness Bui Tin, show that the Viet Minh had sent most of their mobile armed forces to Dien Bien Phu, refuting the view that the Viet Minh had great numbers of troops elsewhere that would have pressed on to victory if the Dien Bien Phu attack failed. Just after completing *Triumph Forsaken*, I learned of the existence of newly available documents from the Communist side supporting the view that the Communists were in deep trouble in early 1954.

The early stages of Dien Bien Phu, contends Stueck, were very favorable for the Viet Minh, which he says casts doubt on Khrushchev's claim that the Viet Minh were in dire straits during the battle. Owing to space constraints, I did not get into the details of this battle in my book, but Communist sources, as well as some Western accounts, show that the Viet Minh did suffer major reverses in March 1954. A decade ago, Pierre Asselin revealed that the Viet Minh suffered a whopping 9,000 casualties in the first four days at Dien Bien Phu. Staggering losses, Asselin asserted, compelled the Viet Minh to turn away from the use of human wave tactics. (Pierre Asselin, "New Perspectives on Dien Bien Phu," *Explorations in Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall 1997)

Stueck faults me for not mentioning evidence presented by Qiang Zhai, Chen Jian, and Ilya Gaiduk showing that the Viet Minh leadership was upset in the middle of 1954 by Chinese and Soviet pressure for partition and for the withdrawal of forces from Laos and Cambodia. These authors do present some differences of opinion between the Vietnamese and the Chinese and Soviets on how Vietnam should be divided. But they also show that the Vietnamese expected Vietnam to be divided. The many other sources I cite on p. 427 in endnote 72 support this conclusion. Thus, the Vietnamese Communists did not, as has commonly been argued, want all of Vietnam in 1954 and hence did not believe that their allies had sold them out, which is the principal issue. The evidence shows the Viet Minh to have been junior partners who were completely willing to defer to the judgment of their respected senior partners in Beijing and Moscow, who after all had made the Viet Minh's battlefield victories possible.

Stueck also criticizes me for using multiple sources in a single endnote at the middle or end of a paragraph. Many other scholars of the Vietnam War, and many other historians, have done the same, which was why I cited sources in this manner. Examples of books on Vietnam that employ this type of citation include Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War* (University of California Press, 1999); Mark Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Howard Jones, *Death of a Generation* (Oxford University Press, 2003); Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam* (Duke University

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Press, 2004). I do not recall seeing any reviewers assert that these or other historians undermined their credibility by citing sources in this way.

According to Stueck, the October 5, 1964 conversation between Mao and the North Vietnamese does not unequivocally show what I say it shows, namely that the Chinese would not respond to an American invasion of North Vietnam by sending Chinese troops into North Vietnam. The notes of that conversation state that Mao told the North Vietnamese that if the Americans tried to invade North Vietnam's interior, "you may allow them to do so. You should pay attention to your strategy. You must not engage your main forces in a head-to-head confrontation with them, and must well maintain your main forces. My opinion is that so long as the green mountain is there, how can you ever lack firewood?" I believe that this statement makes clear that the Chinese did not plan to send combat troops to help the North Vietnamese fight the Americans in the event of an invasion. Had the Chinese intended to help fight, they surely would have referred to a joint strategy and talked about "we" instead of "you."

Both Stueck and James McAllister contend that my argument about China's unwillingness to fight the Americans in North Vietnam hinges on the October 5 conversation. Neither Stueck nor McAllister, nor Chen Jian for that matter, mentions another critical piece of evidence that I cite, Mao's remark to Edgar Snow in January 1965 that China would not fight outside its borders. (360-1) I cannot believe that Mao would have made such a comment insincerely, for I can see no benefit he would have expected by lying on this score. He could not have been trying to lure the Americans into North Vietnam and attack them there, for it would have been much more difficult to support Chinese troops on North Vietnamese territory than on Chinese territory.

Stueck also contests my argument that China's response to the bombing of North Vietnam in August 1964 demonstrated weakness. Before the Tonkin Gulf incidents, the Chinese clearly promised the North Vietnamese that they would strike back at the Americans if the Americans attacked North Vietnam, whether by air, land, or sea. (320) That the Chinese refrained from striking back certainly seems like weakness to me. A thorough CIA analysis of China's public responses to this event concluded that the Chinese emphasized that they would be restrained and that punishment would come from the Vietnamese rather than the Chinese, both of which the CIA believed were intended to prevent the Americans from hitting China. (480 note 55) Right after the August bombing attack on North Vietnam, Mao began developing industry in western and southwestern China, out of fear that the Americans would invade China and compel him to retreat westward. Clearly he was primarily concerned with defending China rather than defending Vietnam; attempting to fight with Chinese forces in Vietnam was incompatible, logically and logistically, with a Chinese Communist retreat from eastern China.

Stueck maintains that I overlooked the logistical challenges involved in putting U.S. forces into North Vietnam or Laos and that these challenges would have been very difficult to overcome, if not insurmountable. In *Triumph Forsaken*, I did not discuss the logistics of an invasion of North Vietnam because it did not seem necessary. In the 1960s, the United

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States was the world's greatest air and naval power and possessed the ability to land huge numbers of troops amphibiously and by air. As the North Vietnamese and Chinese had agreed explicitly on October 5, 1964, the North Vietnamese did not intend to try keeping the Americans out of North Vietnam but instead planned to retreat from the coast and engage in guerrilla attacks rather than large conventional battles. It was a wise plan on their part, for American naval and air power would have pulverized North Vietnamese ground forces had they tried to stand firm on the coasts or a fight big battles elsewhere. Once in control of the North Vietnamese coast, the United States would not have had much trouble bringing supplies in by sea. The French had been able to sustain a war against the Viet Minh with far fewer naval resources. Mao's October 5 warning to the North Vietnamese to avoid a main force showdown, moreover, implies that the Communists believed that the Americans could maintain large conventional forces in North Vietnam. With respect to Laos, I do discuss the logistical feasibility of severing the Ho Chi Minh Trail (322-4 and 481, notes 64 and 65)

In Stueck's view, the spread of Communism across Asia would not necessarily have cut off American trade with Asia. It is an interesting point, and one upon which I perhaps should have elaborated in *Triumph Forsaken*. Asian countries taken over by Communists in the mid-1960s might well have chosen to stop trading with the United States because of hatred of capitalists and capitalism, as North Vietnam did in 1954. Or they might have caused the United States to stop trading with them by nationalizing American businesses, as Cuba did in 1960. Indonesia and Cambodia may offer insights into what would have happened in countries like Thailand where non-Communist governments probably would have bent to the will of China rather than being overthrown right away, since Indonesia and Cambodia were drawing close to China in 1964 and 1965. During those two years, the Indonesian and Cambodian governments became openly hostile to the United States, renounced American aid, confiscated American and other foreign businesses, and increased trade with China. Asian countries like Japan that might have moved to neutralism in 1965, rather than complete subservience to China, probably would have been more inclined to maintain some trade with the United States, but in the long term Chinese pressure might have compelled them to cut back on this commerce. One could argue that the ultimate futility of communism eventually would have led the countries of Asia to abandon socialist economic practices. But even if they did move toward capitalism as China eventually did, the United States might not have benefited because those countries might have erected trade barriers against the West, with Chinese encouragement or pressure.

Stueck argues that had Johnson withdrawn from Vietnam in 1965, the United States could have prevented other countries of Asia—including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, and Singapore—from falling to Communism by increasing American commitments, through military alliances or the stationing of troops. He also says that these countries would have been loath to abandon the protection afforded by friendship with the United States. In the case of Japan, American Ambassador Edwin Reischauer—far from a Cold War hawk—predicted that the Japanese would turn toward neutralism and abandon U.S. protection if the American suffered defeat in Vietnam. (388) Neutralism was a serious threat in the Philippines and Thailand both in 1961, when

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Kennedy was pondering his options, and in 1965. (139-41, 382-3, 385) Those two countries and Malaya and Singapore seemed very unlikely to have confidence in any U.S. offers of commitment if the Americans let South Vietnam go after committing to its defense through SEATO, lavishing it with money and advisers, and expressing support for South Vietnam's defense on repeated occasions. Why antagonize Beijing and Hanoi and invite war by strengthening relations with Washington, when the Americans might decide to bail out at any time and expose their erstwhile allies to Communist retribution? Furthermore, making a stand in one of those countries would have been more difficult than making a stand in Vietnam. (389-90) South Korea and Taiwan would have been less likely to turn away from the United States in the short term, but from a strategic point of view South Korea and Taiwan were not worth nearly as much as other Southeast Asian countries. As I state in the book, we cannot pretend to be certain about what would have happened had South Vietnam fallen, but we can talk about probabilities and the evidence indicates that for many dominoes the probability of falling was high.

Stueck contends that the U.S. stand in Vietnam may have had little impact on the Indonesian military's overthrow of Sukarno and the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party in late 1965 because "it is far from clear that the conservative military, if given support by the United States, would have done anything other than what it actually did in the fall of 1965, namely purge the Communists and overthrow the increasingly leftist regime of Sukarno. What, after all, would they have preferred to rely upon, the good will of the Communists if they seized power or the immediate assistance of the United States?" Much evidence shows that the Indonesian military would have acted differently had the United States abandoned Vietnam in 1965. (380-2) Had the United States abandoned South Vietnam in 1965, some additional elements of the Indonesian military might well have joined forces with the rebels or Sukarno during the coup attempt. Or if the coup had been thwarted, the generals might have avoided easing Sukarno out of power in the months afterward, in the belief that Sukarno would fare better in dealing with the Chinese than would the generals, and had Sukarno remained in power Indonesia would have remained a friend of China and an enemy of the United States.

Had South Vietnam fallen in 1965, Stueck argues, the Chinese and North Vietnamese might not have worked well together in spreading Communism elsewhere in Southeast Asia, and they might have had trouble consolidating South Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries. I do not see reason to believe that relations between China and North Vietnam would have soured in 1965 as they did in later years. America's intervention in Vietnam did much to drive the two countries apart. The war forced the North Vietnamese to become reliant on the Soviet Union, which made the Chinese suspicious of the North Vietnamese. (361-2) The Cultural Revolution and China's accompanying turn away from foreign affairs were influenced by Chinese setbacks in Vietnam and Indonesia; the precise nature of this influence is something I will explore in volume two of *Triumph Forsaken*. North Vietnam and China had different leaders in 1965 than they did when they turned against each other; I very much doubt that relations between them would have deteriorated badly prior to Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969. Frictions might have occurred later as new leaders took power, but I think Vietnam would have remained a partner of

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China in terms of foreign policy as has historically been the case and as is the case today. The 1979 war between North Vietnam and China, in my view, was an aberration that arose from problems created by American intervention in Vietnam.

As stated above, James McAllister devotes a portion of his review to discussing the book's originality. I find his comparison of *Triumph Forsaken* with other revisionist works to be particularly incisive. In critiquing the book, McAllister states that because I assert that Johnson had good cause to refuse invading North Vietnam in late 1964 and early 1965, I differ little from other historians on that issue. It is true that I largely absolve Johnson for not invading North Vietnam during those months, but for a different reason than other historians—the failure of American intelligence to predict Hanoi's change in strategy. (322) In addition, I differ from others in arguing that Johnson bears some responsibility for the Chinese decision in March 1965 to deploy Chinese troops to North Vietnam. The restraints he placed on the bombing of the North and his repeated professions that he did not plan to conquer North Vietnam and China gave the Chinese grounds to conclude that Chinese troops sent to North Vietnam would not get into a fight with American troops. So too did the manner in which he deployed the first U.S. troops, although this behavior is more excusable because of the inadequacy of American intelligence. I am also the first to argue that even after the Chinese troops were deployed, they might still have retreated in the face of an American invasion rather than stay and fight, considering that once the troops began arriving the Chinese stated on several occasions that they would fight the Americans only if they attacked China itself. (413)

McAllister disputes my assertion that Tri Quang was likely to have been a Communist agent. He contends that the evidence of Tri Quang's Communist affiliation presented in *Triumph Forsaken* is no more convincing than what Marguerite Higgins presented in her 1965 book *Our Vietnam Nightmare*. First, it must be said that Higgins presented some important, and wrongfully neglected, evidence. My research shows that Higgins's work was more accurate than that of David Halberstam or Neil Sheehan; the fact that she has largely been forgotten while Halberstam and Sheehan have become iconic figures reflects the biases of many who have written about Vietnam. Higgins revealed, among other things, that Tri Quang's brother was a senior North Vietnamese official, and that Tri Quang had at one time belonged to the Viet Minh. State Department and CIA documents from 1963 and 1964 confirm that Tri Quang acknowledged both of these facts to be true. (458 note 59) In addition, Higgins reported that Tri Quang had said that Buddhism and Communism were compatible. I also incorporate some evidence not used by Higgins. During the 1963 crisis, Tri Quang advocated collaboration with the Communists, and in 1964 some of Tri Quang's followers turned against him and declared him to be a Communist. (218) In 1964 and 1965, Tri Quang frequently used false charges of wrongdoing to demand that the Saigon government remove some of the best anti-Communist officers. (317, 319, 364, 394) Tri Quang had ties to the People's Revolutionary Committees established in Annam in 1964, which were viewed by many as tools of the Communists. (317) Tran Van Huong, like Diem, believed Tri Quang was an accomplice of the Communists, and both Huong and Diem knew more about Vietnamese politics than any Americans. (334) Furthermore, *Triumph Forsaken* is the first history to provide evidence from North Vietnamese sources of extensive

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Communist participation in the Buddhist movement in 1963, evidence that none of the reviewers has disputed. (217, 231) Let us imagine that a present-day American critic of U.S. government policy toward Muslims was found to be the brother of a senior Al Qaeda official, that he admitted to having belonged to Al Qaeda in the past, that he declared that all good Muslims should cooperate with Al Qaeda in toppling the Bush administration, that some of his closest associates later said he still belonged to Al Qaeda, that he made absurd charges of discrimination against the best American anti-terrorism officials, that many of his American followers were actually Al Qaeda operatives, and that his actions led to a drastic weakening of American actions against Al Qaeda. Would one not have strong suspicions that such an individual was a member of Al Qaeda?

McAllister asserts that American analysts at the time believed that Tri Quang was not a Communist. Some American officials actually did think he was working with the Communists. (317) It is true that contemporary American intelligence analysts concluded that Tri Quang was not a Communist agent, though the CIA acknowledged that its assertions about Tri Quang's affiliation were very subjective. CIA analysts did not have access to all of the information, and I think they did not show very good judgment in this instance. They were far from infallible—as noted above, the CIA was also spectacularly wrong about North Vietnamese intentions in late 1964 and early 1965. American intelligence analysts did not believe that Pham Xuan An was a Communist agent, which we now know he was. Identifying a secret agent is a difficult business and the inability to spot an agent at the time is not a very good indicator of that person's status.

McAllister asserts that Tri Quang was “very anti-communist and privately supportive of aggressive American military actions against the North.” On a variety of occasions, Tri Quang displayed a clear lack of anti-Communism. As mentioned above, Tri Quang advocated collaboration with the Communists in 1963 and he later made absurd demands for the removal of fiercely anti-Communist officials. In August 1964, Tri Quang threatened to abandon the anti-Communist struggle unless Diemist elements were purged from the government. (316) In early 1965, Tri Quang publicly called for negotiations between Hanoi and Washington, which was widely interpreted to mean that he wanted the United States to cave in, since negotiations at this point would likely end with nothing better than a neutral regime in the South that would be highly vulnerable to Communist predations. (366) McAllister is correct in noting that Tri Quang did tell the Americans repeatedly that they should take aggressive actions against North Vietnam, but such statements may well have been an effort to increase his credibility with the Americans, which is how some observers viewed them at the time. It is very doubtful that Tri Quang, or the people for whom he may have been working, believed that his recommendations would influence America's policy toward North Vietnam. Lastly, sizable portions of my chapters on 1963 to 1965 show that Tri Quang's actions greatly advanced the cause of the Communists. The Communists could not have had a better agent. In the end, what is most important is not whether Tri Quang was taking orders from Hanoi but whether he did tremendous harm to the South Vietnamese government. I spend much time showing that he did such harm, and this aspect of the book—another of its important findings—has not been questioned.

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McAllister states, “The communists, both during and after the war, certainly saw [Tri Quang] as an irreconcilable enemy rather than as a partner.” To support this view, he cites a Communist document from late 1966 which denounces Tri Quang. This document is interesting and significant, but it does not prove that Tri Quang was not a Communist. It is likely that most North Vietnamese officials, including the author of this document, would not have been informed if Tri Quang was working secretly for North Vietnam. Extraordinarily tight security procedures would have been followed with such a profoundly important agent. The date of the document in question comes well after the events I describe in *Triumph Forsaken*, and after the showdown between the Buddhists and the government in the spring of 1966, and it is possible that the Communists parted ways with Tri Quang sometime between the end of *Triumph Forsaken* and late 1966. I have not yet studied the Buddhist troubles of 1966; as I work on volume two of *Triumph Forsaken* I will explore this issue further. How the Communists treated Tri Quang after the war is not entirely clear. (458 note 63) But even if they were not kind to him we cannot conclude that it meant he had not served the Communists—the North Vietnamese maltreated numerous South Vietnamese Communists after the fall of Saigon.

The commentaries have proven useful by highlighting some questions worthy of special scrutiny during my work on volume two. They have also afforded me an opportunity to eliminate misperceptions and refute criticisms that are likely to arise in the minds of other historians. It is my hope that this exchange will continue to increase serious consideration of new interpretations of the Vietnam War.

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