

## Triumph Forsaken Roundtable Review



Reviewed Work:

**Mark Moyar.** *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965.* New York: Cambridge University Press, August 2006. ISBN-13: 9780521869119; ISBN-10: 0521869110 (hardcover). ISBN-13: 9780511243561 (eBook).

Roundtable Editor: Thomas Maddux

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

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 **ROUNDTABLE** *Review*

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**Contents**

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge .....	2
Review by Jessica Chapman, University of California, Santa Barbara.....	5
Review by Lloyd Gardner, Rutgers University .....	9
Review by James McAllister, Williams College.....	15
Review by William Stueck, University of Georgia .....	21
Author's Response by Mark Moyar .....	28

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**Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge**

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**M**ark Moyar's *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* offers the most sustained challenge to the general consensus among U.S. diplomatic historians concerning the Vietnam conflict. As the first of a projected two-volume study, the book focuses on the period through President Lyndon Baines Johnson's decisions by July 1965 to bomb North Vietnam and commit American ground troops to combat against the North Vietnamese regular forces and the Viet Cong insurgents. Moyar's ninety pages of notes attest to extensive research in U.S. published and unpublished records, the memoir and secondary literature, and translated documents and publications from the North Vietnamese perspective.

From the start in his brief introduction on the Vietnamese background and the Geneva Accords in 1954, Moyar offers a revisionist perspective with some issues receiving extensive development such as the nature of the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, its effectiveness in establishing control in South Vietnam and dealing with the insurgency after 1957, and the U.S.-backed coup to remove him in 1963. On these questions Moyar provides an extensive review of the different perspectives presented by U.S. journalists in South Vietnam, the American military advisers working with ARVN (the Army of the Republic of Vietnam), assessments by State Department officials and Central Intelligence evaluations, memoirs by South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese reports on the status of the conflict. Other issues such as the feasibility and wisdom of sending ARVN and U.S. forces into Laos and North Vietnam to disrupt Hanoi's movement of troops and supplies to South Vietnam are developed in less depth. Some of the issues are "what if" questions such as the impact of an earlier, and more extensive American military escalation, or the possible effects of a U.S. decision to negotiate a withdrawal from Vietnam on Southeast Asia, and American relationships with major Asian allies and countries such as Indonesia and India.

The reviewers appreciate Moyar's effort and his willingness to rethink and challenge the existing scholarship on many of the major issues. They do disagree with Moyar on a number of his most important issues. Moyar provides a detailed rebuttal to many of their reservations and disagreements that should provide an opportunity for further discussion and stimulate further research and revision. Some of the disputed issues are as follows:

1.) The reviewers do not question Moyar's depiction of the Vietnamese heritage of disunity and nearly a thousand years of Chinese hegemony, as well as Ho Chi Minh's long-term relationship with the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong. Moyar, however, is challenged with respect to the assessments of Qiang Zhai, Chen Jian, and Ilya V. Gaiduk on Ho Chi Minh's relationship with the major communist powers (9-11), and on his maneuvering with his communist allies before and during the Geneva Conference. Moyar suggests that President Dwight Eisenhower failed to realize that the French and their Vietnamese allies "were on the verge of crushing the Viet Minh in early 1954" and declined to support the French at Dien Bien Phu with U.S. airpower: "while bombing could not have wiped out all of the Viet Minh forces at Dien Bien Phu, it almost certainly would have thwarted their attack—both

by reducing their numbers and cutting their supply lines at key chokepoints—and it would have left them with a sharply reduced capacity for large-unit warfare throughout Indochina.” (28-29)

2.) Moyar depicts Diem as an increasingly successful leader considering the situation when he took over in 1954 and faced immediate French hostility, the presence of Viet Minh who did not relocate to the North, the Catholic refugees migrating from the North, the problem of dealing with the religious sects, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hoa, and the Binh Xuyen in Saigon. As long as Washington resisted the desire to pressure Diem to manage his problems like an American democratic politician, Moyar’s Diem is an active leader, successful interacting with the people in the villages, carrying out land reform, and implementing successful anti-communist campaigns to dig out the Viet Minh cadre, and developing a conventional force in ARVN as well as village-based forces. Moyar does note that all of Diem’s programs were handicapped by his reliance on Vietnamese administrators from the French colonial period, and only gradually did Diem get newly trained officials to take over. (64-72) Recent assessments on Diem, however, disagree significantly with this overview.

3.) Regarding the emergence of the Viet Cong insurgency in 1957, Moyar vigorously challenges the view presented by some American journalists in Vietnam led by David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan, by military advisers such as John Paul Vann and other U.S. officials, as well as many scholars that the Viet Cong steadily made progress against Diem’s various forces from Civil Guard and Self Defense forces to ARVN. Moyar describes more of an ebb and flow in the conflict, with Diem adjusting to the Viet Cong attacks and almost driving them out of the villages at the end of 1959. (85-86) However, a Hanoi shift from large-scale attacks to a rural insurgency with infiltration of new, well-trained cadres from the north led to the undermining of GVN (the Government of the Republic of Vietnam) in the villages and the creation of a shadow Viet Cong government. With the arrival of increased U.S. aid under John F. Kennedy, advisers, helicopters, and M-113s, Moyar suggests that the initiative shifted back to Diem with the coming on line of a new generation of post-colonial Diem administrators and the strategic hamlet program. Moyar concludes that Diem halted the decline, and despite mounting criticism from some American journalists, continued to achieve gains in the counterinsurgency campaign right into November 1963. Moyar marshals substantial evidence to support this interpretation, however, he notes disagreement with this view from U.S. observers, officials, and most scholars.

4.) None of the reviewers challenge Moyar’s critical assessment on the events leading up to the overthrow and assassination of Diem in November 1963. The Kennedy administration is depicted as divided on whether or not to approve a coup by ARVN leaders, and the new Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge emerges as the main manipulator in Saigon, acting at times without Washington’s knowledge or against Kennedy’s instructions. Nevertheless, the reviewers decline to defend Washington’s involvement, although some suggest that the key consideration for Washington was whether or not Diem was an effective leader with

respect to the insurgency. They question Moyar's emphasis on increasing American demands that Diem act like an American leader and negotiate compromises with the Buddhists and other dissident groups.

5.) The main disagreement between Moyar and the reviewers on LBJ focuses on the wisdom of trying diplomacy to negotiate over Vietnam or on Moyar's preference for escalating sooner, harder, and into Laos and North Vietnam. Several reviewers suggest negotiations would have been preferable to what ensued and that Richard Nixon's turn to détente with the Soviet Union and China and negotiations on Vietnam suggest a possible alternative. Moyar rejects this alternative on the grounds that the most important consideration for LBJ and his advisers was to keep China and a communist Vietnam from spreading communism and their influence further in Southeast Asia and weakening the U.S. relationship with many of its major Asian allies. Thus, Moyar revives the domino theory and develops its potential impact in depth. (290-292), 375-391)

6.) The reviewers are not persuaded by Moyar's thesis that a firmer response by LBJ in 1964 might have prompted Hanoi to reconsider its decision to start sending regular North Vietnamese army units to the south (325-329); that firmness in the form of sustained bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trails in Laos as well as North Vietnam might have prompted China to back off on support to Hanoi (321); and that ultimately in 1965 Washington needed to hit North Vietnam hard with sustained bombing and interdict the supply lines in Laos as well as North Vietnam. (348, 360-361) Moyar's recommendation probably require a separate "what if" study that discusses the availability of U.S. forces and logistics to carry out his suggestions as well as the likely impact elsewhere in Vietnam if U.S. forces are directed to these tasks. Finally, there is always a reaction in the Vietnam conflict from Hanoi and its allies, which would have to be considered.

7.) Moyar's suggestion that a window of opportunity existed to persuade China to let Hanoi fend for itself against U.S. escalation is also disputed. Moyar argues that China shifted from an August 1964 stance of declining a commitment to support North Vietnam against a direct American attack to increasing assistance by March 1965 including troops for road construction and increased arms. (360-363) Several of the reviewers conclude that Moyar has rejected assessments by China specialists such as Chen Jian, Quang Zhai and Xioming Zhang that Mao had laid down a line of defending North Vietnam against U.S. troops since 1962. The memory of what happened in Korea, as Moyar admits, made LBJ very cautious with respect to actions that might precipitate a Chinese intervention.

—Tom Maddux

## Triumph Forsaken Roundtable

2 July 2007

Review by Jessica Chapman, University of California, Santa Barbara

**T***riumph Forsaken* is the first installment in Mark Moyar's ambitious two-volume reinterpretation of America's Vietnam War. He seeks to overturn the predominant scholarly view that, in his words, deems U.S. policy "wrongheaded and unjust" (ix). On the contrary, Moyar argues, American intervention in Vietnam was necessary, as it was based on an accurate assessment of monolithic Sino-Vietnamese Communist aggression during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In his view, the U.S. commitment to oppose Ho Chi Minh, a dyed in the wool Marxist-Leninist and a diehard of international communism, was wise under the geopolitical circumstances of the Cold War. Moreover, Moyar claims, "South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, who has been incessantly depicted as an obtuse, tyrannical reactionary by orthodox historians, was in reality a very wise and effective leader" (xiv). According to Moyar Washington's mistake was not in supporting Diem, but in turning against him and allowing the military coup to take place in 1963. He insists that Diem was winning the war in the countryside up until his death, and that even the infamous Buddhist crisis did little to discredit the President in the eyes of his countrymen until the United States began to express concern over his leadership. Washington's doubts, according to Moyar, were generated almost entirely by an unpatriotic press corps led by David Halberstam. Halberstam, writes Moyar, "would do more to harm to the interests of the United States than any other journalist in American history" (170). In fact, Moyar argues, negative perceptions of Diem, and of America's policy of supporting him, which persist to this day, were inspired almost single-handedly by a handful of ill-informed pessimists in the press.

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Moyar frames his book as a challenge to the predominant "orthodox" interpretation of American involvement in Vietnam. In his view, orthodox historians have closed the fundamental issues of the Vietnam War to further debate. Moyar writes, "Some prominent orthodox scholars have gone so far as to claim that revisionists are not historians at all, but ideologues, a claim that is indicative of a larger, very harmful trend in American universities whereby haughty derision and ostracism are used against those whose work calls into question the reigning ideological orthodoxy, stifling debate and leading to defects and gaps in scholarship of the sort found in the historical literature on the Vietnam War" (xii). Moyar is correct to note that scholars are not immune to ideological bias and closed mindedness, though the literature on the Vietnam Wars is vastly more complex and nuanced than his liberal orthodox/conservative revisionist dichotomy implies. As he points out, revisionists like Harry Summers, A.J. Dommen, and others have already posed challenges to the predominant view of America's war in Vietnam, and I believe the

2 July 2007

historical profession welcomes solidly researched, well argued work of any ideological persuasion. On final analysis, though, Moyar contributes little of substance to what he has termed the revisionist perspective. If anything, his consistent overstatement of the originality and importance of his arguments, his fragmentary and often questionable use of evidence, and his easily discredited attacks on well-respected, rigorous scholars, merely validate the orthodox view, perhaps undeservedly, and does a great disservice to the complexity of Vietnam's recent history and to the story of American involvement there.

Moyar asserts that his book "differs from all of the existing literature in its breadth of coverage both inside and outside the two Vietnams and in its use of a more comprehensive collection of source material" (xiii). In fact, Moyar's sources consist mainly of heavily-mined U.S. archives, and he often cites documents or fragments of documents that are by no means representative of the sources available. Despite his claims 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. This is particularly ironic coming at a time when growing numbers of students and scholars are busy mining the rich archival materials available in Vietnam with an eye toward producing a fuller view of that country's recent history.

One of Moyar's stated goals in this volume is to revive the well-worn debate over whether Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist or a communist. He puts the Viet Minh leader squarely in the latter camp. "Contrary to widely accepted interpretations," writes Moyar, "he never would have turned against his Chinese communist neighbors, or any other communist countries, had the United States allowed him to unify Vietnam" (xiv). In drawing this conclusion, he accepts unquestioningly the accuracy of Washington's perceptions of the global communist threat. I would certainly welcome clarification from Moyar on why Vietnam was of such vital strategic importance to the United States in 1954, as most evidence seems to suggest that its value as a non-communist state was more symbolic than real. In addition, Moyar's discussion of Ho Chi Minh's diplomacy would benefit from additional research and analysis. While he recognizes Ho's penchant for political manipulation, and for playing his potential allies off of one another, he concludes that Ho's overtures to the United States were duplicitous while his supplications to China were genuine. Moyar takes Ho's statements of loyalty towards the Chinese at face value while dismissing the leader's friendly advances to the United States as subterfuge. Referring to Ho's well known statement, "It is better to sniff French shit for a while than to eat Chinese shit all our lives," Moyar writes, "Ho generally liked the Chinese as a people... It could easily have been an attempt to trick his Western adversaries into thinking that there were not strong ties between the Vietnamese and Chinese Communists" (9-10). Moreover, he concludes, "Ho had manipulated many past adversaries with false offers of friendship, so the idea of hoodwinking the Americans with pretended amicability came readily to him" (17). Moyar provides no satisfactory explanation for how he distinguished Ho's true inclinations from his rhetoric, which points to a disturbing lack of critical analysis throughout the book.

2 July 2007

In arguing for total unity in the Sino-Vietnamese Communist bloc prior to 1963, Moyar overlooks an emerging body of scholarship, based in rich international archives, that illuminates the fragmentary, contentious nature of international communism throughout the Cold War. Historians like Sophie Quinn-Judge, Ilya Gaiduk, Qiang Zhai, Chen Jian, and others have demonstrated that inter-state tensions always existed among communist powers, and the relationship between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) proved no exception. Ho Chi Minh was at once a communist and a nationalist, a duality which has long been recognized to pose no contradiction. Additional scholarship on Ho Chi Minh and the DRV is certainly necessary and welcome, but Moyar's book contributes little to our current understanding of the North Vietnamese state and the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

Another of Moyar's arguments, stemming from his core assumption that the defense of South Vietnam was vital to Washington's strategic interests, is that Ngo Dinh Diem was an effective leader, and that his overthrow in 1963 "forfeited the tremendous gains of the preceding nine years and plunged the country into an extended period of instability and weakness" (xxiii). While Moyar does recognize Diem's many shortcomings, he dismisses them as necessities of circumstance. He claims that "the Vietnamese masses of the mid-twentieth century were not seeking a leader whose ideas appealed to them, but a strong and charismatic leader who would organize the people, protect them, and treat them justly" (37). He recasts Diem's short-term ability to stifle dissent, usually cited as evidence for authoritarianism, as a sign of the President's ability to lead a vital non-communist Vietnamese state. Recent works by Edward Miller, Philip Catton, Matthew Masur, and me have begun to complicate previous depictions of Diem as a mere puppet of the United States, but archival sources have yet to support the conclusion that he was an effective popular leader. Moyar apparently did no direct research in Vietnamese sources to support his view, and his argument that Diem was a successful strongman is not a novel contribution to existing literature on the subject.

One of the most troubling aspects of Moyar's work, relative to his treatment of Diem, is his monolithic representation of the "Vietnamese masses." He describes the people of Vietnam, particularly peasants, as a coherent bloc with singular wishes and goals. On the contrary, the country was and still is ethnically, religiously, ideologically, politically, regionally, and socio-economically diverse. I encourage him to consider this pluralism as he revisits his conclusions and moves on to future projects. As it stands, his reductionist depiction of the Vietnamese people constitutes a step backwards, rather than forwards, in the historiography of the Vietnam Wars.

Moyar should be commended for his willingness to challenge the overwhelming majority of scholars in his field. He took on an ambitious project, attempting to cover ten years of America's Vietnam War with attention to all of the major parties involved. However, perhaps it was his effort to provide such great detail that prevented him from analyzing any single element of his argument in sufficient depth. Rather than bringing up new veins of discussion, he revived a number of old debates that most scholars were all too happy to



## ***Triumph Forsaken Roundtable***

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2 July 2007

replace years ago with more sophisticated lines of inquiry. I hope Moyer will continue his work and search for new ways to foster dialogue and academic cooperation between scholars of various political perspectives. Doubtless, literature on the Vietnam War, as any other subject, will benefit from such diversity.

### Review by Lloyd Gardner, Rutgers University

#### REFIGHTING VIETNAM – ‘TIL WE WIN!

No one can have any doubts after reading *Triumph Forsaken* about where Mark Moyar stands. There are no shades of grey here. The book is for those who like their Cold War history straight—no mixer to dilute the story. It is a book that challenges the orthodox (according to Moyar) view of a “defeat” he believes did not have to happen. The ultimate outcome in Vietnam, he argues, was foreshadowed by two disastrous decisions: first, the American-abetted *coup* against Diem in 1963 that unleashed a plague of incompetent generals and self-serving Buddhist monks, and, second, the failure to move north in the next two years with limited ground forces to cut off the enemy from his source of supplies.

The man most responsible for the first decision, Moyar asserts, was Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican appointed by JFK in order to spread the responsibility around should things go bad. It was a horrible decision from the get-go, because Lodge enjoyed undue freedom of action by the very nature of an appointment designed to ward off another “who lost China” debacle. The history of Henry Cabot Lodge in Vietnam has been told many times. No one doubts his crucial role. One account, which has a certain similarity to Moyar’s, is the novel by the Australian writer, Morris West, entitled simply, *The Ambassador*. West’s fictional Lodge comes to Vietnam filled with New England certainty about all things great and small. He acts out of that background rather than any sense of the consequences. He regrets his role in the overthrow of the Vietnamese leader, and indeed suffers a breakdown as a result. Moyar’s Lodge similarly puts his judgment against that of military men and others with a keener sense of Vietnamese politics. When Diem will not kowtow to his demands, the ambassador turns against him and plots his demise. But afterwards in real life, Lodge had no regrets and indeed became one of the leading hawks in the LBJ years. His role on the first Council of Wisemen in 1965 was to dismiss all arguments about whether the South Vietnamese would object to a mass infusion of American ground forces. More on that later.

*Lloyd Gardner is the Charles and Mary Beard Professor of History at Rutgers University, where he has taught since 1963. A specialist in 20th Century foreign policy, Gardner is the author or editor of fifteen books on American foreign policy including Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy (1964), Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941-1949 (1970), Creation of the American Empire 2 vols. with Walter LaFeber and Thomas McCormick, (1973), Wilson and Revolutions, 1913-1921 (1976), A Covenant with Power: American and World Order from Wilson to Reagan (1984), Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams (1986), Safe for Democracy: The Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913-1923 (1984), Approaching Vietnam: From World War II through Dienbienphu, 1941-1954 (1988), Spheres of Influence: The Great Powers Partition Europe from Munich to Yalta (1993), Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam (1995), and The Search for Peace in Vietnam, 1964-1968 (2004) with Ted Gittinger; Lloyd Gardner and Marilyn Young, eds., The New Empire: A 21st Century Teach-In (2005); Lloyd Gardner and Marilyn Young, eds., Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How Not to Learn from the Past (2007).*

2 July 2007

The point to keep in mind is that Washington, from the President on down, was indeed divided about Diem's ability to survive, let alone eventually prevail over his multiple enemies. Could the war be won with Diem in power was the burning question, not liberal desires to export the New Frontier or the Great Society. The answer for some was no, and JFK did not intervene decisively to stop what was going on in clandestine meetings between Lucien Conein and dissident generals. How long would it have been until Diem pulled down the presidential palace around him? How far would Diem go to maintain his style of governance? The CIA had tracked his lack of progress since 1954 in building a viable state. Doubts did not begin with Henry Cabot Lodge nor with Moyer's other "heavy" – the media. Diem's primary agenda had always been the securing of American aid – with no strings attached. He was once described as a puppet that pulled his own strings. And John Foster Dulles quipped after a Diem visit that one would think the Vietnamese leader would at least be interested in what an American secretary of state had to say. Not Diem. He figured his greatest risks were in alienating his wealthy supporters by taxing their lucrative trade in reselling imports, not the VC out in the boondocks. Eisenhower had attempted to add a qualifier to American aid that it would depend on real progress politically and economically. That caveat was forgotten as the American military commitment grew. But a 1959 NIE (National Intelligence Estimate), 63-59, noted that "South Vietnam has made only limited progress toward basic long-term economic development in the five years since independence." The bulk of American aid, meanwhile, was used to finance imports sold locally, giving the economy a superficially healthy look like the blush on a TB patient. Not only did this policy hold up economic development, it created a parasitical class loyal to Diem, but not much use otherwise in nation-building.

Another NIE in late August 1960 noted a sharp deterioration in the previous six months, both in terms of security and the growth of corruption. "Dissatisfaction and discontent with the government will probably continue to rise unless the security situation improves and unless Diem can be brought to reduce the corruption and excesses of his regime." In another place in this NIE, policymakers could read, "These adverse trends are not irreversible, but if they remain unchecked, they will almost certainly in time cause the collapse of Diem's regime." Note, the operative word was collapse, not military defeat. What the media picked up from American officials in Vietnam were similar warnings and fears, not a self-generated determination to force Western-style liberalism on the Vietnamese. In other words, the question that posed itself was whether victory was possible with a regime that showed no signs of understanding, let alone correcting, its policies regarding corruption – and, over the long run, economic development?

Maybe that was an erroneous conclusion, and maybe Diem was a survivalist. But fears he was on course to follow other deposed dictators in Asia, not that he was illiberal, caused the doubts in the policymaking community—worse even, he might come to an agreement with Hanoi, as strange as that sounded. He was at least willing to drop such hints to give himself wiggle room, much to American distress. Moyer's Diem, however, is almost a saint, a celibate patriot who, at the moment the 1963 coup began, supposedly forsook a chance to

## ***Triumph Forsaken Roundtable***

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2 July 2007

save himself by refusing to order attacks on rebel headquarters so that the army might be preserved to fight the Communists. That is a bold assertion, but certainly Diem wanted to make a deal at the end. Ho Chi Minh, by contrast, is portrayed here as a womanizer who was willing to sell his country out to the interests of the Chinese. The politics of personality plays a large role in Moyar's analysis, not stopping with Diem and Ho, but spreading across his cast of characters. The Buddhists—especially Tri Quang—are sorted out as little more than agitators without a cause, who behave insidiously, and sometimes snarl. With all that, and with all the known differences between North and South Vietnam, the 26 May 1959 NIE still concluded that Hanoi had charted a “generally realistic” course, a phrase that bespoke a wish Saigon could do the same, or better. “North Vietnam’s economic planning appears to be generally realistic and well adapted to the economic potential of the country. In contrast to South Vietnam, the emphasis is on present sacrifice for promised future benefits, and the standard of living is being kept very low in order to squeeze out capital for investment.” Things change over time, but the outlook for Diem changing was bleak to non-existent. (One reason American policymakers believed “Rolling Thunder” would send the right signal, by the way, as voiced by Max Taylor and others, was that the North had so much to lose in terms of what it had built up in the years since the end of the French War! )

Moyar is very harsh in his treatment of those he believes had no military expertise, the media, of course, but also the State Department, and academic theorists of limited war. Going back to the beginning, so to speak, at the end of World War II, Moyar dismisses Archimedes L. Patti's 600-page critical study entitled *Why Vietnam* as a case of later second thoughts to suit fashions after defeat. An OSS (Office of Strategic Services) agent who met and talked with Ho Chi Minh, Patti wrote of missed opportunities and developed a powerful argument why that should not have happened. But Moyar cites a Patti telegram in August 1945 that talks about “red elements” leading his movement in an illiberal direction and concludes he would not be a reliable ally. It will not be news to readers of Patti's book that the author did not feel Ho Chi Minh would be a reliable ally. The point argued at great length was that there were opportunities for American policy, and that Ho's beliefs did not rule out a “rapprochement” of some sort not unlike Nixon's approach to China, a much more dangerous enemy after a war terribly costly to all Vietnamese and the United States.

Then there was the case of George Ball. Moyar calls Ball's memoirs self-serving, indeed “unusually self-serving even by the standards of political memoirs.” His major offense seems to have been that he changed his mind between February and July 1965. Moyar suggests that like Patti, he wanted to wash away his sins and the historical record all at once. He didn't start out as a doubter, Dean Rusk would say, but maybe he convinced himself in the process of the decision-making. That seems rather admirable, one could say, given the standards of Vietnam decision-making, rather than self-serving. (We will wait to see if Clark Clifford is also scourged for changing his mind not once but twice in a promised second volume.)

Kennedy's administration was divided into pro-coup and anti-coup factions, and it is certainly the case that this division afforded Lodge greater opportunities to push his

understanding of what was best for the U.S. and for Vietnam. To say there were no opportunities to rein him in, however, would be inaccurate. The main fear was always whether a coup would succeed, not whether the United States had the right to do such a thing. Thus, as Moyar quotes LBJ, “The worst mistake we ever made was getting rid of Diem.” With that mindset (although Johnson could have been lamenting that the coup, followed by JFK’s death left him with a terrible dilemma), there would seem to be little room for a serious evaluation of Vietnamese politics, beyond a deadly version of “Deal or No Deal, Coup or No Coup.” Moyar laments that Americans failed to understand the nature of those politics—and the need for someone like Diem at the helm—but if the only options are to overthrow or not to overthrow, what does that say about American ability to wage any kind of war in such a land? Interestingly, in this regard it was not only George W. Ball who argued that Americans would find themselves in an alien environment, but also Max Taylor (before his conversion experience at Hawaii in 1965), and General Westmoreland, who did not want to use American troops in heavily populated areas.

A final comment on the paths of those favoring or opposing a coup. Henry Cabot Lodge became a diehard supporter of the war. In 1965, during the discussion about whether to send the first 100,000 troops, he argued that it was unnecessary to take into account any views out of Saigon, because there was nothing there that could be called a government—which was, one could argue, a telling statement about the American project in Vietnam after eleven years. On the other side, Robert McNamara, who had opposed the coup, found himself becoming more and more doubtful about whether the war was winnable, or whether Americans should be fighting it.

In regard to the second decision deemed by Moyar as foretelling ultimate defeat, the failure to move north at a critical moment to cut off infiltration, the story really begins with the isolated response in the Gulf of Tonkin (whether the second attack took place or not, and Moyar thinks it did not), which he says sent the wrong signal, and the limited nature of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign. Among early advocates of sending troops to Vietnam was McGeorge Bundy, who thought in 1964 that a small number of American soldiers would do the trick, especially if accompanied by a Congressional resolution and actions in the United Nations. Bundy thought in terms of crisis management, as if Vietnam were like the Cuban Missile Crisis. He did not want to go north, however, and neither did LBJ. The only serious advocate of such a campaign into North Vietnam in the inner circle was Walt Rostow, and he had been so since 1961 after the disaster at the Bay of Pigs. Johnson, writes Moyar, was too fearful of a Chinese response. Later revelations from Chinese sources, he argues, demonstrate that the Chinese were not really interested in fighting in Vietnam, and were reluctant to engage the United States in another “Korea” – even less so than the Americans. Of course, such an assertion undermines another of the book’s arguments that there really was a domino threat in Southeast Asia, and that if the North had succeeded it would have joined with the Chinese to carry the revolution on bayonets into other lands starting with Thailand. McNamara has spent a second lifetime (it seems) explaining to Vietnamese leaders it was a case of mistaken identity. Not so says Moyar, there were Chinese troops in NVN clearly showing an alliance—they did not have to fight only because

2 July 2007

the United States adopted a defensive strategy. But they were obviously not anxious to engage the Americans elsewhere, and according to the author offered only limited promises of actual support. Hence LBJ was too timid. So what do we have? On the one hand, a Sino-Vietnamese threat existed to all of SE Asia, but on the other the Chinese were saying not so fast, we don't want to fight the Americans. Somewhere in the middle of this discussion LBJ would have button-holed Moyar and asked him this question: If I go north, these Chinese troops you are talking about, even if I only try to cut off the Ho Chi Minh trail, can you guarantee they will just stand around?

It is at this point that one must stop and consider from a different angle *Triumph Forsaken's* reassertion of the Munich analogy and the domino thesis. Moyar argues that countries all the way across the globe to Saudi Arabia expressed their anxiety lest the United States abandon Vietnam, and that all European countries except France gave Washington unqualified support. The failure of the many flags campaign—LBJ's effort to secure foot soldiers from allied countries—does not speak well to such an overriding concern. One remembers Dean Rusk practically begging the British to send even a token force. As for those that did, especially South Korea, the troops were essentially "mercenaries" who saw (the soldiers themselves) a good chance to make something for their families out of the war financially. Certainly, the pay was much better than anything they could get at home. As for Germany and Japan, one can look at the essays by Wilifried Mausbach and Hideki Kan in Lloyd Gardner and Ted Gittinger, eds., *The Search for Peace in Vietnam, 1964-1968*, for a different view of the enthusiasm for the American project.

"Mao had definite plans for large battles in Thailand and beyond," writes Moyar, proof he would say of the Munich analogy and the domino thesis. It took Robert McNamara a long time, but when he wrote *Argument without End*, after several meetings with the old enemy, the former Secretary of Defense concluded it was all a case of mistaken identity. What we thought they were up to, they were not; and what they thought we were up to, we were not. It is a kind of belated, backhanded, admission that there were no dominoes at stake. Not very convincing otherwise, to be sure, in terms of the question of Vietnamese determination to write their history.

But many things changed in a few years, counters Moyar, including the overthrow of Sukarno in Indonesia, the widening of the Sino-Soviet rift, the wars across Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and – "Richard Nixon's rapprochements with the two large Communist powers." Now, if the Munich analogy taught anything to policymakers, it was supposed to be that diplomacy did not work with fanatic regimes like Hitler's Nazi Germany or Mao's China. Moyar argues that the American stand in Vietnam made possible diplomacy, forcing Beijing into a "realist" frame of mind, apparently. Could it not equally be (since we are supposed to look at all sides of an issue) that the Chinese saw Nixon as a "realist" who had a mission to end the war, and who needed China as much as China needed him? In that sense, Vietnam did indeed propel the nation forward into détente however we define it, to get out of the war and make up for lost time. In his memoirs, Nixon talked about his trips to Eastern and Western Europe before the 1968 election, especially to Rumania, and that he

2 July 2007

learned there that the general feeling was that the United States was concentrating on the barn while the house was on fire. Or for that matter, taking a slightly different perspective, Nixon's 1967 article, "Asia after Vietnam," in *Foreign Affairs*, which sounded a very different note than then-current emanations from Washington about the Chinese threat. "Taking the long view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates, and threaten its neighbors." One can parse this sentence many ways, but its call for a new China policy beyond military containment cannot be denied. There is an admission here—and more than that—a positive view that what America does or does not do will have a great deal to do with Beijing's world outlook. Later in the article, Nixon talks about the transfer of Western technology to Asia—a whole new chapter he calls it, in the Winning of the West.

What it comes down to, in the end, is that the Vietnamese were remarkably willing to suffer casualties to win the war. We were willing to drop more bombs than in the history of modern warfare, but Johnson and then Nixon drew the line at invading the North. 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. A later NIE pointed out that American forces were being ambushed in precisely the same places as attacks on the French had occurred. And every time we had to withdraw to close up communications and supply, the enemy would have returned to former positions.

Was Vietnam unwinnable? At a time when the colonial empires were collapsing, the United States backed itself into a corner in Vietnam, and became a prisoner of exaggerated fears, and that determined how it viewed the struggle. Unwinnable was unthinkable in such a situation. Did leaders in Hanoi feel sure they would win, according to their definition of victory? Hardly. But what they did know is that they were willing to continue sacrificing the present for the future. Pretty hard to beat that sort of Calvinist determination.

Review by James McAllister, Williams College

Historical scholarship on the Vietnam War, as opposed to the war itself, has largely been a peaceful and cooperative enterprise. The predominant puzzle for virtually all historians of the war has been to figure out how American policymakers from Franklin Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson became involved in a senseless conflict that could and should have been avoided. Within that basic framework, of course, historians have argued endlessly about the role of various individuals, bureaucracies, and potential missed opportunities for an earlier American withdrawal or a negotiated settlement to the war. More recently, some historians have published important books and articles that are far more sensitive to the role of international actors, cultural forces, and Vietnamese perspectives on the war. Nevertheless, the basic paradigm for historians has scarcely changed over the course of the last three decades. Unlike historical scholarship on the origins and course of the Cold War, where you could easily find historians on opposing sides of the fundamental questions of the conflict from the 1960s to the present, scholarship on the Vietnam War has always been marked by a great deal of consensus.

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Mark Moyar's goal in his bold and ambitious book is nothing less than to shatter this enduring consensus about the Vietnam War. In an analogy sure to displease both the author and his critics, the purpose of *Triumph Forsaken* is to spark a revolution in the area of Vietnam War scholarship equivalent to the one sparked by William Appleman Williams in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. Moyar's revisionism is certainly not as sophisticated as that of a Williams, or A.J.P. Taylor on the origins of the Second World War, but his ambition is the same. Many historians will be tempted to lump Moyar's book in with previous revisionist books by Guenter Lewy, Lewis Sorley, Norman Podhoretz, Harry Summers, Michael Lind, General Westmoreland, and William Colby. This temptation should be resisted, however, because none of the figures previously associated with revisionism ever produced a work of diplomatic and military history as comprehensive and wide ranging as *Triumph Forsaken*. While many historians can and undoubtedly will vehemently disagree with all or most of the arguments Moyar advances, it is important to recognize that this is an original work of scholarship that can rightfully claim to be the most consequential revisionist book ever produced on the Vietnam War.

Indeed, while historians will undoubtedly focus their attention on Moyar's disagreements with so called "orthodox" accounts of the Vietnam War, his disagreements with previous revisionists are no less fundamental. It is instructive to compare the central arguments of



## ***Triumph Forsaken Roundtable***

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2 July 2007

*Triumph Forsaken* with the main conclusions of Guenter Lewy's book *America in Vietnam* (1978) and Michael Lind's *Vietnam The Necessary War* (1999). Both Lind and Lewy are highly critical of the military strategy pursued by General William Westmoreland and strong advocates of the so called pacification/counterinsurgency approach to the conflict. In Lewy's view, the United States "never really learned to fight a counterinsurgency war and used force in largely traditional ways, and the South Vietnamese copied our mistakes (p.438)." Lewy also rejects the idea that the war could have been won by changing the location of the battlefield: "Military action in Laos and Cambodia at an early stage of the war, seeking permanently to block the Ho Chi Minh trail, would have made the North Vietnamese supply effort more difficult, but basically an expansion of the conflict would not have achieved the American task. Certainly, an invasion of North Vietnam would only have magnified the difficulties faced (p.438)."<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely this perspective on the military aspects of the Vietnam War that Moyar rejects throughout *Triumph Forsaken*. In contrast to both revisionist and orthodox scholars alike, Moyar enthusiastically endorses the general military strategy and tactics advocated by Lt. General "Hanging Sam" Williams, Paul Harkins, and General Westmoreland from the late 1950's to the summer of 1965. In his view, and in marked contrast to the historical consensus, Williams was correct in organizing the South Vietnamese army primarily on the model of the United States during the 1950s and in emphasizing the primary need for the South Vietnamese to stop a conventional invasion rather than developing the ability to deal with counterinsurgency warfare (pp.67-71). Whether the target is scholars like Andrew Krepinivich or practitioners like John Paul Vann, *Triumph Forsaken* consistently argues against the idea that the Vietnam War could or should have been fought largely according to the principles of counterinsurgency warfare or that "winning hearts and minds" was a truly important or relevant objective for either side. Advocates of a counterinsurgency strategy are generally viewed by Moyar as people who are ignorant of the realities of the war in general, or the realities of the Vietnam War in particular. Unlike Lewy and countless other historians, Moyar rejects the idea that the possibility of direct Chinese intervention, which he thinks was highly unlikely before March 1965, constituted a sufficient reason to refrain from either cutting off the Ho Chi Minh trail or even invading North Vietnam. In his view, both of these options would have been better ones for Lyndon Johnson than "fighting a defensive war within South Vietnam's borders in order to avoid the dreadful international consequences of abandoning the country (xxiii)."

Unlike Colonel Harry Summers Jr., who long ago suggested in his book *On Strategy* that Johnson might have been able to invade North Vietnam without provoking Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> Page references are to Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). It should be noted that Lewy himself has recently praised Moyar's book as an excellent contribution to the literature on the war. See Guenter Lewy, "The War That Could Have Been Won," *The New York Sun*, 24 November 2006. Nevertheless, the differences between *America in Vietnam* and *Triumph Forsaken* on many crucial issues could not be greater. It is also worth noting the contrasting perspectives on American military strategy found in *Triumph Forsaken* and Lewis Sorley's *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 1-16.

2 July 2007

intervention, Moyar is making his argument primarily as a historian rather than as a military strategist. Does he in fact make a compelling and persuasive case to support the idea that China would not have intervened in the event of an American invasion of North Vietnam before March 1965? Unfortunately, the answer is no and his whole treatment of the issue raises some real questions about Moyar's tendency to base very important arguments on weak or ambiguous evidence. Over the last ten years scholars such as Chen Jian, Qiang Zhai, James Hershberg, and Xiaoming Zhang among others have produced an impressive body of scholarship on the question of what China might have done in the event of an American invasion of North Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> Moyar himself cites these authors in his footnotes, as well as some of the documentation that has been published by the Cold War International History Project. But all of these authors, all of whom have far more expertise and experience with documents from the Chinese side, would not come anywhere close to endorsing his emphatic argument that China would not have intervened in the event of an American invasion of North Vietnam. While no scholar can ever be certain what Mao would have done in the event of an American invasion, both Qiang Zhai and Xiaoming Zhang have explicitly considered and rejected the Summers/Moyar thesis that threats of Chinese intervention were simply a bluff. In *Mao's China and the Cold War*, Chen Jian shows that Mao and other Chinese leaders repeatedly indicated between 1962 and August 1964 that an American invasion of North Vietnam would be met by Chinese ground forces. "If the United States attacks the North," Mao argued in August 1964, "they will have to remember that the Chinese also have legs, and legs are used for walking."<sup>3</sup>

If the Chinese were clear about their determination to respond up to August 1964, and Moyar essentially agrees with the argument that China's commitment to intervene in the event of an invasion of North Vietnam was solidified by March 1965, the evidence for his case has to fall within this six-month period. The only truly compelling piece of evidence that Moyar presents from this period to support his argument is a conversation between Mao and Pham Van Dong from October 1964 in which Mao seems to suggest that North Vietnam should be prepared to fight a long guerrilla struggle on their own in the event of an American invasion. This conversation is certainly interesting and invites legitimate speculation as to its larger meaning, although the very same document also makes clear that Mao did not believe that the Johnson administration had either the intention or the capabilities to invade North Vietnam anytime in the immediate future. I do not think that Moyar is being at all intellectually dishonest in making his argument about the possible consequences of an American invasion of North Vietnam, but I do believe that this example shows that he sometimes tends to hang very important and substantial arguments on an

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<sup>2</sup> Chen Jian *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp.205-221; Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Xiaoming Zhang, "The Vietnam War, 1964-1969: A Chinese Perspective," *The Journal of Military History*, vol.60, no.4 (October 1996), 731-762; and James G. Hershberg and Chen Jian, "Reading and Warning the Likely Enemy: China's Signals to the United States about Vietnam in 1965," *The International History Review*, vol.27, no.1 (March 2005), 47-84.

<sup>3</sup> Jian, p.213.

2 July 2007

inadequate and very slim body of evidence. Even more frustrating is the fact that in the end it is not at all clear where Moyar himself stands on the entire question of whether the Johnson administration should have invaded North Vietnam in late 1964. After stating the case for an invasion of North Vietnam in very positive terms, Moyar concludes his discussion by acknowledging that “President Johnson had sound reasons for refusing to invade North Vietnam prior to March 1965, the month in which China returned to expressing a willingness to fight in North Vietnam (p.322).” If Moyar’s argument is that Johnson was ultimately right to reject the idea of an invasion of North Vietnam, then his position is essentially no different than that held by most historians today and the one held by American analysts at the time.

It would certainly be a mistake to suggest that *Triumph Forsaken* is exclusively concerned with issues of military strategy. Military issues are a very important part of the book and some of the most compelling passages in the book provide vivid and graphic depictions of the fighting on the ground between the South Vietnamese Army and the communist insurgency. But Moyar’s central argument is that America could have easily avoided the massive military commitment it later wound up making by not overthrowing President Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963. In his view, the overthrow of Diem was “by far the worst American mistake of the Vietnam War (xvii).” Moyar is far from the first scholar to make positive arguments about Ngo Dinh Diem, or to suggest that the overthrow of Diem in November 1963 was a tragic error, but one will not find a more elaborate and passionate defense of the Diem regime in all of the existing scholarship on the Vietnam War. In his view, Diem was a wise and effective leader who understood the nature of Vietnamese political culture in a way that his many American critics did not and that his decisions and methods of governance were appropriate given this context. If American policymakers had refrained from trying to impose Western standards and mistaken concepts on Diem, Moyar firmly believes that South Vietnam ultimately would have been able to win its struggle against the North largely on its own. In his view, the Buddhist crisis of 1963 provided an opening for Diem’s State Department opponents and journalists such as David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan to make the case for removing Diem from power. If America had simply ignored the mischievous and unfounded protests of the Buddhists, reined in Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, and concentrated their attention on the military successes and the tremendous progress of the strategic hamlet program in 1963, Moyar suggests that the South Vietnamese might have been able to prevail without the introduction of any American ground forces.

Assessing all of the various strands that compose Moyar’s argument about the Diem regime and his assessment of the war’s status in 1962-63 is beyond the scope of this review. I strongly suspect that even scholars who are generally sympathetic to the idea of Diem revisionism will argue that he goes too far in his defense of various aspects of the Diem regime. Historians of the Vietnam War certainly do not have to accept Moyar’s argument that Diem was a better leader and a more independent nationalist than Ho Chi Minh, but *Triumph Forsaken* does suggest that historians would be better served viewing Diem more as an independent actor with his own goals and less as a simple American puppet.

Moyar does advance an interesting and unique interpretation of South Vietnamese politics after the fall of Diem. Most historians suggest that the chronic instability and dismal performance of the South Vietnamese government after November 1963 was more or less inevitable. Some scholars emphasize that the generals inherited a situation in the countryside that was badly deteriorating long before Diem was overthrown, while other scholars would agree with William Bundy that the quality of the post-Diem leadership was “the bottom of the barrel, absolutely the bottom of the barrel.” However, Moyar rejects both of these interpretations of the post-Diem era. Drawing on a wide variety of sources, Moyar vigorously argues that the deterioration of the security situation in South Vietnam did not begin until after Diem’s overthrow. In addition, while Moyar certainly does believe that Diem was a far better leader than all of those who followed him, he rejects the contention that the quality of leadership was so inherently poor that South Vietnam was destined to fall into a combination of anarchy and ineffectiveness. In his view, at the very least, both Nguyen Khanh and Nguyen Van Thieu were capable anti-communist leaders. The key question that Moyar seeks to answer is why the South Vietnamese government performed so poorly after November 1963 despite the fact that the elements of effective leadership were still present even after the overthrow of Diem.

Moyar’s answer is that the militant Buddhists, primarily inspired by the leadership of Thich Tri Quang, made it nearly impossible for the South Vietnamese government to function. Any account of the post-Diem era is bound to emphasize the important role played by the Buddhists, but Moyar is the first historian to suggest that the American journalist Marguerite Higgins was correct in arguing that Tri Quang was a communist agent. While Moyar briefly concedes that Tri Quang might not have been controlled by Hanoi, he writes that the “sum of the evidence strongly suggests that Tri Quang was a communist operative (218).” Unfortunately, the argument and the evidence presented about Tri Quang’s communist affiliation in *Triumph Forsaken* is ultimately no more compelling than the evidence put forward by Higgins in her book *Our Vietnamese Nightmare* (1965). Analysts from the CIA and the Saigon Embassy thoroughly examined the question of Tri Quang and his alleged communist connections on three occasions between August 1964 and January 1965 and each time they concluded that the evidence simply did not support such conclusions. As the CIA concluded in August 1964, “The ‘reports’ claiming that he is a communist fall into the categories of hearsay, gossip, and accusations without any supporting evidence.”<sup>4</sup> Even after the events of December and January 1965, when American officials were in complete despair over the seeming ability of Tri Quang and the Buddhists to throw the Saigon government into complete chaos, all of the leading American analysts of the Buddhist movement still concluded that there was little reason to accept the thesis of communist control or inspiration.

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<sup>4</sup> See CIA, “An Analysis of Thich Tri Quang’s Possible Communist Affiliations, Personality and Goals,” LBJ Library, NSF, VNCF, box 7, vol.16. For a more extensive analysis of Thich Tri Quang’s views and his relationships with American officials in this period, see James McAllister, “‘Only Religions Count in Vietnam’: Thich Tri Quang and the Vietnam War,” *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.41, no.4 (2007), 1-31.

Moyar's new evidence on Tri Quang amounts to little more than some documents that suggest Hanoi tried and was sometimes successful in infiltrating Buddhist organizations; efforts that were well known to all at the time and in no way an indication of communist influence or agency at the top leadership level. Tri Quang was a demagogue and cared little about democracy, but he was also very anti-communist and privately supportive of aggressive American military actions against the North, much like the ones Moyar favors in *Triumph Forsaken*. The communists, both during and after the war, certainly saw him as an irreconcilable enemy rather than as a partner. As one captured VC document from late 1966 stated, "It is necessary to make our cadre, monks, nuns, and believers realize that Thich Tri Quang is nothing but a deck of cards played by the US imperialists' political organizations."<sup>5</sup> In short, the "sum of the evidence" strongly suggests that Tri Quang was not a communist operative. As in the case of a hypothetical American invasion of North Vietnam, Moyar first puts his energies and passion into making a very controversial argument, but in the end he also acknowledges that it is quite possible that Tri Quang may have had his own independent reasons for the course of action he pursued.

Historians of the Vietnam War are unlikely to welcome Moyar's revisionism with any great enthusiasm. Judging by the early reaction to the book, *Triumph Forsaken* is likely to be highly praised by conservatives and rudely dismissed by academic historians. Both sides will attribute the disagreement to the fact that the other side is too influenced by ideology. Personally, I wish that Moyar had written a book on Vietnam that could transcend the revisionist-orthodox divide in the way that Melvyn Leffler's *A Preponderance of Power* defused similar controversies over the origins and course of the early Cold War. Nevertheless, mainstream diplomatic historians should not dismiss this book as merely an ideologically driven justification for America's Vietnam policy. If Moyar was only attempting to appeal to a conservative constituency that already accepts his basic view of the war, he would not have immersed himself in all of the secondary literature on the war, conducted serious archival research, read numerous unpublished dissertations, or tried to integrate various communist sources on the war. While the author could and should have left out some sweeping dismissals of the work of some honest and able historians from the footnotes, *Triumph Forsaken* is a work of scholarship that should be taken seriously. For all of my own disagreements with many different aspects of *Triumph Forsaken*, including several not brought up in this review, historians should engage this work like they would any other book on Vietnam. Diplomatic historians should readily accept the challenge to defend a fundamental consensus over the war that has so far stood the test of time.

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<sup>5</sup> Saigon Embassy to State Department, "Captured Viet Cong Document on VC Policy Towards Buddhist Movement," 21 February 1967, NAI, POL 27 VIET S, box 2776.

## Triumph Forsaken Roundtable

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2 July 2007

Review by William Stueck, University of Georgia

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*The author wishes to thank Richard Immerman, Chen Jian, and Qiang Zhai for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this review.*

For the sake of full disclosure, I begin with the promotional blurb I provided for Cambridge University Press for the book under review: “Mark Moyar has produced the best ‘revisionist’ study to date of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Engagingly written and broadly researched, this book establishes Moyar as the leading voice of a new generation of historians intent on challenging conventional wisdom.” This statement was not an endorsement of the book’s central argument, but rather a reflection of the beliefs (1) that Moyar is a serious scholar whose work deserves careful consideration, especially because of his use of sources from the North Vietnamese side, and (2) that reexamining the evidence and arguments for the orthodox view is a healthy development, especially for people such as me who spent a good portion of the late 1960s and early 1970s either protesting the war, dodging the draft, or a combination of the two. The extensive early attention devoted to *Triumph Forsaken* reinforces my sense that the field of diplomatic history is alive and well.

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Since I am no expert on the Vietnam War, I want to avoid any pretense at making authoritative judgments about the arguments and evidence Moyar puts forth. Rather, as a person who over the years has dabbled a little in U.S. primary sources on Vietnam and more than a little in the English-language secondary literature, I will comment on the arguments that strike me as most persuasive, those that strike me as least so, and where the debate that is just beginning might most fruitfully focus.

In a text of 416 pages, Moyar devotes a mere 31 in getting through the Geneva Accords of the summer of 1954. In that brief space, however, he makes assertions about Vietnamese history, the legitimacy of U.S. concerns for Vietnam after World War II, the military balance in Indochina in early 1954, and the negotiations at Geneva during June and July of that year that represent important foundations for what comes later. He emphasizes factionalism, disunity, authoritarianism, and violence in Vietnam’s political history and China’s relatively benign approach to Vietnam over the centuries. When China did intervene militarily in Vietnam, Moyar asserts, it was generally because it was dragged in at the behest of one of the smaller land’s warring factions. Furthermore, according to Moyar, by 1945 Ngo Dinh Diem possessed nationalist credentials with his countrymen comparable to those of Ho Chi Minh, who in fact was a staunch internationalist holding “to the Leninist principle that

2 July 2007

Communist nations should subordinate their interests” to those of the broader revolutionary movement (9). American concern from 1949 onward that the fall of Vietnam to Communism would produce a “domino” effect in the region was sound, but its unwillingness to provide France with air support in the spring of 1954 was a serious mistake, as such aid probably would have averted the debacle at Dienbienphu and reinforced the essentially favorable military position that the French enjoyed at the time. Even after Dienbienphu, Ho recognized the weaknesses of his own forces and readily accepted partition of Vietnam rather than a continued armed struggle. That partition along the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel was not far from the division of the country from the late sixteenth century through most of the eighteenth.

Moyar is on strongest ground in his assertions regarding Vietnamese political history. The secondary literature makes it hard to dispute that unity was the exception rather than the rule or that Vietnam lacked a liberal tradition. Those facts, in turn, suggest that partition somewhere in the area of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel was far from a historical aberration and that Vietnamese leaders need to be evaluated by some standard other than a predisposition toward liberal democracy. In addition, recent scholarship suggests that Ngo Dinh Diem possessed personal qualities and nationalist credentials that made him a potentially viable alternative to Ho, although Diem’s absence from Vietnam for most of the 1940s and early 1950s greatly complicated his task. Finally, although the nature of China’s traditional relationship with Vietnam may be debated endlessly, there can be no doubt that from early 1950 onward the People’s Republic of China gave important support for the communist-led Vietminh, support that was essential to the French defeat at Dienbienphu.

Moyar is less persuasive in other areas. For example, he asserts that “the French and their Vietnamese cohorts were on the verge of crushing the Vietminh in early 1954,” a claim based largely on *Khrushchev Remembers* and Hungarian diplomat Janos Radvanyi’s recollection of statements in 1959 by Vietminh General Vo Nguyen Giap. Former Soviet premier and party leader Nikita Khrushchev’s memoirs provide immensely useful insights and have been proven accurate on numerous issues, but they must be used with caution. Khrushchev’s account of events regarding Indochina from April through July 1954 is particularly problematic. He is clearly wrong in stating that “at the first session of the [Geneva] conference, the French head of state, Mendès-France, proposed to restrict the northern reach of French forces to the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel,” a “surprise” to the Soviets, who regarded the line as “the absolute maximum” of what could be attained by the Communist side. In fact, Mendès-France did not become French premier until June 18, over six weeks into the conference, he initially insisted on the 18<sup>th</sup> parallel as the demarcation line, and the Soviets consistently hoped that the demarcation line would be no further north than the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>1</sup> Moyar quotes Khrushchev as having been told by Zhou Enlai in early April

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<sup>1</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, trans. by Strobe Talbott (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 482-83. For a recent account based largely on Soviet documents, see Ilya V. Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003), 21-25.

2 July 2007

that Ho characterized the Vietminh military position as “hopeless” (27), a statement that does not appear in the leading secondary sources on the Chinese side, books by Qiang Zhai and Chen Jian.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, it is clear that the Vietminh suffered serious losses at Dienbienphu during the early months of 1954, that Vietminh troops experienced morale problems in early April, at which time victory was not assured, and that Ho lobbied at the time for more aid from Beijing, including Chinese troops. Yet Moyar’s use of *Khrushchev Remembers* to put the Vietminh in a position of extreme distress—as having by the end of March suffered “devastating losses”—is dubious. Even if Ho did say to Zhou what Khrushchev claims, the Vietminh leader had every reason to exaggerate conditions in order to get more Chinese aid, especially given the upcoming Geneva conference. Even if Radvanyi’s account of Giap’s lecture to a group of Hungarian officials five years after the event is precise, the lecture could easily have been an exaggeration to dramatize Giap’s own brilliance and the heroism of the Vietnamese Communists.<sup>3</sup> Giap’s 1964 published account as well as later oral accounts to journalist Stanley Karnow, after all, are quite different.<sup>4</sup>

Placing the Khrushchev and Radvanyi stories against some undisputed facts does not strengthen Moyar’s interpretation. The Vietminh outnumbered the surrounded French by five to one in manpower at Dienbienphu, they controlled the high ground on which their ample Chinese-supplied artillery and anti-aircraft weapons were protected through camouflage and deployment partially underground, and they hid and shielded their troops through carefully constructed tunnels and trenches. During the first stage of their offensive in mid-March, Vietminh units captured three key outer French defense posts and, through artillery and anti-aircraft fire, closed the enemy airstrip, thus greatly restricting France’s capacity to resupply and reinforce its troops. The French suffered over a thousand casualties, hundreds of defections by T’ai soldiers, and a crisis of command both at the tactical and strategic levels. Paris’s desperate appeal to Washington was not without cause.

It is entirely possible that U.S. bombing of the high ground around Dienbienphu could have brought some relief to the French. However, Giap had constructed in-ground shelters for his manpower and heavy weaponry with great care and monsoon rains hit the area harder and earlier than usual in mid-April, flooding the French-held low ground and reducing the potential for precision bombing. The bottom line is that, with any outcome short of the annihilation of Communist forces at Dienbienphu, the Vietminh was far better positioned than the French to continue the military struggle over a prolonged period. The Vietminh

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<sup>2</sup> Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 46-49; Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 134-38.

<sup>3</sup> Janos Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality: Gambits, Hoaxes, and Diplomatic One-Upmanship in Vietnam* (South Bend, Indiana: Gateway Editions, 1978), pp. 8-9. Radvanyi’s prudence in accepting the accounts of others is called into question by his unquestioning acceptance of Khrushchev’s account.

<sup>4</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap, *Dien Bien Phu* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Press, 1964); Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, rev. & updated ed. (New York: Viking, 1991), 204-14.



2 July 2007

already occupied substantial portions of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and Mao was actively planning large-scale aid to his ally over a protracted period, all at a time when public support for the war in France was in decline.<sup>5</sup> New evidence from the Vietnamese side may eventually alter prevailing wisdom. At this point, however, the most plausible reading of Ho Chi Minh's perspective in the early spring of 1954 is that, after fighting the French for nearly eight years, he was anxious to win a decisive victory that would lead to the early independence and unification of Vietnam under his control, but that he was far from desperate or unprepared to fight on indefinitely.

This interpretation also fits Ho's course following the French surrender at Dienbienphu, and it does not jibe with Moyar's account. Again the direct documentation on Ho's thinking is far from conclusive, but Zhai, Chen, and Ilya V. Gaiduk (on the Soviet side) all present substantial evidence of discontent within the Vietminh leadership over Chinese and Soviet pressure for partition, especially at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, and for withdrawal of forces from Laos and Cambodia. True, Ho was well aware of his ongoing dependence on Chinese materiel support, which surely dictated caution in resisting Beijing's views; yet as a Vietnamese leader he could hardly have helped but possess local priorities divergent from Mao, who had recently experienced a costly military struggle with the Americans in Korea and faced the unfinished business of securing Taiwan to complete his own country's unification. Although Moyar cites Zhai, Chen, and Gaiduk on some specifics, he ignores other details as well as these authors' conclusions.

The above excursion into Moyar's use of sources in a specific case falls well short of dismantling the overall argument of the book. It does suggest, however, that such key areas as his portrayal of the state of the war in South Vietnam during 1962 and 1963 and Mao's willingness to intervene with Chinese ground forces during 1964 and 1965—or lack thereof—require the same kind of scrutiny. In the first case, Moyar argues that the war was going fairly well for the Diem government and would have gone even better had the United States been more supportive of its leader. Moyar bases his claims largely on pro-Diem elements among U.S. observers and heretofore untapped North Vietnamese sources that he did not read but had translated for him. I am persuaded that at least part of Diem's growing problems in the countryside during 1963 were a result of increased aid to the Vietcong from North Vietnam and China, that the United States erred in pressing Diem to accommodate Buddhist dissidents and in giving a South Vietnamese military faction the green light for a coup in the fall of 1963, and that anti-Diem journalists such as Neil Sheehan and David Halberstam carried more weight in the United States than their knowledge or wisdom warranted. Nonetheless, I find suspect the glowing description by Moyar of Diem's leadership and his downplaying of the issue of land distribution. Moyar is certainly correct to rebut orthodox portrayals of Diem as an unthinking reactionary and to emphasize security as a primary concern of the peasants, but the extent to which he goes in these directions strikes me as excessive. That Moyar sometimes uses block citations in the middle or at the end of declaratory paragraphs, thus making it virtually impossible to

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<sup>5</sup> On Mao's plans, see Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 47-48.

identify which point is supported by which source, does not inspire confidence. Over the next decade a new generation of scholars, armed with appropriate language skills and a determination to uncover new materials in archives in Vietnam and France, are likely to have much to say on these matters.

There also remains much to uncover on Chinese intentions regarding Vietnam in 1964 and 1965. It is well known, of course, that Chinese troops began moving into North Vietnam in May 1965 to assist with logistics and man anti-aircraft weapons. Rather than see this fact as an indication that China would have sent troops into North Vietnam at any point before that had the United States crossed the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, Moyar argues that it was U.S. timidity during the summer and fall of 1964 that emboldened Mao to commit forces to his ally to the south. Moyar views as weak China's response to U.S. bombing of the North after the Gulf of Tonkin incident. "After the Gulf of Tonkin reprisals," Moyar claims, "in violation of previous promises, the Chinese made clear to Hanoi that if American forces invaded North Vietnam, China would not send its troops to fight the Americans." (p. 321) To support the assertion, he cites an account of an October 5, 1964 meeting between Mao and two North Vietnamese leaders in Beijing that is translated and published through the Cold War International History Project.<sup>6</sup> Yet the document is ambiguous. Neither Chen Jian nor Qiang Zhai, the leading authorities on Chinese policy at this time, interpret it as Moyar does.<sup>7</sup> Nor do they regard China's response to U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in August as weak. Moyar is correct in stating that the available evidence suggests that China's position at this time was less committal than it had been earlier in the year or during the spring and summer of 1965, but it is a stretch to suggest that Mao would not have intervened on a major scale in late 1964 had the United States invaded the North. As on the Diem issue, while new evidence may prove Moyar correct, the weight of the current documentation is against him.

A better chance existed that Mao would not have sent troops had the United States invaded Laos, especially if it restricted itself to southern areas being used by the North Vietnamese for infiltration routes into South Vietnam. Yet Moyar fails to analyze potential logistical problems for American forces in launching such a campaign during the second half of 1964. Overall, if we accept Moyar's argument that the fall of South Vietnam in the mid-1960s would have led to a major erosion of the U.S. position in Asia and perhaps worldwide, rapid American escalation of the war in August 1964 may make sense, but the prudence and/or feasibility of carrying the ground war to North Vietnam and Laos remains doubtful. Given

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<sup>6</sup> Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, Stein Tonnesson, Nguyen Vu Tung, and James G. Hershberg (eds.), "77 Conversations Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977," Working Paper No. 22, Cold War International History Project (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 1998), 74-77.

<sup>7</sup> James G. Hershberg and Chen Jian, "Reading and Warning the Likely Enemy: China's Signals to the United States about Vietnam in 1965," *International History Review* 27(March 2005): 62. Hershberg and Chen state simply that Mao "did not offer Chinese direct military intervention in response to the invasion." See also Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 133.

2 July 2007

the internal problems faced by the South Vietnamese government during 1964, it is also doubtful that a giant infusion of U.S. armed forces a year earlier than it actually occurred would have brought victory over a relatively brief period and at less than an enormous cost in life and treasure.

This leaves us with Moyar's analysis of the domino theory, which is the most extensive to date (see especially pp. 376-91). Moyar asserts, rightly I believe, that the fact that dominoes beyond Indochina did not fall after South Vietnam went Communist in 1975 does not necessarily mean that a similar outcome would have resulted if South Vietnam had gone Communist a decade earlier. Indonesia, after all, was far more firmly anti-Communist in 1975 than it had been in 1965, Thailand was much stronger, and Chinese influence was far less threatening. Moyar briefly examines the positions of governments in and the internal conditions of anti-Communist nations on the Pacific rim and concludes that, in all likelihood, an American withdrawal from Vietnam during 1965 would have had a devastating effect on U.S. alliances and the anti-Communist cause in the region and that the United States would have wound up fighting somewhere else, most probably in Indonesia, under even less favorable conditions than in South Vietnam.

Moyar makes a strong case, but I still have reservations. Most important, with the countries I know best, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, it is unlikely that a U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam would have seriously compromised American alliances. Moyar is correct in claiming that leaders in South Korea and Taiwan and, to a lesser extent, Japan favored U.S. escalation in Vietnam; yet the option of abandoning the U.S. security system lacked strong appeal, even if the American government proved unreliable in defending its South Vietnamese ally. For one thing, where else could the three countries find protection? Japan had the most viable option of the three, a turn toward neutrality, as its boundaries were less threatened than the other two. Even so, Japan was in the midst of a U.S.-brokered settlement with South Korea that could not help but provide economic benefits over the long term, it possessed a strong, not to mention privileged, trade relationship with the United States and a profitable one with western Europe as well, and it even carried on significant trade with China, despite American reticence. The spread of Communism through Southeast Asia would not necessarily have precluded trade with the area. Economically, breaking the alliance with the United States was potentially much more disruptive to Japan than sticking to it. What's more, the United States had never concluded security treaties with South Vietnam as it had with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. So long as it countered a withdrawal from South Vietnam with a reinforcement of commitments to the others, the loss of confidence on the part of the others arguably would have been minimal. Moyar essentially concedes that the same would have been the case with Australia and New Zealand, and I would add the Philippines to the list.

Moyar is on stronger ground with regard to Thailand and Indonesia. In the first case, though, the United States would have retained the option of offering a military alliance, which it had never done with South Vietnam, and the stationing of troops. Despite turmoil at the top, Thailand had a much more functional government and social system than did

2 July 2007

South Vietnam and it had historically feared expansion by China and Vietnam. Furthermore, the United States could have made military commitments to Malaya and Singapore, which given their size, location, and relatively stable internal situations, were readily defensible. Control of one side of the Strait of Malacca, a major strategic prize, should have been sufficient to keep it open to shipping. Indonesia was the biggest problem, but even here, 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? In other words, much of the impact of a U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam would have been determined by what Washington did as a follow-up.

Moyar does an excellent job of documenting the very real fears of President Johnson and his top advisers during 1965, but in becoming their advocate, he overstates the most likely consequences of a retreat in Vietnam rather than escalation. This overstatement includes not only his estimates of the reactions of anti-Communist governments and groups but the capacity of China, about to become embroiled in the Cultural Revolution, to consolidate its position in Southeast Asia and possibly beyond. Given the history of Vietnam, both before 1965 and after 1975, it is by no means certain that the Vietnamese Communists would have easily consolidated their position in the South, even after a U.S. withdrawal, or found China cooperative in expanding their power into Laos and Cambodia (or in pushing westward beyond that). Under any circumstances, Southeast Asia was destined to be in turmoil for some time and was just as likely to cause indigestion to a Communist China and a Communist Vietnam as a readily absorbed treat to be exploited for further gain. It was also likely to be a source of further acrimony between the Soviet Union and China. Moyar assists us in understanding why American leaders calculated differently at the time and he provides much grist for a healthy "argument without end." For this aging diplomatic historian, however, while sparking some embarrassing memories of the self-righteousness and naiveté of youth and generating a salutary mental workout, he has failed to persuade on the key point that the United States did the right thing in escalating the war in Vietnam during 1965.

### 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.

2 July 2007

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 Vietnamese of many scholars is inferior to that of Pribbenow. A substantial number of

2 July 2007

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

2 July 2007

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.



2 July 2007

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

2 July 2007

overly optimistic view of the North Vietnamese economy because of false information 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.

2 July 2007

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*

2 July 2007

(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 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 States was the world's greatest air and naval power and possessed the ability to land huge numbers of troop 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 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

2 July 2007

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 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,

2 July 2007

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 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



## *Triumph Forsaken Roundtable*

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2 July 2007

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.

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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