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The Unmaking of a President (Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam)

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defector, two love stories, Polynesian legends and a SAR subtheme. Curiously, there is no submarine or antisubmarine action.

In the battle, *Grand Eagle* wins over *Kiev*, though not without paying a price. Importantly, their contest is one for limited objectives, and World War Three does not erupt as a result of the actions of these two contemporary titans and their masters. With all of *Grand Eagle's* combat, communications and reconnaissance capabilities and her grand size and potential, it appears that Ruse's airship might be procured for an outlay significantly less than that for a 60,000-90,000-ton aircraft carrier. With her realistic weaponry, *Grand Eagle* probably is no less nor more vulnerable, nor costly to operate than an aircraft carrier. President Carter has said that what we need is new faith in old ideas. Is this one?

A Game of Titans is entertaining and informative. Instruction is perhaps best conveyed by a medium that is entertaining. The book's underlying theme is sea control and the novel creates a plausible fiction to argue for sea control through the use of large airships.

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Schandler, Herbert Y. *The Unmaking of a President (Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam)*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977. 350pp.

For one who was even a minor participant in the Vietnam war years, this is likely to be a difficult book to read carefully. Any good work on this painful era would be, for it is a story whose end we know too well for enjoyment. *The Unmaking of a President* chronicles the succession of events and decisions of the second phase of that war, from 1965 to 1969; from the decisions to make it an American war to the agonizing reassessment which followed the recognition that it could

not be. For his account, Schandler draws on the *Pentagon Papers*, command histories, memoirs and on his own reflections as a staff member of OASD/ISA in the central period of the study, 1968-69. Indeed he was the principal author of the two sections in the *Pentagon Papers* which deal with Tet, hence the primary focus of the book an outgrowth of a Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard under Samuel Huntington and Graham Allison. Readers who expect an analytical treatment of the subject matter will be disappointed, however. The style is strictly historical, largely chronological; and therein lies its chief shortcoming. Although there is a final chapter which pays token homage to the theoretical questions so clearly raised by the period, one looks in vain for an Allison-like application of alternative models to explain the differing perspectives involved. Further, Schandler's examination of the decisionmaking process is almost completely confined to the post-Tet 1968 reassessment period, which was previously illuminated by another insider, Townsend Hoopes (*The Limits of Intervention*). Schandler offers few new insights here, and his account lacks the flavor of personal anguish which made Hoopes' memoir so intriguing to potential participants in future policy debates. This is better history, but it lacks the human despair of Hoopes.

The political side of the reassessment is presented quite fully, and Schandler's account will make an adequate single-source document for that explanation. However, the military side of the decisions is not well presented, undoubtedly due the classification of source material. There is no military equivalent to LBJ's *The Vantage Point*. Most frequently, the JCS are presented as hopeless optimists on the one hand (just a few more troops . . .), and hopeless pessimists on the other (without full application of airpower . . .). They are condemned for failing to examine the ends being sought

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in Vietnam, as they should be. But the failure was a common one to both the political and the military professionals. Given the order to March On Regardless, the JCS complied, responding with the Can-Do spirit we prize so highly in our professionals. "Can do what?" "More of the same," and that was answer enough for the time being—until Tet. Moreover, the JCS saw more clearly than many just how much the conflict in Southeast Asia was emasculating the capability of the nation to respond to serious challenges elsewhere, at least after we were fully committed. And they warned the executive regularly, without much effect. McNamara disagreed with many of these warnings.

Schandler does not examine the decisions to expand the war in 1965, and this is unfortunate, because in some ways they are of more intrinsic interest to the military professional. His account suggests a process of incremental decisionmaking easily compared to seduction. As the events gathered strength, they acquired an internal dynamic of their own, and the final result was not considered very carefully by either side in the bureaucratic process of expansion. Further, there is a fascinating implication of bureaucratic imperative involved in this expansion: From on-hand Navy aircraft for reprisal raids to the deployment of Air Force assets for similar duty; from a few 7th Fleet Marines to guard the airbase at Danang to the deployment of Army troops to cover the incountry helicopter advisory bases. Organizational preference for preemptive search and destroy missions over the unattractive defensive role initially approved is equally obvious. At the end of this chain, the entire military capability of the four services (less nuclear weapons—and some wanted to use them) was employed to the limits of political risk-taking. One wonders if each of these decisions was given full political attention in its implication, or were they considered technical

matters" properly within the purview of the JCS? And to what extent did the discussions within the JCS reflect implicit accommodations to let every branch of service participate in accordance with the "roles and missions" charter of 1948? Budgets drive interservice policy, and in those years, Vietnam drove budgets toward General Purpose Forces. Participation meant money for one's branch. These questions await another scholar.

Not surprisingly, Schandler concludes that the decision process for national security policy was confined in this period to a small inner circle within which dissent from the President's policy was "an almost impossible burden." The scholar deplores the lack of an institutional mechanism to ensure debate on serious alternatives of policy, echoing generations of scholars before him. The difficulty, of course, is that any advisory device must reflect the style of the president who is both its author and patron. The mechanism will *never* determine his decisions, and whatever the form, its members must be strong spokesmen for differing viewpoints. Members of any consultative body (formal or informal) bear a responsibility to their nation no less serious than that of their President: To provide honest advice when asked for it; and to proffer resignation when their advice is rejected repeatedly on matters they consider to be of the gravest interest to the nation. There are means of dissenting within the system (even within Johnson's system), as Hoopes and Clark Clifford, among others, demonstrated in this period; and those who may someday bear a similar responsibility should be capable of effective dissent in a manner not destructive of the discipline essential to the profession of government and arms when such dissent is required by the situation.

Schandler's book raises more questions than it answers, and it is thus vaguely unsatisfying. But in fairness, he

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promises a chronology of Lyndon Johnson's agony in stepping down because of Vietnam. He provides that amply. It is simply not a satisfying tale. It is an authentic tragedy, and Schandler is not Shakespeare.

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Sherry, Michael S. *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-45*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977. 260pp.

It is supposed to be characteristic of soldiers to prepare for the next war by refighting the last one, but the process has rarely been demonstrated as clearly as in this first comprehensive history of postwar planning by the American military during World War II. Indeed Michael Sherry maintains that in at least one area—the Army's campaign for Universal Military Training—preparations were being made for World War III on the basis of lessons learned in World War I.

Sherry's book also treats such topics as postwar force structures, unification of the armed services, the relationship between scientists and the military, perceptions of the Soviet threat, and the strategic implications of the atomic bomb. He is not always successful in weaving these diverse subjects into an integrated narrative, but his account makes up in scope and analytical insight what it lacks in continuity.

Sherry's main thesis is that the emergence of a cold war consensus in the United States cannot be understood solely as either the product of Soviet aggressiveness or the requirements of capitalism. It stemmed as well, he argues, from the development of a firm conviction within both the American military and the civilian policymaking elite that technology alone had rendered the United States vulnerable to postwar aggression, even before it had become clear from what source such aggression

might come. "Before the cold war developed," he writes, "there had arisen a cold war mentality, an anxiety about the nation's security and an insistence on mobilizing full resources to protect it."

This is a significant and, on the whole, credible interpretation. It does not depend upon time-worn but unverifiable assertions that both capitalism and military organizations require identifiable enemies in order to survive. It recognizes the importance of the revolution in military thinking generated by the simultaneous utilization during World War II of strategic weapons and long-range delivery systems—a revolution whose implications for the future security of the United States concerned the generals and admirals of that war more than is often realized. Sherry's account also provides the best explanation yet for one of the most puzzling aspects of postwar military planning: the fact that despite this concern over American vulnerability expressions of alarm over the long-range objectives of the Soviet Union were virtually nonexistent until almost the end of the war.

Sherry makes it clear that this particular blindspot grew out of the Pentagon's tendency to plan on the basis of adversary capabilities rather than intentions, and from a narrowly military perception of American postwar interests. Because the Soviet Union had developed neither a strategic air force nor a blue-water navy, it did not fit the new technological criteria of danger planners had established. Obviously the Russians would have a powerful ground army after the war, but from the "purely military" point of view this force posed no threat because it could not attack the United States. Nor was it all that clear, from the same limited perspective, that the United States would have a vital interest in maintaining the postwar balance of power in Europe. Not until 1945 did it become evident that considerations of politics,