Symposium

McNamara's Lessons and *The Fog of War*

Edited by Lloyd S. Etheredge

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<u>Editor's Introduction: Three Strategies of Foreign Policy Learning</u>

by

Lloyd S. Etheredge[1]

This symposium responds to Errol Morris's documentary film <u>The Fog of War</u> about the life of Robert S. McNamara and eleven lessons for American foreign policy. Mr. McNamara, a member of the Harvard faculty in his youth, says in the film that his commitment always has been: "Try to learn. Try to understand. Develop the lessons and pass them along." This symposium reflects a similar professional commitment to engage the historical record of realisms, fogs, and delusions and get the lessons right.

I. <u>Background</u>

Mr. McNamara served as American Secretary of Defense for seven years during the Cold War, including three crises in Soviet-American relations that risked nuclear war, an acceleration of the Soviet-American nuclear arms race, and the escalation of the Vietnam War. He helped to pioneer the use of quantitative methods in management (as a member of Harvard's junior faculty, in World War II, at the Ford Motor Company, at the Department of Defense). After leaving the Johnson Administration his experience continued through thirteen years as President of the World Bank and in many further activities, including several books.[2]

To place the film, and current interest in the film, into perspective it also may help to know that during the initial seven years of the Vietnam War Secretary McNamara was the government's principle spokesman for the daily operation of the war. After visits to Vietnam in 1962, 1964, and 1966 he gave self-assured, optimistic reports and forecast that the National

Liberation Front in South Vietnam and the North Vietnamese government would abandon the war soon. Now, we know that he began to rethink these optimistic conclusions in 1966 and ordered a classified study to review the history of American involvement in Vietnam, including earlier escalation decisions. (This project became the extraordinary forty-seven volumes of The Pentagon Papers, which became public when they were leaked to The New York Times by Daniel Ellsberg in 1971.) McNamara's changing private advice to President Johnson led to his nomination as President of the World Bank in February 1968.

Mr. McNamara's passionate commitment to lesson-drawing and more rational management also responds to the history of the 20th century, when 160 million people (equal to 10% of the world's population in 1900) died as a result of state-organized violence. Because of scientific progress and the improved destructiveness of weapons, the absolute number and percentage of the human race killed in political violence increased from the 19th century; and in 1900 thoughtful people were even more optimistic about rationality, peace, and progress than we are today. In the 21st century, there are likely to be a larger number of governments and non-government actors with capabilities for nuclear (and biological) destruction and an abundance of low-cost conventional arms in the Third World. America may not begin the major wars of the 21st century, any more than it began the major wars of the 20th century, but America will be affected. And, perhaps even more, the lives of today's students in other countries.

<div align="center">II. <u>An Overview: Three Strategies of Learning and Two Levels</u></div>

The contributors to this symposium (Richard Ned Lebow, Michael Shapiro, Karen Turner, and myself) draw from the history of the twentieth century, from their own research in the US and North Vietnam, from the social sciences and humanities. The commentaries were written

independently. In addition to the references that accompany each contribution there are Websites based on the film that may be of interest to students, teachers, and scholars (e.g., www.choices. edu/FogofWar, including a teaching guide and other online resources developed at Brown University; www.sonyclassics.com/fogofwar). Of recent books, Stern's (Stern 2003) study of the Cuban Missile Crisis is to be highly recommended.

The symposium places The Fog of War in the context of three strategies of learning for American foreign policy (cognitive rules, empathy, and liberation from constructed realities and identities) and two levels (lessons for individuals and lessons for the design of systems). Here is a brief introduction:

III. Three Strategies

A.) Cognitive Rules

Mr. McNamara derives specific cognitive rules for individual decision makers or citizens who are part of a democratic decision process. This traditional (rational and science-related) strategy of learning is analogous to imagining a government to be an artificial intelligence computer program, and codifying rules to upgrade the program in its next release.

For the future, McNamara's most powerful lesson is to deal with the danger of nuclear weapons. He has concluded that the maximum possible rationality of even the brightest govern-ment CEOs - a fundamental faith of his earlier life (Lebow) - is insufficient for the safe future of humanity. This lesson is *guidance* to the programmers of Release 2.0, not the details of a new solution.

McNamara's strategy presents a demanding challenge to the scientific study of foreign policy decision making and international relations (Etheredge). Ideally, we would like cognitive rules

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that can re-run Mr. McNamara's life and/or American foreign policy in Release 2.0, and the upgraded design would retain (or improve upon) the accomplishments while avoiding the major mistakes (e.g., Vietnam and mistakes that caused unnecessary death and suffering, necessary complicity in war crimes). The McNamara/Morris rules leave gaps. For example: the film discusses the "domino theory" of the Cold War: The minds of decision makers in Washington extrapolated from the possibility of a visible public defeat in Vietnam to imagine an encourage-ment of Communist enemies worldwide, a collapse of American credibility and alliances (including the credibility of nuclear deterrence), a loss of control/chaos on a global scale, and also the (now familiar) virulent Right-wing attack machine in domestic politics (seen earlier in the "who lost China?" debate and McCarthyism). The escalation of the Vietnam War and - next - the major part of the destruction and American deaths in Vietnam (as Nixon and Kissinger sought to prevent defeat, or withdraw without a visible defeat, or with a "decent interval" before collapse) were shaped by such powerful and fearful imaginings.[3] Unfortunately, Mr. Morris did not press Secretary McNamara on the question of how to calibrate these imaginings - or even whether McNamara is prepared, as the anti-war movement in Vietnam wished, to reject the domino theory. Today, as alarmed American national security managers extrapolate from the 9/11 attacks and one deadly anthrax attack against Congress, and engage a new and more militarized foreign policy toward the Muslim world, we still await Mr. McNamara's rationality/science-based rule. Or, if it is unavailable: What is the meta-rule that the Release 2.0 programmers should include when an answer cannot be derived inside the mind of an American decision maker by the maximum available rationality, applied to the maximum-available historical and current evidence?

B.) <u>Empathy</u>

The second strategy is to improve empathy. <u>Merriam-Webster</u> definitions of empathy refer to "imaginative projection" and "vicarious experiencing" - i.e, to capabilities partly independent of analytic intelligence. The term has various meanings and serves various agendas: from McNamara's cognitive lawyer-like injunction for an accurate reconstruction of an opponent's objectives, perceptions, and negotiating positions; to an added assessment of personality that (as (Hamburg 2002) suggests for the case of Hitler) might sometimes dispel illusion and motivate preventive actions); to a deeper sense of shared emotion/humanity and identification that alters the moral equations of whose costs are deemed acceptable; to a spiritual I-Thou recognition/ relationship with another luminous, spiritual Being that transcends any use of other people as means rather than ends and that might (e.g., Turner, Lebow) be inconsistent with the practice of foreign policy and world politics as we have known it.

Across the four independent perspectives of this symposium, there is agreement about the importance of empathy, which also may be a foundation for ethics and morality. And a shared professional dissatisfaction with Mr. McNamara's limited discussion of the potential role that rigorous alterity- (other-) focused learning (Shapiro) and improved empathy can play to create wiser policy.[4]

C.) <u>Growth and Liberation from Constructed Realities: Discourses, Dramas, and Media</u>

The third strategy of learning focuses on the knower-in-the-world (as a package) and seeks to promote liberation from constructed realities: 1.) from linguistic/cognitive discourses; 2.) from powerful emotion- and imagination- infused psychodramas, especially entrapment within

hierarchical/technocratic/rational management mindsets and power dramas on a global scale; and 3.) from the implicit (and sometimes distorted) meanings and shaping of responses in media-created realities (e.g., like The Fog of War). Since Plato wrote his famous story in The Republic of the entrapped cave-dwellers (seeing only a conventional reality of shadows cast by the light of a fire, and hearing only echos) and of a struggle upward, to liberation and into the true light of the Sun, the Western political tradition and liberal arts education have been partly shaped by strategies to achieve liberation, growth, and enlightenment (Etheredge forthcoming).

The McNamara/Morris film is primarily a strategy one (cognitive rules) project, with a modest and limited attention to strategy two (empathy). It is silent about the added benefits of the third strategy for learning: A famous story tells of a visitor to the state of Maine who asked directions from a local resident. The punch line of the story is: "You can't get there from here." From different perspectives, each of the four commentators (who also are teachers) refer to methodologies and resources for deconstruction and liberation (including engagement with alternative discourses - Turner, Shapiro) and address a dialogue to the McNamara/Morris project that I would summarize (in my own words) as: "Perhaps useful, but after it is completed it will not ultimately take you to enlightenment, which may be what the world also needs and what you are seeking."

- It may be useful to note that McNamara (albeit inside Plato's cave) has been a leader to develop a new discourse of rational, responsible management of global policy. The new discourse requires, as Lebow argues, careful and critical evaluation of each of its elements, its missing elements (should efficiency be more important than justice?), and its implications. By contrast to this new discourse, traditional textbooks of international relationships tell stories of

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nation-state <u>personas</u> relating by a diplomacy based on the court protocols of absolute monarchs at the time of the Congress of Vienna (1815). And last-generation international law still imagines nations to be persons, writ large, with sovereignty and rights. But change the discourse, change the reality. Is it possible that Saddam Hussein was fired?

Will the new deconstruction/liberationist learning strategies work? President Reagan may be an interesting example. During the renewed US/USSR nuclear arms race of the early Reagan years, former Secretary of Defense McNamara said that (rational) arms control specialists believed only a 15% reduction of nuclear warheads was possible. But, in partnership with Mikhail Gorbachev, was there in President Reagan - as a former movie actor - a sensibility that reality is made-up, that gave him a kindred spirit with the most radical academic deconstructionist? And that gave him a statesman's capacity to move far beyond McNamara's anticipation, and shed an old Cold War reality and preoccupation as simply as if he was completing a movie role and was ready to move on? Shapiro and Turner (also, Lebow) are pushing the frontiers of a new strategy. Any new methodology that gives people the mastery and enlightenment to identify and shed old discourses and dramas provides a new dimension of learning in international politics.

IV. <u>A Second Level: Improved Designs of Institutions and Systems</u>

The focus of the McNamara/Morris film, and most of these commentaries, is learning at the level of individuals. But lessons must be embodied in domestic institutions, which is another level of discussion. (For example, President Nixon derived different lessons from the Vietnam War and concluded that military conscription should be eliminated in favor of an all-volunteer military to reduce domestic political constraints on future uses of American military power

overseas, a change that was adopted in 1973.) Other nations also learn: embodying lessons in new institutions of the international system is another important arena - e.g. (Ikenberry 2000; Mandelbaum 2002).

In America, several major foundations and NGOs have a primary and continuing concern to draw and implement domestic and international lessons to improve American foreign policy and world politics. A useful overview of recent thinking is (Hamburg 2002). Alongside a persistent "fog of war" there also may be a persistent "fog of peacetime knowledge" in foreign policies and foreign policy institutions in many countries: One of the emerging system-level questions, which I touch upon briefly in my own contribution, is whether emerging global communications technologies, especially numerous, lowcost, desktop global television channels using Internet broadband, will be able to provide new and useful linkups. Change the discourse, change the reality?

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Endnotes

1. Policy Sciences Center, New Haven CT. Contact: lloyd.etheredge@ yale.edu; URL: www.policyscience.net. Thanks to Lynn Etheredge and Roger Hurwitz for discussion of an earlier draft.

2. One of the important contributions of Mr. McNamara's managerial rationality, not discussed in the film, was the evolution of nuclear strategy (from "massive nuclear retaliation" to "flexible response") and the development of new weapons and rational frameworks (e.g., second strike capability, mutual assured destruction) for deterrence and as a foundation for arms control. He also began a process to enroll the leaders of the USSR in this framework.

3. Psychologists can observe the dramatized, and sometimes overdramatized, imaginings of chaotic collapse into a Hobbesian state of nature ("persecutory, psychotic, and depressive anxieties") across many settings: Jaques, E. 1955. Social systems as a defense against persecutory and depressive anxiety. In *New directions in psychoanalysis: The significance of infant conflict in the pattern of adult behavior*, edited by M. Klein, P. Heimann and R. E. Money-Kyrle. New York: Basic Books. My contribution (below) suggests that the domino "theory" (sic) is a vividly-imagined dramatization in the minds of national security decision

makers with a type of high power motivation. However this diagnosis does not establish the validity of the imaginings: some opponents also may live inside their own messianic dramas, sense weakness, and push the falling dominos.

4. The analysis of "others" would include the current ways in which the American people, reporters, and other political actors are perceived, and the defining conceptions of different situations, expectations, and roles - all of which shape the rules of ethics and morality that are applied. Lebow (below) vigorously challenges the legitimacy of McNamara's use of these defenses. I include morality and ethics with empathy, for purposes of introducing this symposium, although they also might be considered a separate area of learning and partly developed by different methods.

ROBERT S. McNAMARA: MAX WEBER'S NIGHTMARE

Richard Ned Lebow[1]

Robert S. McNamara belongs to a blessedly small circle of people who – by his own uncomfortable admission – arguably qualify for prosecution as war criminals in *two* wars. Not surprisingly, his reflections on these events on the whole tell us more about Robert McNamara than they do about the lessons we might learn from them. He is horrified by the destructiveness of modern warfare, speaks out against proliferation and preemption, but is categorically unwilling to apologize for his actions. In a recent public appearance at Berkeley, he danced around the question of whether the Bush administration should be criticized for its invasion of Iraq, failing once again – he refused to speak out against the Vietnam War after leaving office in February 1968 - to use his influence for the cause of peace. He is outspokenly hostile toward officials who had the courage to oppose the Vietnam War. In Berkeley, he refused to take a question, or meet privately, with Daniel Ellsberg because he considers him a traitor.[2]

McNamara's long career – and now, burgeoning post-career – convey an extraordinarily important lesson, but not one he talks or writes about. It has to do with the dangerous emergence of efficiency as a value and the related substitution of quantitative indicators of success for qualitative ones. Like a skilled surfer, McNamara positioned himself perfectly (MBA in 1939 from Harvard Business School) to ride the crest of the wave, and what a ride it was. From service in the Army Air Force, where he used his technical and organizational skills to facilitate the destruction of Japanese cities, to the Ford Motor Company and its presidency, to Secretary of Defense in the Kennedy

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Administration, where he played a major – some would say dominant – role in bringing about and managing the catastrophic American intervention in Vietnam. Before that wave dashed itself against the rocks, he had the good fortune to cut loose and find a lesser wave – the World Bank – to carry him to the tidal pool of retirement. Even here, occasional surges of undertow – his books on Vietnam and now, *Fog of War* - threaten to take him back out to open water.

For political scientists, the wave is more important than its rider. It is driven by a powerful current of faith that most problems are amenable to technical solutions, and that clear, logical thinking wed to good data can discover those solutions and make their implementation more effective. The technocratic approach to problems has led to progress, especially in the material domain, but it has not come without costs.

Toward the end of the proto-Enlightenment of fifth century Athens, Sophocles wrote *Oedipus* to warn his fellow citizens of the danger of rationality divorced from principle. Nietzsche (1962) picked up on this theme and posited a sharp opposition between the Apollonian art of sculpture and the non-plastic Dionysian art of music. The world of the intellect is Apollonian, and much to the detriment of the human spirit, Nietzsche insisted, has dominated Western philosophy and culture since the time of Socrates. Weber (1994) gave Nietzsche's dichotomy a modern twist by reframing it as a conflict between bureaucracy and charisma. He associated charisma with human creativity, which found its fullest expression in the man of culture (*Kulturmensch*). Bureaucracy was stifling this creativity by organizing life around dehumanizing routines and empowering the expert but soulless technician (*Fachmensch*). As reason shaped the structure and ends (*Zweckrationalität*) of all kinds of human activities, including religion,

art and the academy, it led to a corresponding disenchantment with nature and the mysteries of life, and with it, a loss of wholeness and decline in communal identification.

Karl Mannheim (1940: 39-75) grasped the most disturbing implication of Nietzsche's and Weber's pessimistic vision: runaway rationality – by individuals or organizations - inevitably results in destructive irrationality. When he penned these words, Mannheim had Nazi Germany in mind, but his argument, and the Weberian foundation on which it rests, are equally applicable to the United States. It is far from the most bureaucratic of countries, but it is the society in which modernity – which found expression, according to Weber, in the standardization, commercialization and quantitative evaluation of all aspects of life - has gone the furthest. The powers that opposed and retarded its progress in Europe – a well-entrenched aristocracy, conservative, state-supported religions and long-standing class divisions – were non-existent or the weakest in the United States. It is no coincidence that the assembly line, Taylorism, modern advertising, push-button warfare and a belief that heaven resembles upper-middle class suburbia, replete with SUVs, are all American inventions. For the same reasons, it is also the country in which science, professionalism and ethnic and religious tolerance have achieved their fullest development or expression.

The career of Robert McNamara provides a stunning illustration of the downside of Weberian modernity. He was an enthusiastic analyst and functionary in the American bombing campaign of Japan, a campaign that deliberately blurred the distinction between military and civilians and sought to kill, maim and make homeless as many of the latter as possible. It found its fullest expression in the fire bombing of Tokyo, in part an experiment to test the premise that a large enough fire would be to a great extent self-

sustaining by creating currents to draw in oxygen from beyond its perimeter. The deaths of 100,000 civilians – the estimated casualties of the greatest fire bombing raids on 9-10 March 1945 - were merely a welcome byproduct of organizational self-promotion and scientific curiosity run amok.

The Ford Motor Company did not kill people, but it did treat its workers as expendable resources to be manipulated and coerced in pursuit of profit. McNamara joined the company following his discharge in 1946 at a time when the company was anxious to regain its full authority over the shop floor, which it had agreed to share with trade unions to stimulate wartime production. Ford sped up the production lines and cut back on relief workers in violation of the agreement it had negotiated with the United Auto Workers. These measures, which put worker safety at risk, were designed to compensate for stoppages in the assembly lines caused by administrative failures in coordinating the flow of parts that fed lines at the Lincoln and River Rouge assembly plants. Ford management refused to recognize the Union's competence to raise the issue of production standards, hired thugs to beat up and intimidate protesting workers, and not surprisingly, goaded the UAW into a major and relatively successful strike in 1949 (Asher and Edsforth 1995). Throughout the 1950s, relations between management and workers remained tense as Ford continued to violate agreements it had signed with the Union about production standards and pay structure. McNamara was part of Ford's management team throughout this period; he became a director in 1957 and president in 1960. His principal contribution was to introduce the same methods of operations research that had guided target selection and the logistics of the bombing campaign. By rationalizing the procedures of supply and production – and treating the human

component as merely another quantitative input in the process – he brought "efficiency" and profit to Ford. As Weber predicted, organizational goals and procedures become the only yardsticks for evaluating decisions and behavior. Reneging on contractual commitments to unions and workers, and intimidating them to the extent that the company's power permitted, were reasonable actions to the executives and technocrats whose understanding of justice was synonymous with organizational goals. Such a labor policy - common to GM and Chrysler as well - was not only unethical, it was significantly at odds with substantive rationality as the capture of an increasingly sizeable percentage of the American automobile market by more efficient Japanese and European firms would soon demonstrate.

The Vietnam War was characterized by the same arrogance of reason and even more managerial callousness toward human beings. Intervention was motivated by political concerns but was narrowly framed by McNamara and his associates at Defense as a technical, military problem. They never questioned that America would emerge victorious by virtue of its superior firepower and wealth, and devised all kinds of quantifiable measures – including the infamous body count – to assess progress toward victory. Because they never considered the ethical dimension, McNamara and the other hawks in the Johnson administration failed to recognize how politically inappropriate there frame of reference was and how their intervention was doomed from the outset. It encouraged or confirmed local suspicions that the United States was another colonial power seeking to dominate Vietnam, if not all of Indochina. At Geneva in 1954, the Eisenhower administration had insisted on the temporary division of Vietnam, and had installed a puppet regime in the South headed by a northern Catholic refugee, Ngo Dinh

Diem. From the outset - and with full American support - Diem renounced the unification

provision of the Geneva Accords and the elections that were to bring it about in 1956. By

the time the Johnson Administration began its air war against North Vietnam in 1964 and

then inserted ground forces into the South to prop up Diem, his regime had done its best

to roll back land reform, extract rents through every kind of corrupt practice and only

kept itself in power by murdering or imprisoning opponents who ranged across almost

the entire political spectrum. There are still pundits who insist that different military

tactics would have led to victory, but this is a pipedream, as is McNamara's specious and

self-serving contention that a diplomatic settlement was only prevented by a North

Vietnamese misunderstanding. Vietnam was a political struggle where victory required

not only appropriate skills but an ideology and policies that appealed to a wide cross-

section of the Vietnamese people. American military intervention was a response to the

loss of that struggle, signalled by the impending collapse of its local client. It should have

been obvious – and was to many observers – that military intervention could not extract

roasting chestnuts from the fire but only make that fire hotter.

There was – or should have been - an important ethical dimension to American

policy. As far as I know, ethical considerations never entered seriously into the

deliberations of the Johnson administration. Neither the president nor his secretary of

defense gave much thought to the relationship between ends and means. Was the goal of

an independent South Vietnam – one that is, not controlled by communists – worth the

blood and treasure this would entail? And just how much bloodshed was there likely to

be? What kinds of strategies and tactics might minimize these human and economic costs

and maximize the chances of achieving the desired end? Driven by its foreign and

domestic political goals, and cocksure in its expectation of success, the administration

entered the fray without ever seriously considering the relationship between means and

ends. It just assumed that the means at its disposal would work. But an American-

supported coup and subsequent behind-the-scenes political maneuvering failed to bring to

power a government that could mobilize much in the way of popular support. On the

military front, the massive use of firepower was often quite arbitrary, obliterating entire

villages and their residents. It was apparent to observers at the time that American tactics

were entirely unsuitable to a guerilla war, and served to sustain the flow of recruits to the

Viet Cong. Even if they considered ethics only in its narrowest, instrumental sense,

American policymakers ought to have thought about the likely consequences of their

behavior for their international reputation – and ironically, it was concern for reputation

that motivated intervention. At a deeper level, rationalization and bureaucratization - just

as Weber feared - rode roughshod over the Kantian imperative. People were treated as

means, not as ends. Japanese civilians in the 1940s, auto workers in the 1950s and

Vietnamese civilians and American conscripts in the 1960s were objects to destroy,

exploit or expend – and in the case of Vietnam, in pursuit of irrational and unattainable

ends.

In *Agamemnon*, (763-64) Aeschylus opines that "Ancient Hubris breeds, again

and again, Another Hubris, young and stout." The Anglo-American invasion of Iraq is

but the latest example of great power arrogance and managerial irrationality. While

successful in its initial stages, the Iraqi invasion is as flawed in its conception – and, if

possible, more confused in its execution. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and his planners

framed it as a technical military problem, although as always, force was being used to

achieve political goals. The narrowness of their vision became fully apparent when the only action they took in the chaos that ensued after their entry into Baghdad was to send troops to protect the Iraqi oil ministry. Now facing an insurrection that has claimed more American lives than the invasion, they continue to ape their unsuccessful predecessors. Johnson, McNamara and their generals attributed continuing Viet Cong resistance to infiltration and support from the world-wide communist movement. Bush, Rumsfeld and their brass would like to pin the blame on Al-Qaeda. American forces in Vietnam escalated their search-and-destroy missions. American forces in Iraq are doing the same, once again blind to the likely political consequences of their crude and relatively ineffective use of force against civilians. As the Greek playwrights and Max Weber understood, it is impossible to formulate interests intelligently outside of some language of justice.[3]

McNamara, now 87 years of age, is still in top form. In *Fog of War* and his Berkeley interview, he always has appropriate factoids at hand; he laments, for example, that 160 million people died violent deaths in the twentieth century. Much of this carnage is attributable to psychopathic leaders like Stalin, Hitler and Pol Pot. But many wars – like Vietnam and Iraq – were initiated by leaders who were misguided but not evil in the sense that they derived pleasure from the destruction of other people. The psychopaths could not have wreaked such destruction, and the saner leaders might have exercised more restraint, if they had not been served by stables of able and encouraging technocrats. McNamara might properly reflect upon the sobering thought that one of the reasons why the last century's death toll was so stunningly high is that there are so many officials like him in high and low places around the world.

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[2] For the account in The New York Times: (Murphy 2004).

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3 Lebow (2004) lays out this argument in detail.

A Film of Missed Opportunities
by
Karen Turner[1]

The Fog of War is a film of missed opportunities. For those of us who came of age during the Vietnam War, Errol Morris's presentation offers no new insights. How much richer the ironies of McNamara's eleven lessons for life would have been if the director had forced the old strategist to follow one of his own admonitions: know your enemy. Or even better, know how your enemy views you and your war.

One of the most vivid early memories of my first stay in Hanoi in 1993 involved a tour to the Ho Chi Minh Museum. Arranged according to the countries the peripatetic Ho had visited in his formative years, the U.S. exhibition was dominated by a Ford Edsel car. At first I didn't get it, but then our Vietnamese friend murmured, "McNamara, Ford, efficiency." It didn't matter how much blame the former President of Ford Motor bears

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[1] Karen Turner, Holy Cross College and Harvard Law School. Author with Phan Thanh Hao of *Even the Women Must Fight: Memories of War from North Vietnam* (Turner, 1998) and producer of *Hidden Warriors: Women on the Ho Chi Minh Trail* (Hen Hao Productions 2004). Contact: turner@holycross.edu.

for this symbol of failed technology. The museum's message was this: We won. We survived an enemy that used the most advanced weapons in the world and one of America's most famous efficiency experts to try to destroy us. Technology is never enough, for it was human will that triumphed in the end.

My return to Vietnam in 1995 coincided with Robert McNamara's first visit to Hanoi since the end of the war that the Vietnamese call the "American War." That year marked the twentieth year anniversary of "Reunification" in the parlance of the winners, "The fall of Saigon" for the losers. By then I was deeply immersed in a book project that focused on the 170,000 Vietnamese women volunteers who defended the Ho Chi Minh Trail between 1965 and 1974. I noticed right away that the mood had shifted in Hanoi since my last visit in 1993. As I interviewed male and female veterans and intellectuals, watched Vietnamese television, and read some of the fiction produced by military writers, I detected that a somber assessment of the costs of war for ordinary people dominated all forms of discourse - even the official media. A documentary produced by the Military Film Studio, for example, featured a modern team of naval officers with cameras traveling down the coast to film the history of the "no-name" ships that ran supplies from North to South by sea from 1959 to 1972. In one episode, an old woman peddler in a fishing village recalls on camera how she gave up her gold to buy a boat and Japanese engine

for the navy - and sent her son to the army to serve the cause. When asked if the government has ever repaid her, she replies that she has never been reimbursed, much less thanked. But her greater sacrifice was her son, imprisoned by the South Vietnamese and never recognized as a veteran after the end of the war.

Having worked in China, where such programs would never be shown on television, I was surprised at the outburst of resentment against the government that surfaced in the 1990s. A Vietnamese indictment of war was available in a cheap photocopied knock off in Hanoi street stalls by 1995, and everyone knew that the soldier-writer had paid his dues when he wrote on behalf of the peasants who supported the military. Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* (Bao 1996) celebrates the common peasant soldiers forgotten by the government after they sacrificed their youth. "They had simple, gentle, ethical outlooks on life. It was clearly those same friendly simple peasant fighters who were the ones ready to bear the catastrophic consequences of this war. Yet they never had a say in deciding the course of the war." Bao Ninh places the blame where it belongs, on "those damned idiots up there in the north enjoying the profits of war."

In this climate of disenchantment with the old men who send young

men to war that Robert McNamara reentered the war story. From press reports I knew that he had sparred with his wartime nemesis, the aging general Giap, about such controversial events as the Gulf of Tonkin incidents. But as I talked with ordinary people, I learned that it wasn't this high level visit that interested them, but rather a televised reunion between an American pilot and the Vietnamese militia woman who had captured him after his plane was shot down. These two people had become famous during the war on both sides, for the huge American and his petite captor had served as an emblem of Vietnam's spiritual strength over the U.S, giant, a triumphal image for the Vietnamese, a source of shame for Americans. But in 1995, the reconciliation between these two ordinary people who happened to be enemies once took on new importance. Robinson apologized for the destruction his country had wrought on the village and paid respects to the war dead. Mrs. Mai responded that he had been a model prisoner - not eating more than his share, cooperating with the villagers who cared for him before he went to Hanoi to prison.

As I worked on my project, I learned that most Vietnamese believe that everyone suffers in war, that ordinary people get caught up in the political ambitions of the powerful, and that blame should never be placed on ordinary soldiers who serve a cause. My husband, a veteran of

the war who had returned to Vietnam to teach, was always moved by how warmly people who knew his history welcomed him. Perhaps it is because of their long history of war that the Vietnamese take a more philosophical view than Americans. Or perhaps it is because they don't expect to participate in government, that they don't elect the leaders who send young men to war. But we have lessons to learn from them about the human costs of war and the possibilities for true reconciliation. As a female film director who fought in the anti-French and American wars told me, "Politics change, but human emotions remain the same."

As I talked with veterans of the volunteer youth brigades who had left their homes in 1965, I asked how they viewed the American strategist most directly responsible for ordering the bombings that propelled them into war, that destroyed homes, lives, futures. And one of them asked me, "Could you just tell us why your country came to bomb our village? "For them, the Cold War and its military consequences meant nothing. Intellectuals were more interested in the role of U.S. decision makers, but only to a point. When I talked with one of my friends, a writer who had lost family during the bombings of Hanoi, she placed McNamara squarely in a Vietnamese context: "You know, we Vietnamese feel rather sorry for him. He has a son who is not well you know. He is suffering too." And so, she placed Robert McNamara in a Vietnamese context that denies

heroism and understands that everyone pays for decisions that wreak violence.

I would not expect any American filmmaker dealing with a subject like Robert McNamara to zone in exclusively on the other side of this war that still troubles our memories. Yes, the filmmaker does include a few clips of Robert McNamara's visit to Hanoi in 1995, but they focus entirely on the highly educated American former Secretary of Defense expressing surprise that the Vietnamese have a long history of resistance to outside aggression, that their oldest adversary has been China, that nationalism has always trumped ideology. But *The Fog of War* treats the Vietnamese people as a sideshow who appear in a few fragmented and slow-motion vignettes.

Today as the U.S. and Vietnam have moved beyond the embargo and enjoy full diplomatic relations, there is no excuse for not delving more deeply into the history of the war from the other side. A wealth of information, much of it in English and easily accessible exists for anyone who cares enough to really "get under the skin" of the Vietnamese. My own work on women veterans has been enriched by novels in English, such as Sorrow of War (cited above) and Novel without a Name (Duong 1996) - powerful fictionalized accounts by Vietnamese veterans that

refuse to celebrate war in any form. Christian Appy's collection of oral histories: <u>Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from all Sides</u> (Appy 2003), presents insights from strategists, soldiers, and civilians on both sides. Curbstone Press and the University of Massachusetts Press routinely publish fiction and memoirs authored by Vietnamese. German archives have made wartime footage from the Vietnamese side available. How much we could have learned if Morris had paid just a bit more attention to the complexities of war, had he not fallen into the trap that ensnared McNamara himself, of forgetting about the Vietnamese as human, as actors, as critics, and not simply strategists. If we probed too deeply, however, we might discover in Vietnam a feeling more disturbing than hatred - impatience with America's preoccupation with its lost war. As one Vietnamese woman told me, " I get tired sometimes of trying to make guilty Americans feel better about losing the war and harming so many Vietnamese."

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<u>Lifting the Fog</u>
by
Michael J. Shapiro[1]

I. <u>Introduction: Autobiography and History</u>

Watching Errol Morris's *The Fog of War* has to remind anyone who has been

attentive to the media history of the Vietnam War of how persistent America's Vietnam

experience remains as a marker in the ongoing autobiographies of those who played a

part in shaping it and in the related, continually revised, national self-understandings of

the U.S. as well. Ward Just's post Vietnam novel, *American Blues* (Just 1984)

articulates the "radical entanglement between history and autobiography" that the

continuing Vietnam-related media events reflect.[2] A writer, the novel's narrator and

main character, finds that his return to Vietnam, where he (like Just himself) had been

posted during the war, fails to produce a resolution that will allow him to complete his

history of the war and allow him to achieve a sense of personal resolution as well. As

one commentator on the novel puts it, "What the narrator confronts in postwar Vietnam

is not historical clarification but new categories of mystery" (Myers 1988, p. 219). And,

as Just's narrator puts it, "I had grown comfortable inside the American illusion and

could not comprehend the Vietnamese, so it was hopeless weighing and measuring

today against yesterday" (<u>op. cit.</u>, p. 201).

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Morris's documentary. Contact: shapiro@hawaii.edu.

[2] The quotation is from an analysis of the Dan Rather- Norman Schwarzkopf

returns to Vietnam and Normandy in (Shapiro 1997).

In stark contrast with Just and his narrator, Robert McNamara has committed himself to clarity about the Vietnam experience and to a definitive post Vietnam pedagogy about the future of war. After seeking to reflect on and illuminate retrospectively his policymaking role during the Vietnam War (McNamara 1995), he turned from autobiography to dialogue, seeking the kind of enlightenment that he thinks can be derived from treating history in general, and the American-Vietnamese experience in particular as an "argument without end" (McNamara 1999). Stating that he wanted to "learn from history," and, in particular, to identify the "missed opportunities" to terminate the conflict before it achieved a monstrous death toll, he puts his methodological faith in documents as a corrective to faulty recollections. "The record is clear," he insists, and he proceeds to seek participation by his former enemies, General Giap among others, in a dialog aimed at identifying "misunderstandings (ibid., p 26). Although the former Vietnamese leaders turned out to be largely resistant to McNamara's shared misunderstanding model, his return to Vietnam seemed to satisfy his enlightenment faith nevertheless. With or without full cooperation from his Vietnamese counterparts, he produces "lessons," that he hopes will make the twenty first century less violent than the twentieth.

Like Norman Schwarzkopf, who returned to Vietnam five years earlier to reflect on *his* personal Vietnam War role as well as to try and relocate Vietnam's place within the American collective imagination, much of McNamara's effort is aimed at the past rather than the future. In Schwarzkopf's case, the return, broadcast in June, 1993 as an

episode in the CBS television series, *CBS Reports with Dan Rather*, was "designed [as I have noted elsewhere] to restore 'the soldier hero' to an honored place in the American political culture" (Shapiro 1997, p. 151). The dialogue between Schwarzkopf and Rather and the cuts to testimony of soldiers who had served under Schwarzkopf in Vietnam (and have also returned seeking resolution by communicating with their former "enemies") focus on the sacrifices soldiers made while serving their country in a war about which they retain doubts as to its official justification. At a minimum, the Schwarzkopf return, like McNamara's is more than a lament about the "tragedy" of warring violence and a commitment to diminish it in the future; it is also a history-rectifying enterprise, working at both autobiographical and national levels.[3] What distinguishes the Schwarzkopf return from McNamara's is the cooperation of Schwarzkopf's interlocutor, Rather, with the Schwarzkopf perspective and the unambiguous cooperation of their Vietnamese interviewees. Those selected, ranging from business administration students to public officials, seem eager to participate in a definitive resolution of the former enmities; they testify that they bear no grudges and are eager to bury the past and move on to a successful, entrepreneurial future.

II. Fogs of War

Rather than merely lifting the fog of war, Morris's documentary offers conflicting views about what it is that constitutes the fog.

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[3] Schwarzkopf has a more thoroughgoing attempt to efface the "Vietnam syndrome" (the loss of prestige for soldiers and the nation in an unpopular war) in his autobiography (Schwarzkopf 1992).

While McNamara's return failed to produce the level of resolution-through-dialogue for which he had hoped, it doubtless seemed to him that the documentary format, in which he produces long monologues in response to queries from someone with whom he has no history, allows him to impose the kind of resolution he seeks on his and America's Vietnam experience, as he expounds on the "eleven lessons from the life of Robert McNamara" that organize the flow of the documentary. He appeared to think he was lifting the "fog of war" with lucid and progressive thinking. But such focused documentaries merely give the interviewee the illusion of personal control over meaning-making. Reviewer Roger Ebert refers to the documentary's presentation of McNamara's lessons as "his thoughts...as extrapolated by Morris" (Ebert 2004, p. 32). But extrapolation is hardly the appropriate analytic. McNamara's articulated "thoughts" do not exhaust the narrative space of the documentary. Morris's camera work - the ways in which he frames the speaking McNamara and the cuts and juxtapositions of his editing, as McNamara's words are interspersed with historical, archival footage and taped conversations (along with the contrapuntal cast of Philip Glass's musical score) - renders a conflicting, dysnarrative challenge to McNamara's accounts. Ultimately, as I will argue, attention to the form of Morris's documentary, reveals alternative loci of meaning-making, McNamara's verbalized accounts on the one hand and Morris's assemblage of voices and scenes on the other. This documentary can be seen as a drama that, not unlike feature films on war, renders a context that threatens the sense making of its protagonist.

In general, documentaries should not be radically distinguished from feature films. As Michael Renov (Renov 1993, pp. 2-3) points out, the documentary's use of

> high or low camera angles (...effects conventionalized in
> fiction film and television), close-ups which trade emotional
> resonance for spatial integrity, the use of telephoto or wide-
> angle lenses which squeeze or distort space, the use of
> editing to make time contract, expand or become rhythmic..
> [are all effects that]...documentary shares [with]...its fictional
> counterpart.

A recognition of the convergences between the two genres brings to mind a feature film about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the outstanding documentary filmmaker, Danis Tanovic: *No Man's Land* (2001), in which fog imagery is prominent at the outset. The action begins in a fog as a small company of soldiers from one side of the conflict move unseen across a field. As the fog lifts, another symbolic one descends. After all but one of the previously obscured soldiers is shot from a position across the frontier, once they are visible, and after the lone survivor makes it into the protection of a trench, much of the rest of the film treats a dialogue between this survivor and an enemy he encounters in the trench. Their dialogue turns out to be constrained by the rhythms of conflicting moments of coercion as one versus the other holds a gun. The fog that remains is an ideological lens; it involves ethnic mythologies through which antagonistic perceptions are screened. Ultimately, the encounter between the antagonists, each of whose mundane and vulnerable humanity - rendered in close-ups - belies the grounds of their mutual hostility, Their encounter is a microcosm for the absurdity of the wider

conflict, which is rendered in the ironies delivered by the shifting and layered film narrative as it exposes the irrational enmities and hypocrisies of all parties to the conflict - antagonists, UN Peace keepers, and journalists, among others. In Tanovic's treatment of war, the fog clears only materially; it remains dense as the pseudo-ethnic basis of the antagonisms and in the conceits of the "humanitarian" forces.[4]

In the McNamara-Morris documentary encounter, the fogs are also conceptual, but, as I have noted, they are differently rendered. Bracketing the form of the documentary for the moment, the simple story line is about the life and current thoughts of one of the architects of the Vietnam War. *What* the documentary is about is shaped by two inter-articulated narratives. A story of U.S. wars from WW I to Vietnam, and near-war crises (especially the Cuban Missile Crisis) and McNamara's life story, which begins with his earliest recollection of the celebrations at the close of the First World War. But *how* the documentary is about these two stories, one collective and one biographical, is disjunctive. McNamara's treatment of the inter-articulation between the two stories is not the same as Morris's. While McNamara narrates the meaning of events in his personal life and in his occupational and public roles - as an air force logistical coordinator in World War II, an executive in the Ford Motor Company, and Secretary of Defense in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations - another narrative is being screened.

McNamara's first remarks, as he takes his seat for the screening, is exemplary.

[4] For a treatment of the pseudo-ethnic legitimation for the hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see (Hayden 1996) and (Mehmedinovic 1998).

Reflecting his reputation (and self-understanding) as one who is virtually omniscient and absolutely in charge of personal and historical memory, he asserts, "Now I remember *exactly* the sentence I left off on." But this assertion of control, which doubtless McNamara thought he retained while being enabled by Morris's interrotron (a video device that allows him and his interrogator and thus viewers to make direct eye contact), dissipates rapidly after his opening remark. Two aspects of Morris's documentary filming wrest control over meaning-making and reinflect the interpretations one can derive from McNamara's accounts.

The first, most obvious, and more familiar meaning-making effect of the documentary is achieved through the editing process. While documentary evidence belies some of McNamara's accounts, especially his self-positioning as one reluctant to endorse military action during the Cuban Missile Crisis and during the military escalation in Vietnam during Lyndon Johnson's presidency, my focus here is on form, on *how* the cuts to archival footage and taped conversations disturb or alter the contexts that McNamara uses to frame his claims rather than on their veracity.[5] A couple of brief examples of the most significant challenges to McNamara's perspective on his role should suffice. First, under the rubric of lesson # 2: "Rationality will not save us," McNamara asserts the limits of rationality, noting that the world was saved from an all-out nuclear war by luck because all the relevant decision makers were rational. But here his discourse is wholly geopolitical. What was at risk, he says in explicating this lesson

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[5] For an account of the errors in McNamara's recollections of the two cases, see (Kaplan 2003).

(and it is repeated in other segments), is the existence of "nations," by which he means sovereign states. Juxtaposed to his remarks, however, are scenes of populations. The viewer is shown fast-forwarded panning and tracking shots of pedestrians in dense urban venues, a blur of moving crowds. At such moments, McNamara's reasons of state, his macro-level, geopolitical focus, effectively evacuates vulnerable civilians from his scenario, while, in juxtaposition, Morris's editing brings them back, foregrounding the human lives rather than the states that were at risk.

Second, in the segment treating lesson # 4: "Proportionality should be a guideline in war," McNamara evinces an awareness of the slaughter of civilian populations, admitting, in the case of the fire bombing of civilian populations in Japan for example, that he was "part of the mechanism that in a sense recommended it." While here, as elsewhere, McNamara's discourse is primarily logistical, Morris's editing situates the mechanisms that deliver violence from a perceptual and technologically mediated distance: meetings of the Joint Chiefs, military planning sessions with maps and charts, teletyped messages, and scenes of industrial production and the fitting out of weapons, alongside scenes of the devastation caused by the bombing: cities destroyed, and heaps of burned and maimed bodies in burned-out landscapes. The juxtapositions make McNamara's career of logistical distance bizarre and insensitive to the human costs to which his war planning contributed *disproportionately* (as Morris's images point out, for they show many scenes of McNamara in planning sessions at many levels of executive and military decision making). And they make his vocabulary and grammar, especially when he frequently resorts to the passive voice in this segment, distancing as

well. In short, much of the editing process of the documentary changes what McNamara renders as a necessary evil (McNamara's lesson # 9 is: "To do good, you have to do evil") to an evil, followed by its legitimation as necessity.

While in *The Fog of War*, the editing carries much of the burden of the documentary's interpretation of the consequences of McNamara's (former and current) perspectives, there is another, more subtle aspect of the camera work that wrests control from McNamara's responses and monologues. Although the interrotron allows McNamara to make eye contact with his interlocutor and thus to look directly at the viewers, he is rarely in the center of the frame. Effectively, the decentering of McNamara is a large part of what I have termed the dysnarrative flow of the documentary. Morris's camera offers us a body that is recalcitrant to the story it is telling. A McNamara that wants to fill the entire space of the narrative fails to command and fill the frame. Often he is shown off to one side and cut off so that one sees him from just below the neck to only part of his head. The dysnarrative effect of Morris's continual repositioning of the McNamara body comports with the critical effect of some feature films in which bodies are positioned to resist narrative complicity. As the film theorist, Vincent Amiel, points out, in classic cinema the tendency was "to utilize the body as a simple vector of the narrative, abandoning its density for the exclusive benefit of its functionality," but more critically oriented directors offer a body that is not an "instrument in the service of narrative articulation."[6]

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[6] The quotations are from (Amiel 1998, p. 2), my translation.

Lest there be any doubt about the semiotic effect of the way he distributes McNamara's body around the frame, cutting more at some moments (especially when McNamara is being the least self-disclosing) and less at others, but rarely allowing him a centered and full bodied exposure, Morris's epilogue seals the effect. At the end of the film, as McNamara is called to account, Morris asks him if he feels "responsible," even "guilty" about his contribution to the enormous loss of life in Vietnam. While McNamara, now seated behind the wheel of a car, refuses to answer the question, he is more radically cut than at any previous moment. First, only part of his head and one eye is in the frame; then his whole face is available, but only in the car's rear view mirror. For McNamara, as he states toward the end of the interview, the "fog of war" is merely war's complexity, the large number of variables one must consider and manage. Morris's filming suggests, however, that the fog is elsewhere; it exists, among other places, in the lens through which McNamara saw and continues to see the world - emphasized in the last shots of McNamara's face (the only ones taken from an oblique angle) in which the most centered element is one lens of his glasses.

III. Conclusion: Responsibility

The overriding conclusion about his tenure as Secretary of Defense that McNamara wants to emphasize derives from the contrast he sees between what he calls the success of the Kennedy administration's actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Johnson administration's failure to terminate the Vietnam War before huge casualties occurred. He ascribes the success of the former to "empathy," the ability, in his words, "to get inside the other person's skin" and the failure of the second to lack of empathy. It

is clear from his writings as well as from his remarks in the Morris's documentary that empathy for McNamara is not an ethical concept. It is, rather, a perception of one's enemy's motives and intentions. The conceptual armament with which McNamara treats the "other," is of a piece with his general tendency to regard the world through a strategic lens. From his perspective, insofar as he has accumulated debts during his career, they are to the people he served in government, not the alterity that was the target of his government's war policy.

However, there is another way to approach one's debts, an alternative to McNamara's perspective on responsibility and to the persistence of the militarized lens through which the U.S. sees its current "enemies." A Canadian Professor of literature, Claude Mark Hurlbert, teaches Iraqi literature in order to overcome the alienation of his students from a people who are represented as, alternatively, fanatic and enigmatic by the militaries and the media of western powers (Hurlbert 2003). Hurlbert draws upon the work of Bill Readings to locate the question of our obligation to "explore the nature of our incalculable obligations to others," which Readings renders as a "network of obligations" that emerges when we can appreciate "singularities," the "unique aggregates of historically specific characteristics existing within webs or relations to other singularities" (Hurlbert 2003, p. 56; Readings 1995, p. 185). Hurlbert's and Reading's attention to our debts to otherness contrasts markedly with McNamara "empathy," which is a management tool rather than an ethical disposition. What is revealed when Morris's documentary lifts the fog of McNamara's strategic thinking is the absence of a self-reflective sense of responsibility to those who turned out to be the

victims of the policies that he helped to put in place. A lyrical passage from novelist,

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* fits the sense of this revelation and provides

an apt conclusion. Morris's *The Fog of War* serves to "nudge [McNamara's] hidden

morality from its resting place and make it bubble to the surface and float for a while. In

clear view. For everyone to see" (Roy 1997, p. 35).

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<p style="text-align:center">What's Next? - Nine Lessons
by
Lloyd S. Etheredge[1]</p>

1.) <u>Think outside the framework of McNamara's generation:</u> *Imagine that you want the people in other nations to vote for you as world leader.*

During WWII and the Cold War McNamara's generation necessarily focused on military power and the credibility of its use. Today, the world is changing. With a revolutionary upgrade in global communications technology underway, and democratization, we can distinguish between *hard power*, based on military and economic superiority, and *democratic power*, based on words, leadership and voluntary assent. And begin to focus on the new potential of democratic power to shape global outcomes.

To a "hard power" theorist, America is the most powerful nation because its nuclear arsenal can incinerate any opponent; because it is without a peer in its twelve aircraft carrier groups and global airlift and sealift capability; because the annual military budget exceeds the expenditures of the next nine nations combined (and America is even further ahead in military R&D spending), and America's GDP, at meetings of the seven leading countries, is 45% of the total and exceeds the combined GDP of the next three attendees. Between America and anybody else "Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power; nothing," writes the historian Paul Kennedy (Kennedy 2002). "Hard power" thinking is the kind of global power drama imagined by theorists who use the word "hegemon."

But if we look at the world today, this is about as good as it gets - using hard power alone.

Democratic power can be created by imagining a new framework. It can operate beyond the water's edge by analogy to domestic electoral politics. If America wants to be a world leader, based on democratic power, it should act as if it was running for the office. Vision and two-way communications; enrollment, organization, and respect; staying in touch; programs to benefit

<div style="text-align:center">1</div>

ordinary men and women in other countries. (Nye (Nye 2004) uses the term "soft" power, an adjective which may be useful to send reassuring messages to hard-power interests.)

The lesson can be used by national governments and by many other actors: by NGOs, universities, or foundations, by individuals. For example, it would be easy to use emerging Internet technology to make American institutions a daily partner with health practitioners in all countries in a commitment to the health of ordinary men and women in all countries. America could run for office on this platform. (For world-changing projects beyond the imagination of hard power theorists, see www.policyscience.net; (Etheredge 2002)).

2.) <u>Be more rational than the rationality assumption: Shift to the triune brain model (e.g., including fight/flight syndromes and the capacity for vivid imagery).</u>

By the triune model (Cory Jr. and Gardner Jr. 2002; Sagan 1986) human brains operate with three different psychologies: 1.) The primitive R-complex, shared with reptiles and all other animals, operates drives such as hunger, reproduction, and the fight-flight/survival reaction to danger; 2.) The limbic system added imagery and memory, social bonding, and the capacity for stimulus-response and associational learning that (for example) distinguishes the behavior of dogs from reptiles. Human psychology (by extension, international politics) is based on the R-complex, the limbic system and the addition of: 3.) the neo-cortex - capacities for language, abstract, analytical, and self-reflective thought, the creation and rational control of nuclear weapons, etc.

McNamara is trying to draw lessons from several cases where the rational/neo-cortex models of simple cost-benefit calculations - for example, "increasing the cost" to opponents as a means to change behavior - failed. Applying the triune model to North Vietnam, I suspect that American escalation actually triggered a (vividly imagined) worst-case scenario and thereby engaged and sustained the primitive fight (i.e., at any cost) response. This is a reinterpretation of <u>The Fog of War</u>: What the film discusses as a North Vietnamese fear of American colonialism, or the Cold War mindset and domino theory, are not merely <u>ad hoc</u> cognitive phenomenons. For example,

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the domino theory phenomenon involved vivid, threatening imagery that triggered people's minds to extrapolate to infinity, and it was not solely a neo-cortex *theory*. There are psychological thresholds which, once they are passed and engage such imagery and powerful emotion, result in predictable failure of the rational cost-benefit forecasts made by outsiders. (Concerning the interplay of images and rationality in securing deterrence without escalating arms races: (Etheredge 1992; Pool 1998)).

Consider other examples: Did the Japanese, fighting against American demands for "unconditional surrender" in WWII, imagine that their way of life, their culture, and the Emperor could survive, and that surrendering to America could bring a future of peace and prosperity? What (as The Fog of War notes briefly) might Castro and Khrushchev imagine was about to happen to Cuba, 90 miles from American shores and surrounded by overwhelming American conventional military superiority, after the initial failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion (and given their awareness of growing Operation MONGOOSE violence and assassination attempts) without a trip-wire deterrent of nuclear weapons in Cuba itself? Or, to take a current and straightforward example: Since 9/11, the Bush Administration has been explicit that its policies are based upon imagining the worst-case possibility of future nuclear or biological WMDs exploded by suicide bombers in American cities. But did Osama bin Laden anticipate that his "incremental" increase (from exploding a large bomb in the underground garage of the World Trade Center in February 26, 1993 to the (even chancier) use of two commercial airplanes on September 11, 2001) would trigger such imaginings, elicit an expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars, destroy two Arab governments, and (by the spring of 2004) lead to the death or capture of more than half of his movement's senior leadership?[2] [3]

3.) Power drama overlays are the enemy.

Political psychologists have assembled growing evidence that the simple and hardheaded Realist/realpolitik theories in academic textbooks do not adequately explain many major cases of international violence. An early discovery by McClelland, Winter, and others was that males with high power motivation actually imagine vivid power-drama stories in the surrounding

world. Power-drama syndromes vary in nature and intensity, and at an extreme they can become entrapment inside an intensely-imagined global drama, overlayed on reality and accompanied by a single-minded messianic ambition to rule the world, and also accompanied by an energized paranoia that others have the same motives to conquer and destroy the self (Etheredge 1976; Etheredge 1979; Etheredge 1985; Post 2003; Redlich 1998). An ultimate video game but not chosen voluntarily - and not a game.

For example, World War II was an expression of these messianic power dramas and the capacity of such leaders to enroll and empower followers - Hitler's megalomania, the breakout from a normal framework of international relations, and dream of a thousand-year Reich; the imperial ambitions of the Japanese war faction that drove aggressive empire-building and its own claims of racial superiority in Asia and surprise attack on the American navy. And the passionate dream of world revolution and Soviet control espoused by the first generation of Communist revolutionaries (plus, imagining a death struggle lock-in with the hostile and global force of Capitalism) that triggered a global power drama and American containment during the Cold War.

Today, we are in the process of negotiating whether a new global power drama will be created by highly power-oriented people, to pit Islamic fundamentalism against America, with the turn-on of the highest conceivable stakes. But the lesson is that these power drama overlays are the enemy. They need to be stopped early. McNamara's cases support a more universal warning: Once the power drama overlays kick-in, international relations become extraordinarily destructive and eventually self-destructive: in part, because details of local realities and their casualty counts have diminished importance (Etheredge 1985).

4.) <u>Institutionalize inter-government empathy, now. Support the APSIA network and global mini-CSPANs in international/area studies to improve professional diplomacy and training in international relations in all countries</u>.

About empathizing with your opponent: McNamara's analysis of failed empathy in the US-

North Vietnam relationship seems incomplete. US and North Vietnamese leaders lived in the same reality as the rest of us: During these years everybody was being told - at very loud volume - that the North Vietnamese mindset was that they were fighting an anti-colonial war, while LBJ was fighting an anti-Communist war in a Cold War context. It was not a simple failure.

However, empathy is a worthwhile investment (as the example of Ambassador Thompson during the Cuban Missile Crisis suggests). And with the new era of global communications technology there should be no excuses for failures of international empathy in the 21st century. A good place to begin would be APSIA (www.apsia.org) - the national and (increasingly) global linkup of professional schools for international relations. Create a cooperative: each school digitizes its own lecture series and conferences and contributes it to a global mini-CSPAN, by which the lecture series and colloquia at all schools become a global resource (on the model of www.videocast.nih.gov, now climbing the charts in the international biomedical world).[4]

Once this is underway, organize similar cooperatives/mini-CSPANs to link up international area studies centers in all countries. Next, upgrade the global political process by creating a global CSPAN, using Internet technology, adding selections from NGOs, think tanks, and other agenda-setting institutions in all countries for a professional global audience.

- Empathy-oriented learning is a multilateral task, not just for Americans. For example, it is useful to recognize that almost every dangerous case cited by McNamara involved a reciprocal failure, by other nations, to understand and forecast American foreign policy decision making. (This can be hard even for Americans: the late Hans Morgenthau was baffled that America allowed a Communist revolutionary government to survive in Cuba, and that Kennedy scuttled his own Bay of Pigs invasion - 90 miles from Florida, during the Cold War, given the Monroe Doctrine - but America used more than 500,000 troops and accepted 58,000 deaths in Vietnam, halfway around the world, in a country that, in his Realist view, had no real geopolitical significance.) Did North Korea - given that America had no defense treaty with South Korea - know that its invasion would produce the Korean War with America? In 1983, when Syria

sponsored an attack that killed 231 American Marines at camps in Lebanon, there was massive Congressional pressure and President Reagan withdrew the Marines. Against the history of this behavior in his own region, did Saddam Hussein, when he invaded Kuwait in August, 1990, know America and American democracy well enough to forecast that, within only five months, President Bush would (with strong, bipartisan Congressional support) assemble a multinational army of 700,000 on his borders, raise and spend $60+ billion dollars - and destroy Iraq's armies?

These Internet-based linkups and colloquia are not a substitute for student exchanges and mid-career training programs which build personal relationships and experience in other cultures. However only a small number of countries can afford such exchange programs, and the goal is to upgrade professional capabilities, for empathy with everyone else, in all 180+ countries.

5.) <u>All nations should improve their professional intelligence capabilities, esp. re nuclear weapons.</u>

The arc of American intelligence failures, as they have become public since the cases (e.g., the unknown 162 nuclear warheads in Cuba) of the early 1960s, is extraordinary (Moynihan 1999). In early 2004, for example, the world learned of a nuclear weapons program in Libya and, suddenly, the existence of what Dr. El-Baradei, the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, called a global "Wal-Mart of private-sector proliferation" with a sophisticated black market for nuclear weapons technology that offers weapons designs, technical advice, and thousands of sensitive parts for centrifuges and other components manufactured in secret factories around the world, in places like Malaysia and Dubai (Sanger 2004; Warrick and Slevin 2004).

American policy can energize a black market for nuclear weapons. (A straightforward prediction of balance-of-power theory is that America's hard power superiority can trigger such defensive responses - especially if the US acts unilaterally and is seen as hostile to core institutions and their followers in other societies (e.g., the Arab Middle East)). But even optimal American policy is unlikely to eliminate the demand, because motives involve other nations or

local conflicts. McNamara is right about the terrible dangers of nuclear weapons in anybody's hands. Whatever upgrades are possible for the US intelligence community, and its $30 billion/year, a great many other countries in the world also need to draw lessons about failures and upper bounds of US intelligence and strengthen their own, independent intelligence agencies.

6.) <u>Empathize with your victims</u>.

    Re ethics: I do not understand how McNamara would apply his "proportionality" rule in specific cases. If he means smart weapons, targeting military targets, minimizing civilian casualties, it sounds like a step forward.

    But there is a better rule: McNamara refers to moral philosophy, but he does not commit himself to Kant. Make the commitment. Apply the Golden Rule. Empathize with everyone, <u>especially</u> including the victims of your policies. (This is a separate issue than McNamara's discussion of empathy with your opposing elite decision makers. It is a rule to empathize with the 3.4 million Vietnamese being killed and the people who loved them.)

7.) <u>Become political. And skeptical of justifications for violence</u>.

    Become political - and keep the wrong people away from power. Political science research confirms that there are "optional" wars in which the personality of decision makers plays a key role (Etheredge 1976; Etheredge 1979; Post 2003). When there are questions of war and peace, there are going to be some people (i.e., on all sides) who are not interested to listen to reason. A related lesson, illustrated by the Vietnam War and the recent US-Iraq War, is that already-decided proponents of violence often seek to manipulate public opinion, engage in secrecy, distortion, and lies; and are self-assured beyond their factual knowledge (Etheredge 1985).

8.) <u>Prefer democracy.</u>

    Especially in non-democracies, it is astonishing how fierce a cost of their own, lower-status, civilians and soldiers, political elites are willing to pay. (McNamara notes that, with 60% - 90%

of its sixty-seven largest cities destroyed by fire bombs, atomic bombs also were required before the war faction of the Japanese cabinet surrendered.) Prefer democracies.

9.) <u>Determine if there is belief-independent spiritual growth; and any validity to an unconcealment theory of truth and methodology for enlightened international politics.</u>

McNamara was trained in the rational tradition of analysis-based learning and rules, a "correctness" theory of truth. Yet the passage of poetry from T. S. Eliot that he loves, and that he applies to his own life in the film, points to courses untaken, to a different "unconcealment" theory of truth ((Heidegger 2002)): "We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time." (Eliot 1963). There is more than new rules - something else is involved.

A similar process seems to be involved in belief-independent spiritual growth, and methods to foster it, as described across different traditions. A useful depiction of such growth and an unconcealment process across cycles of life, suffering, and rebirth is the film by Howard Ramis, <u>Groundhog Day</u> (Ramis 1993). The research question is whether this is the same personal enlightenment/unconcealment process that President Johnson and Secretary McNamara would go through if they had to relive their lives beginning on November 22, 1963 (when Johnson became President), across many repetitions, yet restarting each trial with the cumulating memory of all previous lifetimes?

The codification of methods for this type of enlightenment are rudimentary compared with scientific method/analytic learning which can be taught (today) in graduate courses. Yet there have been genuine (non-authoritarian) spiritual leaders who seem similar across traditions (e.g., Gandhi, Nelson Mandela) and with ways to see the world, relate to it, and act that have moved nations to progress (and reason!) and reduced violent conflict. What did they learn (e.g., or live through) and how did they learn it? It seems possible that there are stages and sequences, akin to Kohlberg's analysis of the growth of moral reasoning. There is a great deal of work to do, if there is something there (Etheredge forthcoming).

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Endnotes

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1. I am indebted to Lynn Etheredge and Roger Hurwitz for comments on an earlier draft. My publications cited in the paper are available online on www.policyscience.net or www.policyscience.ws. Contact: lloyd.etheredge@yale.edu.

2. These primitive mechanisms also can be energized by vivid imagining of domestic political attacks. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, McNamara told President Kennedy that the placement of Soviet nuclear missiles into Cuba, given the number of nuclear warheads already

aimed at America atop ICBMs on Russian soil (i.e., since there was no effective anti-missile defense), made little rational difference to American security in the nuclear age, but Kennedy later said that he imagined he would have been impeached if he had not gotten the missiles out of Cuba. Lyndon Johnson imagined that a virulent political Right would wipe-out the Great Society and defeat the Democratic Party if he lost Vietnam. The Bush Administration undoubtedly fears that another 9/11 attack on American soil could cost the next election, and its foreign policies are partly energized by this imaginative pathway.

3. The American foreign policy response also was energized by additional fear generated by anthrax attacks, especially against Congress, which (at the time) appeared linked to the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, DC.

4. Once a conference or lecture series is organized, the marginal cost to digitize the presentation adds only a modest fraction to the original cost. If a school digitizes ten hours/year of its best material of international interest, and there are fifty professional school members, its students and faculty will have online access to 500 hours of the best program material from fifty schools worldwide. A good return on investment. It also would be straightforward to arrange for the professional alumni of each school to have access.