

# Intellectuals Re-examine Role in U.S. Government

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*First of Two Articles*

By Marilyn Berger  
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"When I first started advising at high levels of the government in the early days of the Kennedy administration," Henry A. Kissinger once observed, "I had the illusion that all I had to do was walk into the President's office, convince him that I was right and he would then naturally do what I had recommended."

In those days, dozens of scholars and intellectuals from Harvard and other great American universities flocked into Washington with the same illusion as Kissinger, who is now back as President Nixon's professor in residence. Like Rexford Tugwell in the 1930s, they were going to "make America over." They would "speak truth to power" in a congenial political atmosphere, and the problems of the world would become manageable.

That was more than 10 years ago and it has now become clear that their hopes and their capacities—were over-

inflated. By the end of 1968, the academics had fled Washington, leaving behind an insoluble war in Vietnam, a country that seemed, at times, on the verge of rebellion, and a Democratic party in shambles. In the words of James Reston, they had "over estimated the capacity of words and style to influence the stubborn political and economic realities of the times."

They sought sanctuary in the universities and foundations and think tanks that had produced them. For many the homecoming was traumatic. Some returned to preside over classes of students whose view of the world had only the remotest connections with that of their professors, whom the students tended to regard as relics of past misconceptions.

At times they were assailed—by colleagues and students—in terms as unforgiving as the indictment uttered a few weeks ago by the Republican party's national chairman, Sen. Robert Dole of Kansas:

See SCHOLARS, A12, Col. 1



Former President Lyndon B. Johnson with his chief academic advisers, McGeorge

Bundy and Walt Rostow, before LBJ's 1967 meeting with King Hussein of Jordan.

"It was the so-called intellectuals of the Eastern Establishment who plunged this nation into war and economic ruin. They were convinced that the war could be managed—and that the public could be managed... (they) led the world's greatest democracy to war in a shamefully undemocratic way."

Walt Rostow was refused reappointment to his old post at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. John Roche returned to Brandeis, where his office was firebombed, his students staged walkouts in the middle of lectures and his life was threatened. William Bundy's appointment to the editorship of Foreign Affairs magazine was bitterly protested by his peers. Edmund A. Gullion's office at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of which he is now dean, was totally destroyed by a bomb.

Chastened by assaults of this kind, disillusioned with their experiences in government, campus intellectuals are binding their wounds, pondering the past—and, in some cases, waiting for another chance.

What have they learned and how do they feel about their role in the political life of the '60s?

Do they feel, in retrospect, that they gave bad advice to the politicians they served? Were they over their heads in a world of bureaucracy and political intrigue? Are they now skeptical of the political process or of their own abilities to influence the course of events? Are they now better or worse equipped to provide intellectual and academic leadership in the United States?

In pursuing these questions, a reporter finds great ambivalence among many of the intellectual alumni of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Some of them are simply weary.

"I think," said Thomas C. Schelling, a leading theoretical military strategist of the Kennedy era, "that my generation shot its wad and got tired. It got a little sour about the war in Vietnam and I don't think there is any new generation coming along with any new ideas. I think it is unattractive now to think about military and diplomatic affairs."

Schelling is a case in point. He is thinking a lot these days about how human beings can live together on what he calls this "dirty little planet," and he is thinking very little about deterrence and war games and graduated response.

"My impression," he says, "is that there are a lot of people who really have a feeling, a foreboding that maybe the world is going to collapse, that maybe it is just beyond the power of five billion human beings to live reasonably well together on a dirty little planet... that life is awfully complicated, institutions are awfully fragile. When liberty begins to erode there is no way to bring it back. You

can't even stop people from overpopulating the world..."

For others, the Washington experience led to new careers and substantial changes in their professional life styles.

Harvard's Adam Yarmolinsky, one of the first resident intellectuals in Robert S. McNamara's Pentagon, is involved now in a real estate development on Welfare Island in New York. William Gorham, another of McNamara's men, went first to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and then to the Urban Institute. John Roche of Brandeis, brought into the White House by Lyndon Johnson, has returned to teaching but has taken on a second career as a newspaper columnist. McGeorge Bundy, formerly a Harvard dean, now heads the Ford Foundation, which has increasingly put its money into domestic areas.

Charles Hitch, Harold Brown and Alain Enthoven—three of McNamara's principal deputies—have scattered, Hitch and Brown to university presidencies, Enthoven to a corporate vice-presidency. McNamara himself is now at the World Bank, where his enthusiasm for economic development is virtually irrepressible.

Some picked up where they left off. Eugene Rostow is back at Yale, Roger Hilsman at Columbia, Kermit Gordon at the Brookings Institution. Arthur Schlesinger and John Kenneth Galbraith are teaching and writing again and dabbling, as usual, in presidential politics.

They are not exceptional in that respect. Abram Chayes, a Harvard law professor who became the State Department's legal adviser under Kennedy and now has a hand in George

McGovern's campaign, thinks many of the displaced academics are simply biding their times.

"Every one of these guys," Chayes predicated, "will be on a train with the election of any Democratic candidate."

Roche, who is the first to concede that the life of the intellectual in government is not easy, said recently: "There are a number of people lining up now, say to be ambassadors or undersecretary of state, or secretary of state. I suppose Hubert [Humphrey] still has his people floating around someplace. Lindsay has a great deal of attraction for some people. McGovern, of course, has most of the Kennedy (men).

Almost all the presidential candidates of 1972 publicize their stables of academic advisers, despite the experiences of a decade ago.

The McGovern for President Committee, for example, has published a list of hundreds of faculty endorsements. Another four-page press release is studded with tributes from some of

the more famous academics.

Here is Galbraith—Kennedy's Ambassador to India—now back at Harvard as an economics professor:

"The American academic community has a pretty clear head in such matters and I am confident, in consequence, that it will unite behind George McGovern for the Democratic nomination for president."

And here is Schlesinger, whom Roche has called "a carnation in [Kennedy's] button-hole":

"As an historian, I am for my fellow historian George McGovern as president because I believe that historians—Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, John Kennedy—tend to do pretty well in the White House."

The "eggheads" who came to Washington in the early 1960s had more in common than academic pedigrees and impressive reputations for brilliance. They were men, mostly in their 40s and 50s who had, in one capacity or another, fought in World War II and had come out of that experience impressed with the lessons—as they read them—of Munich and of the rise of fascism. Like most people of their generation, they accepted, by and large, the central premises of American foreign policy in the postwar years.

They were, in a phrase, essentially Cold Warriors—prepared to make a deal on Laos, prepared to negotiate a limited nuclear test ban treaty but basically convinced that communism had

replaced fascism as the implacable enemy.

Kennedy's inaugural reflected their world view:

"Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans . . . unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights . . . to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

" . . . We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

Leslie Gelb, who came to the Pentagon several years after studying with a Kissinger at Harvard and was to later help produce the celebrated "Pentagon Papers," looks back with a changed perspective.

"The myth grew," he recalled, "that Kennedy was bringing a new foreign policy. But it was, in fact, the culmination of Cold War thinking; more sophisticated but nevertheless Cold War. Their very sophistication obscured the fact that they were cold warriors."

A central purpose of Kennedy and the bright men he assembled around him was to change the military posture of the United States, to end its overdependence on nuclear weapons and to build up conventional forces—and unconventional forces such as the Green

Berets—in order to be able to deal with all kinds of wars, including "wars of national liberation."

The theories underlying this strategy were developed in the government-supported "think tanks" and in the universities. They called for "graduated response" to military threats, a rational relationship between military force and political goals and arms control measures. The Kennedy intellectuals brought these doctrines to Washington, where they were eagerly adopted.

They were rational proposals, accepted not because of their elegance but because they seemed fitted to the nation's goals, to the President's intention to counter aggression. In part, they also fitted into what the military wanted anyway. Roche put it this way: "What you have is the intellectuals coming up with theories providing high cover for certain types of things the military wanted to do on their own."

It was not long, however, before the theories bumped up against the realities of Vietnam.

This was something that Hans J. Morgenthau, now at the City University of New York, had anticipated in a warning to the theorists in July, 1961. "In the world of the intellectual," he wrote, "ideas meet with ideas, and anything goes that is presented cleverly and with assurance. In the political world, ideas meet with facts, which make mincemeat of the wrong ideas and throw the ideas into the ashcan of history."

That was one of the major lessons the academics in Washington learned in the 1960s. Schelling, who was not in government, but who acted as a consultant and whose strategic theories figured heavily in the McNamara Pentagon, recalled:

"All during the 1950s and virtually during the 1960s, none of the people who theorized about limited war, massive retaliation and all of that ever paid the slightest attention to Vietnam or had anything to do with it. Vietnam was a sort of incidental nuisance until it became something that was too big to go away by itself but still not their business . . ."

But the theories, as adopted, provided the United States with the capacity for fighting limited wars, Schlesinger said recently. "Oddly enough," he said, "if we had kept this very rigid, all-or-nothing strategy, I don't think we would have used nuclear weapons in Vietnam. We might have done nothing. So there is the ironic possibility that we might have been too intelligent about these matters."

Schelling has his doubts. Adoption of the strategic theories assured that President Johnson had conventional troops available, Schelling concedes, but "if he hadn't had the troops he

would have . . . had the same draft, more intensive training and it would have taken us longer to get half a million troops there than it did take us . . . I don't feel confident that if Johnson had lacked an army it would have kept us out of that war . . ."

The prevailing view is that capabilities figured very little in the considerations leading to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Kennedy had dedicated the nation to assuring the survival of liberty. And from the vantage point of 1961, that was at stake in Vietnam.

In a speech in January of that year, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev spoke of wars of national liberation and said: "We recognize such wars. We have helped and shall go on helping people fighting for their freedom." The speech was read as a challenge and interpreted to mean that Moscow would aid national liberation movements.

Analysts of Soviet affairs say that Khrushchev was responding to Chinese taunts and was not threatening the United States. To this day, these analysts wonder who it was that misread his speech and thus set off the Kennedy response, both in his inaugural address and in later action. In any case, Kennedy reacted. He was not prepared to "lose" another Asian nation to communism as a previous Democratic administration had "lost China."

Thomas L. Hughes, who was then in government but now heads the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, stated a view shared by many when he said that the United States went into Vietnam "on simplistic notions of defending freedom, preventing take-over by the Chinese hoards, etc."

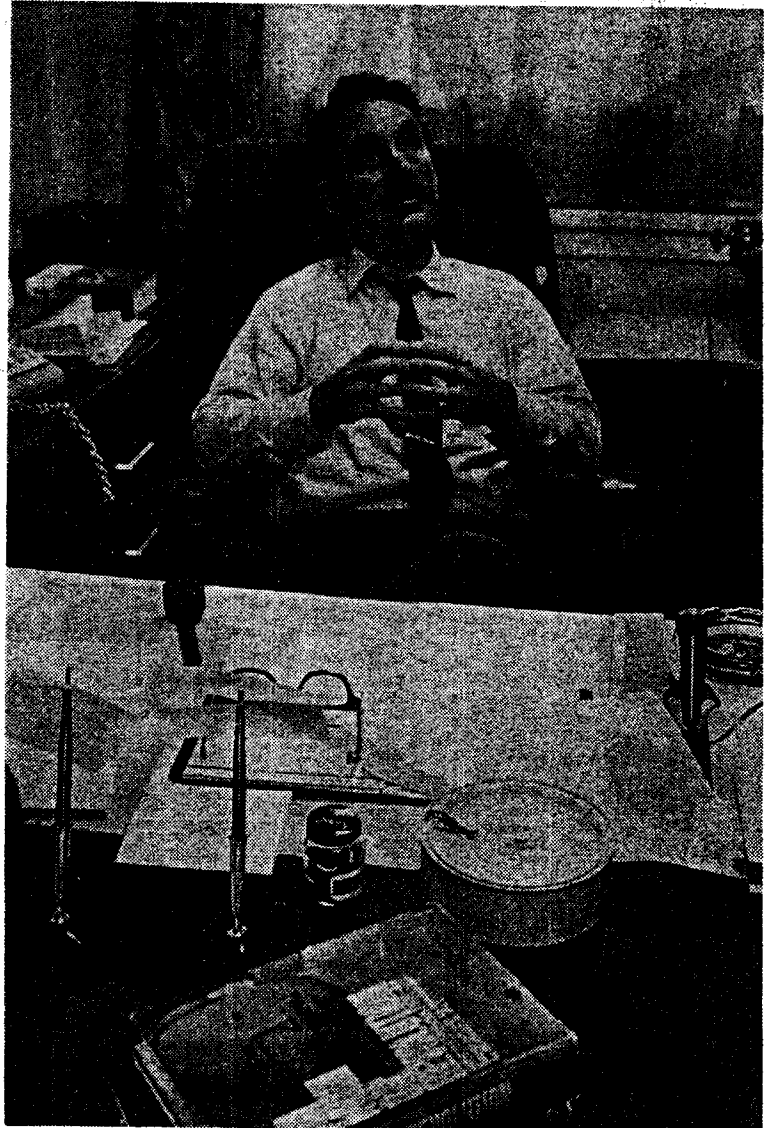
As for the prosecution of that war, Hughes said the ever-increasing pressure tactic would have been applied even in the absence of strategic theories. "Gradualism was at the heart of the whole notion of the war, of keeping open as many options as possible," Hughes said.

But some of the strategists, having looked at the results of ideas meeting with facts, are uneasy and disappointed. One of them, asking for anonymity, said:

"I feel a kind of guilt because while I was preoccupied with grand conceptions of East-West strategy, that dirty little war in Southeast Asia, which I didn't pay adequate attention to, became, let us say, perhaps a disaster almost as great as if the Russians had conquered France.

"It was neglect. It isn't that I feel I was wrong about Vietnam, or that anybody listened to me and misapplied what I thought about Vietnam. It's rather that nearly all of the strategists just plain never took Vietnam seriously until it was clear that it had become an Army war and strategists had no role in it anyhow.

"The other (thing I feel) is really some enormous satisfaction in the fact that though Vietnam caught fire behind our backs, I really think a spectacular achievement of the last two decades is to have gotten Soviet-Ameri-



Associated Press

John Roche: from government to a life hard to understand.

can strategic relations to the point where the world really looks fairly safe from nuclear war. I think we have completely got the concept of arms control adopted by the U.S. government, by the military services . . .

"Ten years ago, or about 11½, C. P. Snow told a large audience in a ballroom in New York City that thermonuclear war within the decade was a mathematical certainty if the whole world didn't find a way to lay down its arms . . . Now, you can't find anybody who thinks that. You can't get 20 students to come to a debate or lecture on

the subject . . ."

### Asking the Basic Questions

How did it happen that policies pursued by a government of some of the nation's best thinkers could diminish the threat of thermonuclear war and at the same time pave the way for such a disaster in Vietnam?

Yarmolinsky provides one answer: "Once you become involved in action, you are a less good question asker." When the Khrushchev speech on wars of national liberation convinced everyone that brushfire wars are the wars of the future, Yarmolinsky said, the reaction was "let's go in and fight them," when it should have been, "Well, they may be the wars of the future but should we involve ourselves in them?"

Yarmolinsky's verdict: "That is when we stopped thinking like intellectuals . . ."

But even those who came in from the outside as consultants and did not "become involved in action" found it difficult to ask the basic questions challenging the premises on which policy is being made. In the case of Vietnam, questions were not asked because it had become axiomatic that Communist aggression must be met. The only "relevant" question was how, and that was the only advice that was sought.

It was not until after the war clearly turned against the United States that the few voices began to be heard which had, from the beginning, been challenging basic assumptions.

Marshall Shulman, who heads the Russian Institute at Columbia University, said recently: "There are only a few places in government where people have these scopes of responsibility that they can entertain the fundamental questions of directions and ultimate purposes."

As a result, the intellectuals often find themselves called upon to legitimize policies already adopted instead of developing new ones.

Kissinger wrote when he was a Kennedy consultant of other complications: "Even if by chance I persuaded him (the President) that his whole bureaucracy was wrong and I was right, he would then have the next problem of going about implementing what had been suggested. And that is not a negligible issue. There is only so much that even the President can do against the wishes of the bureaucracy . . ."

Beyond the bureaucracy, there are a myriad of other considerations that may never enter the calculations of the adviser from academia: political realities, domestic problems, service rivalries, upcoming elections.

There is no end to the theorizing on why intellectuals in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations achieved less than they set out to achieve. Nor is there any end to the backbiting in the academic community over what happened in those years.

Harvard Professor Stanley Hoffman

says academics went off to Washington in the 1960s to bite on "the apple of power" and now "they have such a way of rationalizing what they have done. Rationalization is probably the last gift that will disappear in the human being, and they have all rationalized."

### A Collision of Values

There are those, however, who bit the apple and who remain convinced that they did the right thing.

James C. Thomson Jr., a young China expert who served in the White House and in the State Department under Kennedy and now teaches at Harvard, looks at it this way: "I couldn't have stayed at the university without having given the government service a good long try. And I think I'm better as a teacher and writer for having done that. The ethics of the two situations, though, may be mutually exclusive.

"The need to keep information secret, private or confidential, as a government official, runs head-on into the academic obligation to, if not speak the truth, at least seek out the truth and write it and each is as you see it. I end up thinking that government without regular infusions of academic ethics and academic life would be a lot worse than it is. And the academy without some infusion of government experience would be a lot less relevant. So, having pondered the collision of values . . . we have to live with it and try desperately to keep the flow going in both directions."

It will be more difficult than before to keep that flow going. Academics today, in the aftermath of Vietnam, have to give second thoughts to factors like reputation on campus, job security, tenure and faculty criticism.

From the looks of the lists of professors signing on with the various Democratic candidates, however, it seems likely that many will go if called. "Democratic administrations have a soft spot for unused intellectuals," said Thomas Hughes recently. "But that doesn't really indicate anything at all about the use of ideas. The intensity and clash of ideas is greater, but they may be mutually cancellable."

It is, in fact, one of the great ironies that after the many years of pilgrimages to Washington by a largely Democratic academic community in search of power, it took Republican Richard M. Nixon to put significant power onto the hands of an intellectual—Henry Kissinger.

His predecessors, those who returned to teaching during the '60s, found their student's hostile and the values by which they had sought to govern largely challenged. They found a disgust with foreign affairs, disillusion with what America means, disenchantment with government itself.

Some of them are groping, along

with their students, for a new way. Some remain defensive. Edmund A. Gullion, who served as Kennedy's ambassador to the Congo and whose office at Tufts' Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy has just been reconstructed after being totally burned out, was half angry, half resigned:

"You get kind of tired," he said, "of because ours . . . did its duty and for war. I often think that if the new generation has opportunities it is precisely because ours . . . id its duty and for that reason the world is much more secure, even at the price of Vietnam . . . We were wrenched through the iron gates of life."



Walt W. Rostow (left) and John Kenneth Galbraith: among the scholars.

# Scholar in the Pentagon: Greening of an Intellectual

Leslie H. Gelb, 34, became Sen. Jacob K. Javits' executive assistant in 1966. In the spring of 1967, Gelb joined the policy planning staff of the Pentagon's office of International Security Affairs, where he headed the Pentagon papers project. He is now at the Brookings Institution writing a book on Vietnam and is a consultant to the Muskie organization. In the following edited interview, Gelb tells of the changes in his attitudes as a result of his government experience.

**Gelb:** When the intellectuals started giving advice [to the government], much of the intellectual analysis and criticism tended to get dismissed as too theoretical and not implementable. This only made the intellectuals try harder.

"Then Kennedy gets elected. This is the beginning of the halcyon days. He

was their president; they were advising him. They were brought into government; they would have a chance to put their theories into practice.

Their students wanted to follow them. These were their heroes who seemed even more heroic as men of power.

"This was also an era in which these people felt free to talk about the use of force, [which] became as natural and as easy as talking about setting up the U.N.

"These guys became tougher when they came to Washington. It was a compulsion to prove their hard-headedness . . .

At Wesleyan in 1965 I was the public defender of the faith, the man called on to defend the Johnson Vietnam policy.

**Question:** What caused your change of heart?

**Gelb:** The main thing, I think, was that I came to

Washington and began operating in the real world. In the past it had all been books, abstract thinking.

I did not like what I saw right off the bat. I immediately saw the discrepancy between official statements on Vietnam and what I heard from my friends in government. Already there were the big claims about pacification, but people coming back said it was a horror, dehumanizing, that it wasn't working.

I remember clearly that there was a lieutenant colonel who had headed an army maneuver battalion. He said that the North Vietnamese and VC fought as only "true patriots"—I remember his phrase—could fight. That these were people fighting for their country. That just stunned me.

Two things turned me off—that patent manipulation I saw going on, which I didn't consider the same



LESLIE H. GELB  
... halcyon days.

as leadership, and the Vietnam experience. It looked like a vast cat-and-mouse game, especially on the defense budget and Vietnam. Government officials were basically acting as tacticians and puppeteers rather than as national policymakers.

It was Vietnam that, in my case, and others too I'm sure, brought about a broader questioning of relations with Communist nations. Vietnam pricked the bubble of the Cold War.

# A Russian Studies Major Begins to Question Policy

Richard J. Barnet, 42, joined the Kennedy administration in 1961 in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. In 1963, he left government service to set up the Institute for Policy Studies, which is dedicated to questioning the basic assumptions of U.S. policy. He has become an outspoken revisionist historian who sees the United States as a status-quo, anti-revolutionary power and who blames the Cold War as much on American provocation as on Soviet actions. In this edited, tape-recorded interview Barnet describes his conversion.

Barnet: I was a major in Russian studies, and I accepted all of the traditional interpretations of postwar history. (Then) I did a study on disarmament negotiations. It was proposed to me that it would be a very good way of documenting how the Russians used the disarmament issue for political maneuvering.

I discovered, of course, that it was very much of a

two-way street and that we were about as sincere about disarmament issues as they were.

I wrote a book and I guess it was orthodox enough for the Kennedy administration to offer me a job in the disarmament agency.

Question: What made you start questioning policy?

Barnet: I guess the major change took place during the Kennedy administration where I saw the great gap between what was being told the public on the great issues—on the question of NATO, on civil defense, on the military budget and on Vietnam, which was already a problem, and the realities as I saw them.

And there were the people talking in tremendous abstractions about the Threats. I have great suspicions about documents where they capitalize things in the middle of sentences like Free World Formation and Threat. And I noticed there was very little concrete thinking about international interests or what

the Russians were really up to.

It seemed to me that many of the threats weren't real and on those that were, we were pursuing policies that made them worse, not better.

When I finally came to the point where I couldn't accept a lot of the assumptions of policy it seemed very silly to stay there any longer.

I started the Institute because it seemed clear that the way in which the government was getting advice from outsiders really reinforced all the assumptions inside.

Today I get the right of speech in the State Department, CIA, National War College, and I testify before the Foreign Affairs committee.

Ideas which several years ago were viewed as outrageous are now given a hearing simply because the old analysis is so at odds with the facts. You cannot talk about communism and the great ideological threat

## Lindsay May Be Stranger in N.Y.

NEW YORK, Feb. 26 (UPI) Mayor John Vliet Lindsay's "recognition factor" may increase nationally as he campaigns around the country for the Democratic presidential nomination, but his frequent absences from New York City could make him a stranger there.

The following exchange occurred between the mayor and a federal District Court clerk during a court appearance.

Clerk: State your full name.

Lindsay: John Vliet Lindsay.

Clerk: What?

Lindsay: John Vliet.

Clerk: Vliet.

Lindsay: V-L-I-E-T!

Finally the light dawned, and Lindsay entered court as a defendant in a suit brought by backers of a proposed public housing project which the mayor has stalled.

when the Ford Motor Co. is about to go into partnership with the Russians. So people are looking for another analysis.