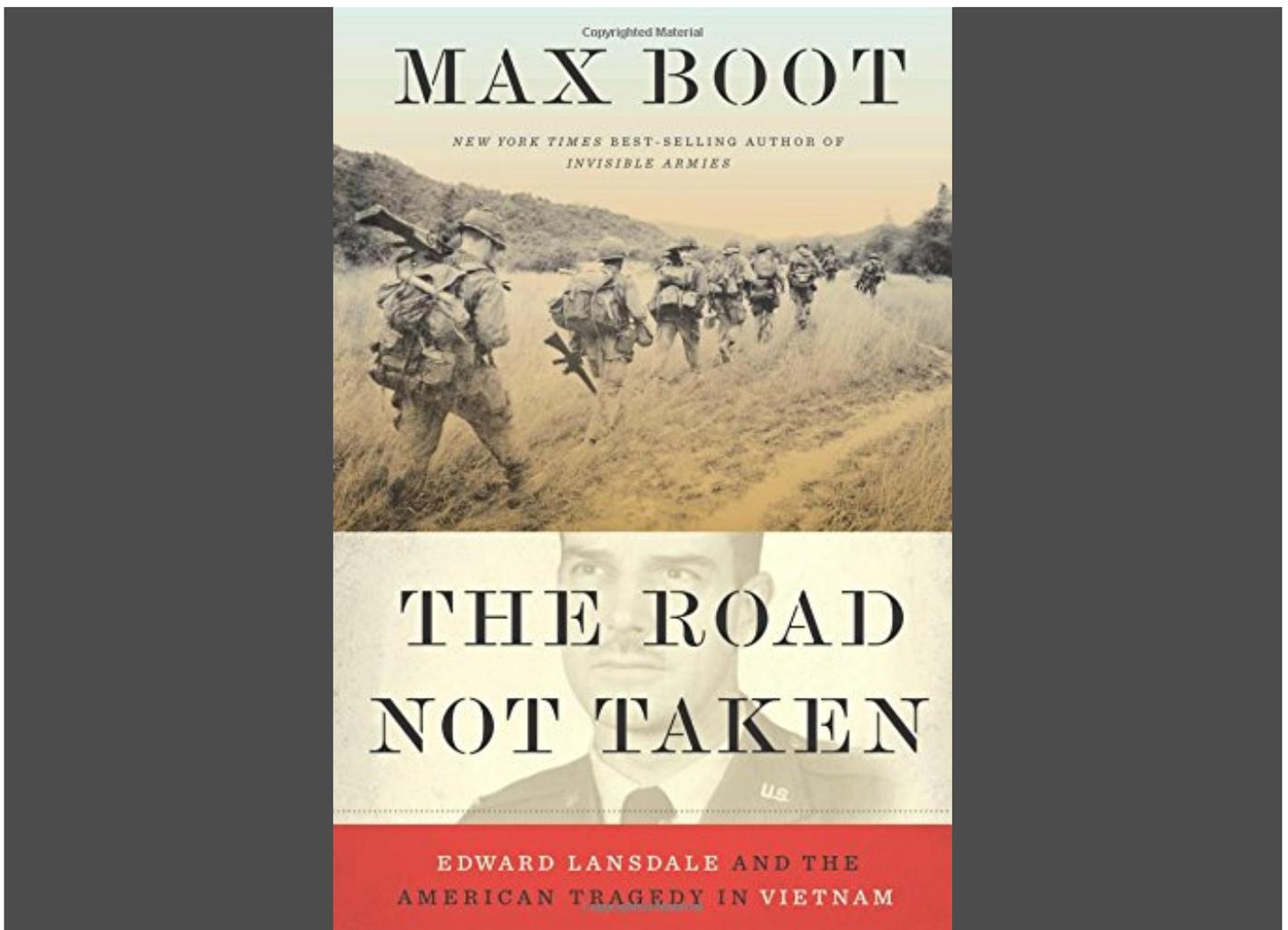


PDF | The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam

by Max Boot



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A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

In chronicling the adventurous life of legendary CIA operative Edward Lansdale, *The Road Not Taken* definitively reframes our understanding of the Vietnam War.

In this epic biography of Edward Lansdale (1908–1987), the man said to be the fictional model for Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, best-selling historian Max Boot demonstrates how Lansdale pioneered a “hearts and mind” diplomacy, first in the Philippines, then in Vietnam. It was a visionary policy that, as Boot reveals, was ultimately crushed by America’s giant military bureaucracy, steered by elitist generals and blueblood diplomats who favored troop build-ups and napalm bombs over winning the trust of the people. Through dozens of interviews and access to never-before-seen documents—including long-hidden love letters—Boot recasts this cautionary American story, tracing the bold rise and the crashing fall of the roguish “T. E. Lawrence of Asia” from the battle of Dien Bien Phu to the humiliating American evacuation in 1975. Bringing a tragic complexity to this so-called “ugly American,” this “engrossing biography” (Karl Marlantes) rescues Lansdale from historical ignominy and suggests that Vietnam could have been different had we only listened. With reverberations that continue to play out in Iraq and Afghanistan, *The Road Not Taken* is a biography of profound historical consequence. 54 photographs; 3 maps

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of January 2018: How’s this for a thought*: America loves war. We know we shouldn’t, but it’s

a compulsion. We manage the dissonance through the words we use to justify it. Sometimes we “stumble” into conflict, other times we’re “lured.” Once we’re there, the “quagmire” traps us, sucking at our boots along with millions, billions, and trillions of dollars, and thousands of lives. We’ve seen versions of this in Afghanistan and Iraq, but the template is Vietnam. Max Boot’s biography of CIA operative Edward Lansdale shows us that it didn’t necessarily have to turn out this way. Lansdale, AKA “the T.E. Lawrence of Asia,” had favored a “hearts and minds” approach in adversarial political landscapes, eschewing pure militarism as a panacea in global policy by introducing social and economic strategies to the mix. He’d experienced success with his philosophy in the Philippines, but in Vietnam, the deck—in the form of powerful generals and diplomats—was stacked against him; America doubled down on bombs and napalm, shoving Lansdale and his ideas to the margins. *The Road Not Taken* recalibrates the argument, and its strengths are (at least) three-fold: Boot’s research is deep and seemingly impeccable; the material is complex and dense, but it reads like a novel; and maybe most importantly, Boot—no liberal himself—refuses to bind himself with ideological constraints, opening nuanced pathways for reassessing this difficult history, especially in the context of current and looming conflicts. The only question: Is anybody listening? * h/t @adamjohnsonNYC --*Jon Foro, Amazon Book Review*



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