

# Devastating Weapons Effects and Societal Broadcast of Approval

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

Devastating Weapons Effects and Societal Broadcast of Approval by Maj Charles Redmond, 45 pages.

Society broadcasts recognizable signals expressing their collective toleration of weapons effects. The limit, or bracket, on these effects may shift as wars prolong and society begins to make judgments on operational employment of specific weapons, and their effects, used to prosecute the war. Society engages in a discourse with the government through the media, acting as a moderator, which provides the most attention to the stronger argument. Astute planners will be able to recognize the public's signals within this debate and identify if strategic leaders should adjust how they legitimize operational actions to the public or if new means are required to achieve operational ends.

Through two case studies focusing on the firebombing of WWII and the use of napalm and Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, this monograph identifies how society broadcasts a shift in its tolerance of weapon effects. An in-depth review of newspaper articles during the wars identified five ways these shifts are signaled: stagnate government priming, coverage juxtaposition or media elite cueing, broad demographic unification, a weapon becoming synonymous with the war itself, and scientific or academic evidenced based movements.

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## Introduction

*Public opinion...was as much of a factor as a mountain and must be considered.*

—Woodrow Wilson

In one night, a conventional weapon killed 85,000 people.<sup>1</sup> Of those that perished, the vast majority were civilians in their homes. This occurred on the night of 9 March 1945, when the United States deliberately targeted civilians in the firebombing of Tokyo. The Tokyo firebombing was only one night of the larger strategic air campaign against Japan that killed approximately 330,000. These numbers do not include the hundreds of thousands killed by the Allies' incendiary bombing in the European theater. Not until the firebombing of Dresden, in 1945, which killed thousands, did the Allies adjust their tactics. However, the Allies did not follow similar actions in Japan, a war that is now commonly referred to as the "good war."<sup>2</sup> Why was the firebombing of thousands of civilians acceptable to society?

Conversely, in the Vietnam War, the US government and military fell under harsh scrutiny from the general public for the employment of Napalm and Agent Orange. Napalm, specifically, grew into a symbol of public protest against the war, even though the weapon's effects were limited compared to firebombing.<sup>3</sup> Agent Orange was used in a deliberate manner to deprive the enemy of cover and resources. Unlike firebombing, Napalm and Agent Orange were directed against the enemy and their resource providers. Yet the weapon effects fell under the harsh scrutiny of society and eventually were phased out of use. What made these weapons

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<sup>1</sup> A.C. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities* (New York: Walker & Company, 2006), 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Rohn, "Napalm in Vietnam," *the Vietnam War*, January 18, 2014, accessed November 5, 2015, <http://thevietnamwar.info/napalm-vietnam-war/>.

taboo, while the deliberate targeting of hundreds of thousands of civilians was socially acceptable?

Something occurred to make these weapons effects socially prohibitive, placing them outside the bracket of legitimacy and limiting their use. These examples demonstrate that society sets standards for weapons employment in open warfare. In the United States, it demonstrates that society and the government have engaged in some manner of discourse during the process of determining which weapons effects are legitimate. The question that needs to be explored is, does society broadcast recognizable signals of the types of weapons effects that it will tolerate?

The firebombing of Japan and non-precision nighttime bombing in Europe during World War II were far more devastating but initially received far less scrutiny.<sup>4</sup> The use of nuclear weapons initially was accepted, but as time progressed, US society increased a more stringent requirement for employment. The employment of Napalm and Agent Orange initially received little attention, but as the Vietnam conflict endured, society's tolerance of their employment dramatically changed. What variables altered society's perception and how did the government recognize that a societal shift occurred?

Society and the government's limits on tactics in war represent two competing views. Political theorist Carl Schmitt explains this limiting of war phenomenon as "bracketing." According to Schmitt "the distinction among different types of war presupposes a distinction among different types of enmity."<sup>5</sup> Initially, enmity of society and the government will be closely tied with similar expectations of military employment. How does this change over time? Will a shift be most evident when society views the conflict in an increasingly more limited context, while the government maintains an existential threat narrative?

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Price, "A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo," *International Organization* 49, no. 1 (Winter, 1995): 76.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 1975), 89.

Military planners must recognize and account for the societal shift to understand and determine appropriate weapons effects in the conduct of operations. Society's initial and shifting responses serve as a barometer of the legitimacy of military actions. Society judges whether the military is meeting the expectations and standards established prior to the conflict.

Through two case studies, firebombing in World War II and the use of Napalm and Agent Orange in the Vietnam War, this monograph seeks to identify the signals of a societal shift in the limits of war, therefore shifting the manner of operations. The shift should become evident by examining two weapons effects through media coverage and society's response within media outlets and polling data. This monograph will attempt to identify how these elements interact to create a discourse that directly constrains or legitimizes military weapons employment. The ability to recognize new limits will allow the military to be proactive and prevent the military from acting outside society's bracket in a manner that could possibly alter political and military aims.

The author selected the case studies because of their contrast. One war provides a more absolute, existential threat, while the other had far more limited policy aims. This variation of absolute and limited aims presents a different prelude to war with unique *jus ad bellum*, justification of legitimacy. The Vietnam case study builds on this by presenting an asymmetric war example. As international studies scholar Andrew Mack explained, the asymmetry of objectives makes it easier to question the morality of the conventional side against the "underdog" insurgency.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, one conflict mobilized the entire nation, while the other required a partial mobilization. While lessening the burden on the greater populous, the lack of total mobilization places a greater burden on the media to bring the war's impact to the attention of society.

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (1975): 186.

These two studies also demonstrate a contrast in duration. This difference in time will assist in evaluating whether the duration of a military conflict impacts society's tolerance of weapons effects. In the words of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, "enemy was time."<sup>7</sup> He needed time to conduct his surge in Iraq before the discourse at home could alter the military strategy. When the government argues for war, in addition to a policy benchmark, it proposes a timeline for the conduct of hostilities. This implies that there is a priming window of opportunity for military action within a "rally-round-the-flag" effect of increased military support. In short, once military action begins there may be a limited window of time in which society tolerates the use of devastating weapons effects to achieve victory. As conflicts drag on, governmental pre-conflict priming effects will diminish and the citizenry will reestablish boundaries on military weapons effects.

In order to identify whether society signals a change in what it deems acceptable weapons effects, this monograph will rely on a variety of primary sources. Newspapers will be the primary source researched to demonstrate the discourse between society and the government. Additionally, it will represent the media elites' focus during the two case studies' respective time period. Official government press releases and letters to the editor will provide the other side of the dialogue. Historical research of operations and weapons effects will establish the enmity bracket, intent, and duration variables to associate with the primary sources listed above. Additionally, scholarly journals discussing the role of government actions, role of media, and society's judgment will also bound the research.

This monograph requires certain assumptions. Variables such as public opinion polls, newspaper articles, and other media sources derive from a responsible free press and a pragmatic society.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, while these weapons have not been officially stated as "off the table,"

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Gates, *Duty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 49.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 1992): 71.

historic evidence can demonstrate a weapon is no longer conventional or retaining a credible threat of use. Historical context is critical to framing the problem. Therefore, these two twentieth century case studies present a relevant focal point of analysis.

### Priming of Government and the Prudent Public through Media

Before the case studies can be examined; this monograph will describe the manner in which the government and societal frames its views'. The responsive nature of democratic governments requires the ability for discourse beyond constitutional structural means. In the United States, the role of the free press, or media, is critical. The government uses the media to broadcast its policy objectives and garner support from society.<sup>9</sup> In turn, society makes judgments on the policy and responds to media outlets through ratings, letters to editors, opinion polls, social media, or tangible actions that garner its own media attention, such as large demonstrations and protests. The media serves as a market place of ideas and assists in framing the policy objectives and society's reactions. This framing is more than just a narrative explanation broadcast, it allows for a system of "priming."

Priming is a behavior of framing policy or a position to garner support. The policy alone may be viewed in a similar manner to a narrative, but priming is the selling or advocating of said policy. The government must advocate the principle policy objectives and allow for society's judgment. Respected political science professor Hector Perla has researched the judgment and decisive role society maintains in "constraining government's political options."<sup>10</sup> In regards to the use of force, he describes how the media's coverage of government policy first sets a reference point for society. Second, society judges the policy objective in terms of gains and

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<sup>9</sup> Hector Perla, "Explaining Public Support for the Use of Military Force: The Impact of Reference Point Framing and Prospective Decision Making," *International Organizations* 65, no. 1, (Winter 2011): 139.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

losses.<sup>11</sup> Society has demonstrated a few key heuristics. A policy structured for military action to prevent national loss will correlate with a rise in public support. Conversely, associating military action to achieve national gain will result in a decline in public support for military action.<sup>12</sup> Political Science professor Kurt Gaubatz suggests the government must demonstrate an objective worthy of military action.<sup>13</sup> If action deviates from policy or cost assessments are understated, then societal tolerances will narrow.

The amount of deviation from perceived policy objectives and anticipated cost adversely impacts priming. Priming frames the government's case for the legitimate use of force and seeks to create a rally effect of support. If the priming frames the need for action to prevent a national loss, then society is willing to accept a higher cost and assume more risk. Conversely, if priming is framed in a "hawkish" manner to provide a national gain, society provides lower support and accepts lower costs.<sup>14</sup> Societal support will also dramatically decrease if the proposed policy objective priming effects are under false pretenses, and if costs exceedingly deviate from the priming arguments.<sup>15</sup> Public support and possible constraining of government action rests on the original rally effect, accuracy of cost forecasting, and the ability of elite political actors to maintain majorities.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that it is the policy being judged as opposed to the overarching narratives, such as national interests. Society's views are more focused on the use of force.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>13</sup> Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, "Intervention and Intransitivity: Public Opinion, Social Choice, and the Use of Military Force Abroad," *World Politics* 47, no. 4 (July 1995): 542.

<sup>14</sup> Perla, "Explaining Public Support for the Use of Military Force," 160.

<sup>15</sup> Gaubatz, "Intervention and Intransitivity," 542.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 553.

Previous research has shown that the principal policy objective is generally the primary variable impacting support over other variables such as national interests, risk, and elite cuing.<sup>17</sup> This demonstrates that society's tolerances have the focus to judge specific weapons employments objectives.

For the priming to occur, both the government and society depend on the media for the required information.<sup>18</sup> The media serves as the bridge of communication between the different factions of society and between society and government. This open "public diplomacy" aimed at promoting policy is beneficial for the government and assists in establishing credibility.<sup>19</sup> In the 21st century, new elements of promoting policy are emerging as social media, blogs, and other communications methods increase the amount of ideas competing for attention. The government must be flexible and sophisticated enough to understand and prime through these modern media outlets. Therefore, if the media ignores a policy, or the government unintentionally self-limits coverage, there will be no discourse. An unresponsive media or government impediments can thwart even high-level elite actors' attempt to prime.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, two competing priming effects have a muting tendency. If, for instance, the president's priming effects are covered equally with an opposing priming effect, from Congress or another political faction, then the two will nullify each other and reduce the desired priming of a policy. The Vietnam War case study lends itself to this situation. In 1966, Congress began having hearings on the conflict and the first

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson and Rebecca L. Britton, "Still Pretty Prudent: Post-Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (August, 1998): 414.

<sup>18</sup> Perla, "Explaining Public Support for the Use of Military Force," 141.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2011), 108.

<sup>20</sup> Perla, "Explaining Public Support for the Use of Military Force," 146.

attempts to halt funding were introduced the following year, demonstrating that an open debate occurred within society.<sup>21</sup>

Large events drive priming actions. First, dramatic events cannot be ignored by society. In World War II, President Roosevelt was effective in priming his coalition toward intervention, but it took the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor to close the gap between Democrat and Republican political factions.<sup>22</sup> The napalm case study will demonstrate that one picture can fundamentally alter or bolster priming. When the Associated Press made the decision to publish a picture of Phan Thi Kim Phuc, “Napalm Girl”, a naked nine-year-old girl fleeing a napalm bombing, it dramatically challenged the government’s priming efforts and the legitimacy of US actions during the Vietnam War. In regards to Agent Orange, the larger environmental and scientific community efforts garnered media attention. This demonstrates how the media elites are able to choose or facilitate discourse focus. In Adam Berinsky’s book, *In Time of War*, he noted during the Vietnam War that the “shift in balance of elite rhetoric on war had important implications for the nature of public support for that conflict.”<sup>23</sup> He also noted similar shifts, after 1940, for support of war. These shifts did not occur due to elite cuing but due to the elite focus on the policy.<sup>24</sup> The media’s focus is at the heart of priming, As Berinsky puts it, “shifts in news media content alter the political importance that the public attaches to the flow of events.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Adam J. Berinsky, *In Time of War: Understanding the American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>22</sup> Andrian Ang, “Review of *In Time of War: Understanding Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq*,” *The Forum* 8, no. 2 (2010), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Adam J. Berinsky, *In Time of War*, 19.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>25</sup> Jon A. Krosnick and Donald R. Kinder, “Altering the Foundations of Support for the President Through Priming,” *The American Political Review* 84, no. 2 (June 1990): 510.

The media is the arbitrator of public debate. Political elites chose the focus of media attention by presenting narratives (priming). The media elites decide whether the narrative is significant and interprets the priming in its coverage. This interpretation, with its bias, is then debated by the populous. Berinsky demonstrates that the media focus on a policy is mirrored by public discussion.<sup>26</sup> The media's increased focus means that the policy will reach across society, even the least informed will be exposed to the discourse. A study conducted on the impacts of presidential priming found that the most informed were the least impacted. The study found that, "citizens with the least knowledge (and presumably the least exposure) manifested the largest priming effects."<sup>27</sup>

While the media can drive the dialogue, it does not control the populous' judgment of when and how to use force. In studying the pragmatism of US public support for the use force, public policy professor Bruce Jentleson found that support varied according to the principal policy objective.<sup>28</sup> Society is actively engaged within the priming system. The public does not just go along with the president's narrative or the media elite interpretation and the public can force the government to adjust.<sup>29</sup> In Jentleson's study, rather than be proactive, the government responded to the populous only after public opinion dropped to a point that the original policy objectives were no longer feasible.

Priming is a behavior that frames the principle policy objectives. Prior to conflict, the government attempts to rally support and society places their constraints on the objective. Perla and Schmitt demonstrate that society has the means to bracket wars and contain or limit

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<sup>26</sup> Adam J. Berinsky, *In Time of War*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Krosnick and Kinder, "Altering the Foundations of Support for the President Through Priming," 510.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 1992): 49.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

government action. But these limits are not fixed and can shift depending on events and elite focus on policy objectives. Jentleson has verified that these limits are not irrational but of a pragmatic prudent judgment of policy. This occurs through the engagement of society and the government in a dueling priming effort conducted through public opinion, the media, and social media. By comparing the firebombing campaigns of World War II and the use of napalm and Agent Orange in the Vietnam War, this monograph will evaluate if these attributes have a consistent, predictable, and recognizable pattern.

### **Incendiary Weapons in World War II**

During WWII, strategic bombing was a focal point of the Allies. The theories of Giulio Douhet and Billy Mitchell were put into action in an attempt for strategic bombing to be decisive and bring a quicker conclusion to hostilities.<sup>30</sup> The thermite incendiary bombs, or firebombs, used in this campaign will be the focus of this WWII case study. These weapons create intense heat, causing buildings to catch fire and be destroyed.<sup>31</sup> Depending on environmental factors, such as weather, urban density, and infrastructure building materials, these weapons can have a devastating effect on targets. Allied air armadas dropped massive amounts (650,000 tons were released over Dresden in 1945) of incendiary bombs on targets resulting in not just a specific factory being destroyed but a large percentage of the city being destroyed.<sup>32</sup>

This case study reviews the newspaper coverage and public responses to the European and Pacific theater during WWII. Six bombing raids from the European theater will be evaluated:

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<sup>30</sup> Peter R. Faber, "The Development of US Strategic Bombing Doctrine in the Interwar Years: Moral and Legal?," *Journal of Legal Studies*, 1996/1997, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.usafa.af.mil/dfl/journal/volume7/faber.html>.

<sup>31</sup> "Bomb," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified 2016, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/technology/bomb-weapon#ref103519>.

<sup>32</sup> Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 75.

Lubeck, 1942; Cologne, 1942; Hamburg, 1943; Cologne, 1944; Berlin, 1944; and Dresden, 1945. The time span covers March 1942 to February 1945. In the Pacific theater, mainland bombings occurred primarily to 1945, therefore, three raids will be examined: Tokyo, and the two raids of Kobe. Each bombing raid will be briefly described, followed by a review of the media's reaction to the raids to identify any signals from society. Additionally, the two theaters provided an aspect of differing coverage and responses towards the German enemy versus the Japanese enemy.

Coverage of the bombings against Germany occurred in a timely manner and with great detail. Over time, there was a gradual shift in media dialogue. In the beginning of US involvement, in 1942, bombings were a simple review of targets and a minor story. As time went on, the dialogue shifted to justification of strategic bombing tactics and rationalization through a lens of revenge. But it was not until late in the war, in 1945, that a debate of firebombing, or terror bombing, emerged from the public.

In 1941, Lubeck, Norway was controlled by the Germans and was a primary commercial port. More importantly, it was Germany's port to supply its military forces in Scandinavia.<sup>33</sup> A widely-published United Press article reported on the bombing raid, describing how the "bombs exploded with 'volcanic' effect."<sup>34</sup> The article described how large fires were ignited and that the city was engulfed with smoke. The article reported on the effects of incendiary bombing clearly for society, but the narrative is not focused on these dramatic effects. The focus the newspaper coverage was on the raids targeting industrial complexes and the success of strategic bombing.

Another widely-published article editorialized that the strikes in German-occupied territory demonstrated that air superiority had shifted to the Allies. The article argued how the addition of American bombers wrested the initiative from Hitler. Allied bombers turned the war

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<sup>33</sup> "Enemy Shipping on Norwegian Coast Attacked By British," *Dunkirk (NY) Evening Observer*, Mar 30, 1942.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

back on Germany and its war infrastructure in an effort to prevent a German spring offensive. Additionally, this article instilled hope of victory. The article described air campaigns as a forerunner to invasion and that the campaign was now being waged by the Allies, not against them. Firebombing was a positive, appropriate approach against the enemy.<sup>35</sup>

Another focus of the early articles was friendly casualties. There was very little discussion about numbers and types, military or civilian, of enemy casualties. Most of the coverage simply stated the loss of 15 bombers, and assert that it was a normal loss for this type of raid. One article released by United Press used the loss in the title; “British Lose 15 Planes in Great Attack on Nazis.”<sup>36</sup> Again, the priming and narrative demonstrated Allies sacrifice to achieve the great attacks of firebombing raids.

The media portrayed that firebombing was worthy of consideration and discourse within society. Even though the media provided an outlet for the government’s narrative for the necessity of firebombing, this story was not the lead or most vital current issue. In the US media, the war with Japan was the primary story and occupied most of the large, front-page headlines.<sup>37</sup> Most of the stories covering large raids, such as Lubeck, are small one to two paragraph blurbs on the bottom of page one or buried deep within the newspaper.<sup>38</sup>

A year later, in May 1942, the Royal Air Force bombed Cologne. The raid consisted of 900 bombers reaching their targets and dropping 915 tons of incendiary bombs, resulting in 469 civilian deaths and leaving 45,000 people homeless.<sup>39</sup> The media viewed and portrayed the raid

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<sup>35</sup> Louis F. Keemle, “Moves In War,” *Times (Olean, NY) Herald*, Apr 2, 1942.

<sup>36</sup> “British Lose 15 Planes in Great Attack on Nazis,” *The Evening (Harrisburg, PA) News*, Apr 2, 1942.

<sup>37</sup> “Japs Land in Akyab, Last British-Held Burma Port,” *Bradford (PA) Evening Star and The Bradford Daily Record (PA)*, Apr 2, 1942.

<sup>38</sup> “RAF Bombs Nazi Ship Off Norway,” *Fairbanks (AK) Daily News-Miner*, Mar 30, 1942.

<sup>39</sup> Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 55.

as a moral victory for the British. There was thorough coverage in the United States and the tone shifted from a year prior. Articles about the firebombing of German cities moved to the front of papers. Articles incorporated greater detail, zeal, and began to occupy front-page headline space.<sup>40</sup> The narrative grew as well. Instead of the excitement for wresting the initiative, the media's justified for firebombing and how it was a foundational element toward the overarching strategy.

The amount and level of detail grew as well. The front-page stories conveyed to the US public the devastating effects of incendiary weapons. An International News Service article widely published in the US quoted pilots describing the effects as, "Too gigantic to be real...a sea of flames...just one big stretch of fire."<sup>41</sup> Detailed aspects of firebombing was presented with increased specificity, such as the fact that a plane dropped bombs every six seconds for over an hour on the target, with flames reflecting off the bombers, and a "terrific mountain" of smoke emerging over the city.<sup>42</sup> The incendiary bombs themselves were referred to as, "giant death-dealers."<sup>43</sup> The media now broadcasted details of specific weapons effects. Also, these effects were presented in a positive manner through government sources. As these details became more frequently published, a discussion emerged that focused on the legitimacy of this weapon employment.

The discourse about legitimacy emphasized two factors; retribution and grand strategy. The retribution was an obvious response to Germany's devastating air campaign against the British. The psychological and physical aftermath was still fresh in the minds of the government

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<sup>40</sup> "America to Join RAF in Effort To Knock Germany Out From Air," *Denton (TX) Record-Chronicle*, Jun 1, 1942.

<sup>41</sup> "RAF Aviators Leave Cologne 'Just One Big Stretch of Fire,'" *Bradford (PA) Evening Star and The Bradford Daily Record*, Jun 1, 1942.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> "German Bombs," *Bradford (PA) Evening Star and The Bradford Daily Record*, Jun 1, 1942.

and society. Dialogue focused on the success of firebombing and that Germany was suffering from the tactics they pioneered, the mass bombings of cities.<sup>44</sup> More importantly, American and British authorities primed through the media the requirements for firebombing. Commander of Army Air Forces, General Hap Arnold, described these raids as, “decisive blows.”<sup>45</sup> Newspapers explained that the bombings were fundamental to Churchill’s master strategy.<sup>46</sup> Airpower and these raids were described as the turning point in the war. As one article captured the tone, “All America trusts that the decision is correct...Great events are in the making.”<sup>47</sup>

While hopes were high in 1942 about the effects of the air campaigns, the discourse shifted in 1943 that they were not decisive and the devastation of European cities was incredible. Throughout July and August of 1943, the allies conducted Operation Gomorrah, which involved the heavy bombing of Hamburg. Hamburg was Germany’s second largest city, and one of the most critical ports in Europe. During this campaign, the governmental priming message adjusted. The Allies had now perfected the new tactic of saturation bombing.<sup>48</sup> Articles explained how the Allies massed more bombers with increased tonnage of bombs on one target. Again, there was no hiding of the effects as papers published how, “cities are being raised” to the point that rebuilding is futile until the war ends.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the priming adjustment included a greater appeal to emotion by reminding the public how the high casualties of this new tactic diminished potential and real Allied losses.

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<sup>44</sup> “Open Second Front,” *The San Bernardino County (CA) Sun*, Jun 1, 1942.

<sup>45</sup> “German Bombs,” *Bradford (PA) Evening Star and The Bradford Daily Record*, Jun 1, 1942.

<sup>46</sup> Clyde A. Farnsworth, “Cologne Given Hard Pounding,” *Denton (TX) Record-Chronicle*, Jun 1, 1942.

<sup>47</sup> “Open Second Front,” *The San Bernardino County (CA) Sun*, Jun 1, 1942.

<sup>48</sup> “Saturation Bombing,” *Miami (OK) Daily News-Record*, Aug 8, 1943.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

As WWII reaches the same length as the First World War, the media imposed greater scrutiny on the bombing strategy. A widely-published Associated Press article suggested that bombings made WWII more devastating to civilization than previous wars. Also, the media began to question whether bombs had turned the tide of the war. Articles discussed the fact that bombings had an effect on the enemy populous, but the Allies remained off the continent, and the German Army had not collapsed.<sup>50</sup> This article also questioned the amount of time the Allies could continue to cooperate. As bombing was seen as decisive in the previous year, it was now portrayed as taking too long. Victory would require a ground offensive.

The war's duration and the effects of saturation bombing with incendiary weapons had started to change the dialogue from society. Firebombing was literally destroying the cities of Europe. American citizens were beginning to write letters to papers bemoaning how firebombing has destroyed cities, not targets. Cities not unlike American cities, filled with Christians and a history dating back centuries, were being leveled. Firebombing targets were no longer destroying an enemy but people, causing members of US society like Hap Carlsen from Ogden, Utah, to ask, "how many thousands have gone to that rest since the tenth bombing of this city [Hamburg]?"<sup>51</sup>

Despite some negative commentary, the media's coverage remained generally positive. The bulk of the articles touted the value of firebombing industrial centers in dense urban areas. Front-page headlines, like the ones in the *Del Rio News Herald* stated, "Nuernberg Given Hamburg Treatment By British Air Armada of More Than 1,000" summarizes the tone of an

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<sup>50</sup> "Start of Fifth Year of War Sees Nazi Morale Shaken," *The Salt Lake (UT) Tribune*, Aug 29, 1943.

<sup>51</sup> Hap Carlsen, "That Was Hamburg," *The Ogden (UT) Standard-Examiner*, Aug 8, 1943.

overwhelming amount of articles.<sup>52</sup> Even a year later, October 1944, with the bombing of Cologne, articles described raids as “seven-barreled aerial blitz” that “rocked” cities.<sup>53</sup>

These articles continued to provide the public the government’s positive message with great factual details. The Associated Press distributed a story on Cologne detailing that 10,000 tons of incendiary bombs were dropped over a four-day period. Additionally, the story detailed how Cologne had been bombed 18 times and how the minister of air stated, “The aim of the strategic offensive is to make Cologne more of a liability than an asset.”<sup>54</sup> From strategic leaders down to the aircrew on a mission, the government’s narrative of intent was factually and graphically provided to the people.

A year later, two things changed. As allied soldiers were fighting on the continent, firebombing began to be questioned by society. As the Germans retreated and its airpower diminished the effects, and devastation of the firebombing campaign intensified. The bombing of Berlin resulted in 9,000 civilian casualties.<sup>55</sup> The most devastating European attack occurred during the bombing of Dresden, in February of 1945, which caused a firestorm that resulted in 25,000 casualties.<sup>56</sup> Newspapers published articles and soldier letters that offered first-hand accounts of the devastation.<sup>57</sup> These casualty rates triggered a backlash to the weapon effects, causing the Army Air Forces to refute that claims that incendiary weapons were “terror bombing”

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<sup>52</sup> “Nuernberg Given Hamburg Treatment By British Air Armada of More Than 1,000,” *Del Rio (TX) News Herald*, Aug 29, 1943.

<sup>53</sup> “11 German Cities Rocked By 5,00-Plane Air Blitz,” *Sunday Times (Zanesville, OH) Signal*, Nov 5, 1944.

<sup>54</sup> “Allies Are Bombing Cologne From War,” *The Emporia (KS) Gazette*, Nov 1, 1944.

<sup>55</sup> Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 59.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>57</sup> Martin E. Miller, “Bud Miller Tells of Terrible Effects of Bombing Germany,” *Garrett (IN) Clipper*, Jul 2, 1945.

Europe. The government now had to defend its tactics and remind the public that the bombs were limited to military targets.<sup>58</sup> Fortunately for the government, the bulk of the debate about Europe emerged after Victory Europe Day.<sup>59</sup> With victory in Europe secured, the bombing of Japanese cities reemerged as the primary media story.

In 1945, Allied territorial gains placed the Japanese mainland within range of Allied bombers. Similar to the European theater, there was thorough coverage. Unlike Europe, there was little debate about firebombing Japan, even though the bulk of the bombings occurred late in the war and well beyond Victory Europe Day. Additionally, the articles published provided greater detail of effects and were, by today's standards, racist. As a result, there was less of a public counter to the government's messaging.

The bombing of Tokyo, on 9 March 1945, was devastating and the American public received full details. American bombers dropped 9,000 tons of firebombs, killing an estimated 85,000 people. The 20th Air Force, Chief of Staff, described the raid as, "the greatest show on earth."<sup>60</sup> Another article detailed how the bombing, "lay waste to 15 miles in Tokyo."<sup>61</sup> Other articles underscored just how devastating the firebombing was by equating the effects to destroying the Queens and Brooklyn boroughs of New York City.<sup>62</sup> These raids were on the same scale as Berlin and Dresden. The media recognized the importance of this raid and positioned most of the articles as front-page headlines.

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Edson, "No Changes in Bombing Policy," *Miami (OK) Daily News-Record*, Mar 18, 1945.

<sup>59</sup> "Great City Is Largely Ruins Due To Attacks From Air in Past Year," *Corvallis (OR) Gazette-Times*, May 3, 1945.

<sup>60</sup> "Heart of Tokyo," *Cumberland (MD) Sunday Times*, Mar 11, 1945.

<sup>61</sup> "B-29's Lay Waste To 15 Miles In Tokyo," *Kingsport (TN) Times-News*, Mar 11, 1945.

<sup>62</sup> "15 Square Miles of Hear of Tokyo Laid Waste by B-29's Great Fire Raid," *The San Bernardino County (CA) Sun*, Mar 11, 1945.

The public received the details and descriptions of the raids straight from government actors. In multiple articles, Major General Curtis LeMay, commander of the 21st Bomber Command, stated that the raid's effects "left nothing but twisted, tumbled-down rubble in its path."<sup>63</sup> Brigadier General Thomas S. Power, of the 21st Bomber Command, flew in the raid and described it as a literal "sea of flames."<sup>64</sup> There was a celebratory tone of achievement against the Japanese enemy. Additionally, unlike Europe, the dialogue focused less on the targets and more on the amount of destruction inflicted on the enemy city.

The Japanese enemy received different treatment than the Germans; the articles exhibited a vengeful pride. There was an element of this found in the British press as the allies bombed Germany, but the US rhetoric towards Japan was more harsh and boastful. Articles that covered the firebombing of Kobe, in March 1945, focused on the fires burning for seven hours, as reported by "Nips."<sup>65</sup> Again, great detail was published on this raid's destruction after bombers dropped a record tonnage of incendiary bombs, causing 12 square miles of damage, with the aircrew claiming the flames were visible 150 miles away.<sup>66</sup>

Ultimately, the combined bombing effects of Dresden and Tokyo elicited a government defense of the incendiary strategy.<sup>67</sup> After March, the dialogue shifted; coverage placed more emphasis on targets and a determined enemy. So while the tactic did not alter, in addition to the devastation caused, there was a noticeable increased emphasis on what was the specific military

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<sup>63</sup> Elmont Waite, "Industrial Tokyo Mostly Devastated," *Big Spring (TX) Daily Herald*, Mar 11, 1945.

<sup>64</sup> "Tokyo Raid," *Kingsport (TN) Times-News*, Mar 11, 1945.

<sup>65</sup> Vern Haugland, "Fires Sear Kobe 7 Hours After B-29 Raid, Nips Say," *The Ogden (UT) Standard-Examiner*, Mar 18, 1945.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Peter Edson, "News Notebook From Washington," *Sunday Times (Zanesville, OH) Signal*, Mar 25, 1945.

target of each raid. Articles covering the firebombing of Kobe in, June of 1945, justified the raid because Kobe was an industrial city feeding the Japanese war effort. In an Associated Press article, the description of destruction was limited and factual in nature and there was a greater focus on the Japanese propaganda response.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, there was an affirmation by the Army Air Force of continuing use of weapons that engulfs cities in a “mass of flames.”<sup>69</sup>

Even with the abundance of published success stories, there was an uptick of counter dialogue in the summer of 1945. Editorials published in June demonstrated that society increasingly questioned the tactic of firebombing. Debating the extreme nature of saturation bombing, these articles were offset by letters arguing that a victory was close at hand. One editorial published in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* expressed that the war was in its final phase and the bombing should not let up in crushing Japanese militarism.<sup>70</sup> Saturation bombing intended to soften mainland defenses leading up to an inevitable US invasion rather than exterminate civilians.<sup>71</sup> This historical rationale reflected earlier editorials about Europe; saturation firebombing proceeded the invasion that garners victory. Several dehumanizing political cartoons also reflected this sentiment.<sup>72</sup>

The articles’ content was one part of the dialogue, but how the articles were positioned on the paper was another important element. Unlike the European theater, the firebombing raids of Japan predominantly held front-page status. The positioning is of interest because the devastating effects firebombing articles were juxtaposed to articles demonstrating victory in other theaters or

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<sup>68</sup> Robbin Coons, “Superforts Hit Kobe,” *Big Spring (TX) Daily Herald*, Jun 5, 1945.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Robert M. Grannis, “No Room for Doubt About Our War Aims,” *The Brooklyn (NY) Daily Eagle*, Jul 8, 1945.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> “German Measles,” *Bradford (PA) Evening Star and The Bradford Daily Record*, Jul 18, 1945.

campaigns.<sup>73</sup> In the *Daily Capital Journal*, the title “Kobe Set Afire by Superforts’ Incendiaries” appears next to the title “Okinawa Battle In Final Stages, Asserts Nimitz.”<sup>74</sup> In the *La Grande Observer*, a major headline read, “Kobe Reels Under Incendiary Bombardment,” but it is bracketed under the main headline “Germany Stripped of Lands, Power” and other articles touting allied successes.<sup>75</sup> Newspapers thus framed the debate in a positive manner.

Framing of the debate was possible due to the meeting of strategic gains, garnering positive media coverage. Additionally, just as the opposition debate began to question the tactics of firebombing, the military achieved decisive victories in their respective theaters. These victories ended the war, essentially ending the debate. Though the debate was no longer necessary, society carried forward the experience and understanding of firebombing effects on civilians to future conflicts. This short, absolute war ends in a decisive victory, providing a significant contrast for comparison with the next case study.

### **Napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam**

Napalm and Agent Orange were weapons that evolved into symbols of the Vietnam War. Napalm was a weapon widely used in WWII, but not to the extent as its employment during the Vietnam War. Much like the incendiary weapons of WWII, napalm became common ordnance and a go-to weapon for close air support roles. Aerial delivery methods enabled devastating effects against the enemy. Agent Orange, a defoliant, indirectly attacked enemy forces. The intent was to deprive the enemy of its cover and food supply. Both the WWII firebombing and the Vietnam era application of Agent Orange indirectly targeted the military opponent’s industry,

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<sup>73</sup> “Jap Suicide Bases Hit,” *Kingsport (TN) Times-News*, Jun 3, 1945.

<sup>74</sup> “Kobe Set Afire By Superforts’ Incendiaries,” *Daily (Salem, OR) Capital Journal*, Jun 5, 1945.

<sup>75</sup> “Kobe Reels Under Incendiary Bombardment,” *La Grande (OR) Observer*, Jun 5, 1945.

and cover and concealment. As with the previous case study, these weapons targeted enemy activities but the devastation touched the lives of a large amount of civilians.

The primary focus of this case study is napalm. Napalm delivery methods and effects provide an adequate comparison to the firebombing of WWII. Agent Orange is included in this case study because it is also a chemically based weapon. It also demonstrates how two weapons, used in the same conflict with similar effects, elicited different responses from society. Even though they each shared common roots of protest, napalm became a greater symbol for the antiwar movement. Additionally, Agent Orange provided a baseline for research. Agent Orange's first use during the Vietnam War was in August 1961. From this point, the case study will review articles debating and reacting to the Agent Orange defoliant and napalm as the war progressed from 1961 to 1972.

In 1961, there were only a few thousand US soldiers in Vietnam and negligible discussion of the Vietnam War in the news. Media coverage at the time buried stories about the Vietnam War deep within papers. Napalm was simply a tool for military success. Even though the coverage was not the primary news of the day, the media did publicize napalm employment in a matter of fact fashion with no judgment placed on its effects. The media covered training exercises that detailed the effects of napalm. In one exercise napalm simulated nuclear detonation due to its large "mushrooming fireball."<sup>76</sup> Newspapers reported napalm employment against the enemy when the US army scored a tactical victory against the enemy.<sup>77</sup> This may demonstrate that napalm was accepted as a necessary weapon. That said, other nations' abuse of the weapon was front-page material.

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<sup>76</sup> "Acting As Aggressors Trains Mateo Troops for Defense," *The (San Mateo, CA) Times*, Aug 14, 1961.

<sup>77</sup> "Troops Ambush Viet Cong Forces," *The Bridgeport (CT) Post*, Aug 17, 1961.

During this time, Tunisia was involved with a dispute with France. A widely-published front-page article charged the French with a civilian massacre.<sup>78</sup> The article detailed Tunisia's claims and "accused the French army of atrocities, including the use of napalm bombs."<sup>79</sup> While the debate over napalm in the United States was minimal, apparently since it was used to kill Communists, the media suggested that if used against civilians it warranted front-page debate.<sup>80</sup>

A year later, in 1962, the coverage remained largely unchanged. The only noticeable adjustment to the narrative was that the enemy body count data began to appear in articles. Similar to the firebombing case study of WWII, the government provided quantifiable data of success by presenting tactical victories and enemy casualty counts for societal consumption.<sup>81</sup> Napalm's use in these victories appeared as in a matter of simple fact manner, but what is significant that articles singled out of napalm but not other types of munitions or tactics.<sup>82</sup> The descriptions of the weapons employment were also becoming clearer as the media described how bombs and napalm were "poured" into the forest before clearing out Viet Cong "combat hamlets."<sup>83</sup> Yet, these facts and descriptions were again buried, sometimes 18 pages deep in newspapers next to the radio schedule.

Opinion articles were buried as well, but there was a debate about Vietnam and tactical techniques. Similar to the sentiment against the use of napalm by the French, individuals condemned US actions as counterproductive. One opinion piece satirically mentioned that the

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<sup>78</sup> "Tunisia Asks US Support In Ousting French Troops; Civilian 'Massacre' Charged," *The Decatur (IL) Daily Review*, Aug 21, 1961.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> "Vietnamese Kill 31 Red Guerrillas," *Valley (Harlingen, TX) Morning Star*, Aug 14, 1962.

<sup>82</sup> "US Aided Troops Hit Viet Cong," *Tucson (AZ) Daily Citizen*, Aug 1, 1962.

<sup>83</sup> "Vietnam Action," *The Danville (VA) Register*, Aug 3, 1962.

United States was bringing the best of civilization, “like poison gas, napalm bombs...” and sardonically stated that these tactics would “make friends with Asia.”<sup>84</sup> An important aspect of this article was that poison gas and napalm were mentioned together in a negative light.

This negative attention was minimal and not a primary discussion for major media outlets. In 1963, focus remained on the development of the F-1A fighter jet and the type of munitions it will employ, such as napalm bombs.<sup>85</sup> Government statements or quotes within newspaper about the Vietnam War remained rare. One statement from the Pentagon downplayed the intensity of the conflict, perhaps undermining its own priming with the need for a containment strategy against the existential Communist threat. Many articles took the Pentagon to task when it stated that South Vietnam was a viable combat testing laboratory. To many, such statements suggested that the US military was practicing killing and examining the bodies “burned to a crisp” by napalm.<sup>86</sup>

It is during this time, going into 1964, that napalm became a household name. In 1964, one of the primary chemists who developed napalm died. Douglas Armstrong’s death was reported in papers across the nation, many on the front page, because of his involvement with napalm.<sup>87</sup> Napalm was emerging as symbol of the US effort in Vietnam. The Associated Press published a story detailing the split of South Vietnamese officials. On one side, articles portrayed the United States as too gentle in trying to win over the population. The other side’s sentiment emphasized that US policy encouraged brutality.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Art Hope, “Better Love Us – Or We’ll Blast You,” *Chula Vista (CA) Star-News*, Aug 30, 1962.

<sup>85</sup> “Northrop Announces New Fighter-Bomber,” *The Daily (Eau Claire, WI) Telegram*, Aug 1, 1963.

<sup>86</sup> Ellis L. Spackman, “Vietnam Valuable Lab to Test Arms?” *The San Bernardino County (CA) Sun*, Aug 29, 1963.

<sup>87</sup> “Napalm bomb chemist dies,” *Redlands (CA) Daily Facts*, Aug 3, 1964.

<sup>88</sup> “Viets’ Criticism of US Grows; Is Contradictory,” *The Bridgeport (CT) Telegram*, Aug

As discussion about napalm grew Agent Orange was remained absent from the media debate. Interestingly, unlike napalm, there was an environmental and scientific backlash to the defoliant. In 1964, the Federation of American Scientists claimed that using herbicides, like Agent Orange, in war violated the Geneva Agreement of 1925.<sup>89</sup> Yet there was little coverage in media print outlets. Searches through *newspaper.com* archives for “defoliant” and “herbicide” programs, in 1964, yielded minimal articles, especially when compared to napalm.

In 1965, the debate over napalm intensified. While it did not receive front-page coverage, there was a noticeable increase in articles mentioning the use of napalm and its value. In a nationally-published article, the debate focused on whether the loss of aircraft and pilots was worth the effects bombing provided.<sup>90</sup> The government’s priming focused quantifiable data such as tonnage of bombs and napalm dropped, enemy killed, and structures destroyed. The public compared that information against the number of planes lost and the fact with all the bombing and loss of planes the US controlled only 50 percent of South Vietnam.<sup>91</sup> The US military was not meeting the proposed policy benchmark. Napalm was singled out as part of a brutal approach against the population that US policy was trying to protect.<sup>92</sup> Even with some arguing the merits and necessary evils of weapons like napalm and Agent Orange during the “curious” war, there was a growing call for a change of course by the US public.<sup>93</sup> This was similar to what was seen

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21, 1964.

<sup>89</sup> “Doing the Science,” *Agent Orange Record*, Studies and Conference Reports, 2010, accessed October 24, 2015.  
[http://www.agentorangerecord.com/information/what\\_is\\_dioxin/studies\\_and\\_conference\\_reports/1/](http://www.agentorangerecord.com/information/what_is_dioxin/studies_and_conference_reports/1/)

<sup>90</sup> “The Raiding In North Viet: Is It Worth the Sacrifice?” *Kingsport (TN) News*, Sep 3, 1965.

<sup>91</sup> “Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Arnold Beichmann, “He’ll re-woo the villagers,” *The Mason City (IA) Globe-Gazette*, Aug 31, 1965.

<sup>93</sup> “Vietnam Food Denial,” *The Terre Haute (IN) Tribune*, Dec 31, 1965.

by Vietnam citizens a year earlier. Specific types of weapons employment influenced society to question the greater war objectives.

The media still presented a balance of both sides, as these counter sentiments received pushback. The media sought out responses from the military and government. An example of this occurred in an Associated Press article that discussed the response of US Marines serving in Vietnam to anti-war protests in the United States.<sup>94</sup> This article demonstrated that those on the ground disagreed with the sentiment back home and that they stood with “their President.”<sup>95</sup> The message that the government conveyed was that they were not burning down farms and homes, but enemy villages, and that the war needed to be fought this way. Marine Corporal George Derieg said, “It’s a war of the napalm bomb, the helicopter, and the American fighting man.”<sup>96</sup> The young marine’s assessment that the protesters were caught up in the moment, reflected the greater governmental narrative that ignored the growing counter argument. If the protesters were unaware of what was occurring in Vietnam and the effects of weapons, the media over the next year would inform them.

Over the next two years, napalm emerged at the forefront of the ongoing debate about US involvement in Vietnam. 1966 probably best demonstrated society’s growing skepticism over the use of napalm as a weapon. The positioning of articles in newspapers often juxtaposed opposing arguments. In multiple papers, images of US soldiers calling in air support, with napalm exploding appeared above recent Defense Department death toll numbers.<sup>97</sup> Images and stories of anti-napalm rallies appeared alongside a “Truly American Demonstration” article covering a

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<sup>94</sup> George Esper, “Young People Are Aware On Vietnamese Situation,” *The Indiana (PA) Gazette*, Aug 30, 1965.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> “Death Toll of US Soldiers Rise in Vietnam,” *The Camden (AR) News*, Feb 26, 1966.

Memorial Day ceremony with a new generation of those who understand “the meaning of freedom.”<sup>98</sup> This policy debate occurred on the pages of newspapers across the United States. The *Daily Independent Journal* published an article that discussed how President Johnson should end the pouring of napalm on Vietnam’s citizens and pursue United Nations assistance. It was positioned above an article positively depicting a US decisive victory over a Communist battalion.<sup>99</sup>

The coverage in 1966 demonstrated that society was still debating whether napalm was a necessary tool necessary to win the war or a symbol of a failed, inhumane policy. Articles depicted how napalm helped US soldiers defeat Communists. One paper placed the recap of an American victory next to an article of a former protester becoming a “proud fighting man.”<sup>100</sup> Articles also soon appeared of former service members describing the ineffectiveness of napalm against a guerilla army.<sup>101</sup>

The anti-napalm argument took shape in 1966. The tone of articles from across logical, rational appeal to stinging emotional appeal during the winter holidays. One article identified the US economy as a “napalm” economy, making the argument that, if the United States continued in the “shameful” war, the US economy would grow more dependent on war and military campaigns.<sup>102</sup> Another argued that the enemy turned napalm employment against the United States. It claimed that the Viet Cong lured troops to call in napalm bombs that hit civilians and

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<sup>98</sup> “Truly American Demonstration,” *The (San Mateo, CA) Times*, May 30, 1966.

<sup>99</sup> “Morse,” *Daily (San Rafael, CA) Independent Journal*, May 30, 1966.

<sup>100</sup> Peter Arnett, “Ex-Protester Is Now Proud Fighting Man,” *Independent (Longbeach, CA)*, Feb 19, 1966.

<sup>101</sup> “Palmyra Man Discharged; Was Wounded During 30 Days of Viet Nam Fighting,” *Lebanon (PA) Daily News*, Fri, Feb 25, 1966.

<sup>102</sup> “Withdrawal Urged From Viet Nam War,” *Daily (San Rafael, CA) Independent Journal*, Feb 26, 1966.

made villagers think the United States was “out to kill everybody.”<sup>103</sup> Even beyond emotional rhetoric, many articles laconically stated: “Napalm Kills Children.”<sup>104</sup> In North Adams, Massachusetts, a group of citizens took out a full page ad of “An Appeal to the American Conscience” to end the Vietnam War. In this ad, the first argument referenced the thousands of peasants each month that are “burned to death by napalm or otherwise slaughtered.”<sup>105</sup>

At this same time, quietly, some Americans continued to protest Agent Orange. The American Association for the Advancement of Science called for a field investigation of the Vietnam War herbicide program.<sup>106</sup> Similar to napalm, a full-page advertisement appeared out in many papers detailing the effects of herbicides in Vietnam.<sup>107</sup> In another nationally-published article, a Catholic Bishop stated that a just war must be fought in a just manner. He claimed that the herbicide program failed to be just, depriving the US war of legitimacy. The bishop insisted that the herbicide program was unjust because, the defoliant destroyed crops in areas that were starving civilians and not the enemy Viet Cong fighters.<sup>108</sup>

The articles of 1966 were reminiscent of those published in latter 1945 about firebombing. Four years into the war, the coverage focused not on protests, but on the arguments against napalm. Most of the protest coverage consisted of small blurbs. Protests of napalm were adding to the dialogue, but not framing the debate.

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<sup>103</sup> Tom Nolan, “The Quiet War In Viet,” *The Brownsville (TX) Herald*, May 31, 1966.

<sup>104</sup> Robert D. Ohman, “Napalm Kills Children War Takes Heavy Toll of Civilians,” *Mt. Vernon (IL) Register-News*, Dec 22, 1966, 1.

<sup>105</sup> “An Appeal to the American Conscience,” *The North Adams (MA) Transcript*, Dec 22, 1966.

<sup>106</sup> “Doing the Science,” *Agent Orange Record*.

<sup>107</sup> Joe Elliott, “Mass Murder is Still...Murder, Mr. President,” *The (Hagerstown, MD) Morning Herald*, Jun 27, 1966.

<sup>108</sup> Louis Cassels, “Anything goes strategy is out,” *New Castle (PA) News*, Aug 5, 1966.

A year later, protest coverage framed the discourse primed government actions. In 1967, protests against the Vietnam War and the use of napalm garnered a ground swell of support and media coverage. Media elites believed that the controversy over the Vietnam War was the biggest story of the year.<sup>109</sup> Specific protests of the producers of napalm continued throughout the conflict, but now napalm itself became one of the primary reasons to protest the war in general. Coverage of one protest said the vast majority of placards in a crowd of 14,000 people simply stated, “Love Not Napalm.”<sup>110</sup>

The media increasingly focused on protester demographics. Most articles attempted to describe the diversity of demonstrators. Articles identified that napalm marches included businessmen, students, and mothers with strollers.<sup>111</sup> Apprehension about napalm reached across the social spectrum. This growing anti-napalm coalition is evident from protest attendees depictions, to Catholic bishops’ editorials, to letters from Protestant US citizens, such as Marguerite Smelser. She wrote to the *San Bernardino County Sun* that Churches could no longer “close its conscience” to the napalming and burning of villages.<sup>112</sup> The public debate in the newspapers questioned whether napalm was more effective against the Viet Cong than social reforms.<sup>113</sup> From this time forward, many of the reports covering battles included subtitles of “Napalm Used” followed by specific details of its use.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> “Editors Vote Vietnam Biggest of Top 10 Stories of 1967,” *The Milwaukee (WI) Journal*, Dec 26, 1967.

<sup>110</sup> T.H. Fitzgerald, “Local Man Views Demonstration,” *Naugatuck (CT) Daily News*, Aug 8, 1967.

<sup>111</sup> “Napalm March Is Held,” *Express (San Antonio, TX) and News*, May 29, 1966.

<sup>112</sup> “Presbyterian Confession,” *The San Bernardino County (CA) Sun*, Aug 8, 1967, 32.; T.H. Fitzgerald, “Local Man Views Demonstration,” Aug 8, 1967.

<sup>113</sup> “Vietnam’s Election,” *Bennington (VT) Banner*, Sep 2, 1967.

<sup>114</sup> “Con Thien Again Site of Battle,” *Janesville (WI) Daily Gazette*, Dec 1, 1967.

The discourse in the media sought justification for the employment of napalm. In 1967, newspapers printed a growing number of rebuttals, from government officials and other citizens. A nationally-syndicated editorial claimed that the government had presented too much information for the public to absorb and that society could not possibly understand the rationale. There were accusations that the media ignored Communist brutality and the public was subjected to “drumfire” articles covering victims of US napalm.<sup>115</sup> Also, the government stepped up statements by commanders in Vietnam. When articles covered the use of napalm, commanders described the weapon’s effectiveness, especially including body count figures.<sup>116</sup> Yet, the government’s priming attempts were still woefully disproportionate to the coverage of protests against napalm.

In addition, napalm, the government needed to justify Agent Orange. In 1967, seventeen Noble Laureates and 5,000 scientists petitioned to end the herbicide program in Vietnam.<sup>117</sup> That year, the Pentagon awarded a 57.69 million dollar order for defoliate. The Associated Press reported that the Pentagon’s announcement “made no mention of Vietnam.”<sup>118</sup> The government had expanded defoliants to a 100 million dollar program.<sup>119</sup>

Overall, the defoliant program met minimal protest. The level of debate was reminiscent of the debate over napalm in 1961, in which the government narrative predominated. Its use was delegated to commanders in the field. Agent Orange was credited for the “significantly reduced”

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<sup>115</sup> Ralph de Toledano, “LBJ, The Public and Vietnam,” *Las Cruces (NM) Sun-News*, Dec 1, 1967.

<sup>116</sup> “Con Thien Again Site of Battle,” *Janesville (WI) Daily Gazette*, Dec 1, 1967.

<sup>117</sup> “Doing the Science,” *Agent Orange Record*.

<sup>118</sup> “Expanded Jungle Defoliant Near,” *The Daily (Eau Claire, WI) Telegram*, Jul 11, 1967.

<sup>119</sup> “US Steps Up Effort to Kill Viet Jungles,” *The Bridgeport (CT) Post*, Mar 15, 1967.

number of ambushes.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, the Pentagon insisted that defoliant was no longer experimental, with “consistent and highly predictable” effects.<sup>121</sup> Meanwhile, contrary reports from the Department of State fueled the debate, stating the herbicide programs were having a negative effect on plant life.<sup>122</sup> Aside from the scientific community and environmental movement, the employment of defoliants and its manufacturers received little public debate.

Unlike Agent Orange, the producers of napalm did not avoid controversy. Throughout the conflict, anti-war protesters protested napalm. As the war drug on, the public demanded greater corporate responsibility. Protests and media focus moved from outside of factories to college campuses, where many students sought to ban companies that produced napalm from recruiting.<sup>123</sup> The demonstrations led Dow Chemical, a significant producer of napalm, to echo the protesters: “this is a lousy war, and unjust war.”<sup>124</sup> While they agreed on the war, Dow remained in line with the original priming of providing the tools necessary to support troops.<sup>125</sup>

Media coverage of troops using napalm to win and survive was not absent from the debate, but overshadowed. The Tet Offensive, launched in January 1968, illustrated this aspect. Ho Chi Minh intended the coordinated attacks against South Vietnam to end the military war and cause the United States to negotiate or even withdraw. While the American and South Vietnamese forces eventually defeated the offensive, the campaign inflicted heavy military and

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> “Doing the Science,” *Agent Orange Record*.

<sup>123</sup> “Marshall Students ‘Protest’ Napalm,” *The Charleston (WV) Daily Mail*, Nov 25, 1968.

<sup>124</sup> J.D. Wilkinson, “Dow Officials Cites ‘Commitment’ In Defense,” *The Daily (Chapel Hill, NC) Tar Heel*, Dec 13, 1968.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

civilian casualties and fractured US strategy.<sup>126</sup> Articles that detailed the Communist “terror attacks,” and how US soldiers used napalm to defeat these attacks, seem to support the US military’s call to increase troop levels.<sup>127</sup> The public support had been weakened and this sentiment eclipsed the tactical success that the military, with the use of napalm, had achieved. Anti-war articles dominated the debate in the media and napalm’s use received a similar negative connotation. A local protest that was reported nationally demonstrated this sentiment, as former clergy members in Baltimore, Maryland, broke into a US government office and used homemade napalm to burn military draft records.<sup>128</sup>

A year later, government priming efforts continued to exhibit a lack of awareness about the changing nature of the discourse as the general public questioned napalm’s use. The government maintained the narrative of location, amount, and type of ordnance delivered, along with the number of enemy killed.<sup>129</sup> While these articles portrayed the government’s side of the debate, the media continued to frame the argument with specific “Bombs” or “Napalm” sub-headlines. The government’s priming had become increasingly less effective and the media reported on the emerging public uncomfortableness about the use of napalm. This was evident in articles that depicted homeowners protesting napalm. Residents raised safety and property value concerns in regards to napalm being produced close to their neighborhoods.<sup>130</sup> This deviation away from protesting inhumane employment was seen with defoliants as well. The impact of

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<sup>126</sup> “Milestones: 1961-1968,” Office of the Historian, *US Department of State*,” last modified 2016, accessed April 19, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/tet>.

<sup>127</sup> “Red Forces Stage Viet Terror Attack,” *The Daily (Canonsburg, PA) Notes*, Dec 6, 1968.

<sup>128</sup> “Seven Men, Two Women Convicted of Burning Draft Bd. Records With Napalm,” *The Gettysburg (PA) Times*, Oct 11, 1968.

<sup>129</sup> “Bombs, Napalm: US Levels Cong Camp,” *The Raleigh (WV) Register*, Sep 2, 1969.

<sup>130</sup> “Homeowners Join War Foes To Protest West Coast Firm’s Napalm Production,” *The Berkshire (Pittsfield, MA) Eagle*, Dec 5, 1969.

accidental spills of Agent Orange in transit became another element to the ongoing environmental protest.<sup>131</sup> A consensus was emerging across the political spectrum against napalm.

As the Vietnam War dragged into its second decade, the media's coverage of napalm did not significantly change. News stories depicting a popular song, "Napalm sticks to kids," were a powerful metaphor and signified the growing backlash.<sup>132</sup> Articles depicting military success were still subject to "Napalm Used" sub headlines.<sup>133</sup> A stronger indicator of society's attitude about napalm can be found in the 1970 coverage of a shareholder case against the Securities and Exchange Commission and Dow. Shareholders attempted to amend corporate policy to prevent napalm from being "used on or against human beings."<sup>134</sup>

In 1972, the debate over napalm in Vietnam grew beyond the boundaries of the conflict. In June of 1972, the Associated published a picture demonstrating the aftermath of an accidental napalm drop. The photograph captured kids running in terror amongst South Vietnamese soldiers. The focal point is nine year old Phan Thi Kim Phuc, whom ripped off all her clothes and ran screaming because "the skin was burned off her back."<sup>135</sup> South Vietnamese government officials attempted to explain that all efforts were made to save civilian lives that were caught in the "strike zone," and the bomb was still within the margin of errors.<sup>136</sup> The photograph sparked a larger debate. Reflecting on the iconic photo, the Associated Press said the image

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<sup>131</sup> "Chemical Transports Threat to Sea – Scientist," *The Ottawa (Ontario) Journal*, Apr 16, 1969.

<sup>132</sup> "Our Napalm Bombing," *Washington C.H. (OH) Record-Herald*, Aug 14, 1970.

<sup>133</sup> "Reds Converging On Capital Of Cambodia," *The Brownsville (TX) Herald*, Nov 17, 1971.

<sup>134</sup> Robert Metz, "Corporations Nudged On Social Responsibility," *York (PA) Daily Record*, Nov 7, 1970.

<sup>135</sup> "Accidental Napalm Drop Hits Civilians," *Freeport (IL) Journal-Standard*, Jun 8, 1972.

<sup>136</sup> "Napalm Aftermath," *The Jacksonville (IL) Daily Journal*, Jun 10, 1972.

“communicated the horrors of the Vietnam War in a way words could never describe, helping to end one of the most divisive wars in American history.”<sup>137</sup>

In the latter half of 1972, the debate entered a new phase. In October, the United Nations released a report on the effects of napalm. The graphic details of napalm’s impact on humans led the report to classify burns as “fifth degree” burns and called for the General Assembly to consider a ban of the weapon’s use.<sup>138</sup> Details of the report made front-page headlines across the country. In turn, this report led many editors to call for the United States to ban the use of napalm, not just in Vietnam, but outright.<sup>139</sup> The domestic outcry over napalm had become international in nature with organizations such as the United Nations, World Health Organization, and the Red Cross joining the debate. However, similar to the firebombing of German and Japanese cities in WWII, the debate reached this tipping point after US military involvement in Vietnam ended.

The debate over Agent Orange continued, but with a different result. Unlike napalm, Agent Orange in October 1969 was restricted to use in unpopulated areas.<sup>140</sup> This occurred due to an increasing amount of scientific tests and evidence demonstrating possible long-term effects of Agent Orange on the environment and people. Anti-Agent Orange actions fell under the broader environmental movement that questioned domestic herbicide programs in the United States. The government priming focused on Agent Orange’s controllability and the limited

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<sup>137</sup> “AP ‘napalm girl’ photo from Vietnam War turns 40,” *Associated Press*, last modified June 1, 2012, accessed April 20, 2016, [http://www.ap.org/Content/AP-In-The-News/2012/AP-napalm-girl-photo-from-Vietnam-War-turns-40\\_](http://www.ap.org/Content/AP-In-The-News/2012/AP-napalm-girl-photo-from-Vietnam-War-turns-40_)

<sup>138</sup> “A new dimension for napalm harm – it’s ‘fifth degree,’” *Independent (Long Beach, CA)*, Oct 19, 1972.

<sup>139</sup> “US Should Lead Anti-Napalm Effort,” *The Edwardsville (IL) Intelligencer*, Oct 20, 1972.

<sup>140</sup> Committee to Review the Health Effects in Veterans of Exposure to Herbicides, *Veterans and Agent Orange: Health Effects of Herbicides Used in Vietnam* (Washington DC: National Academies Press, 1992), 92.

negative effects to populations. In February of 1970, Secretary of Defense Mel Laird rejected the complaints and claimed no verified, “malformed births from defoliation are known.”<sup>141</sup> That was proven to be false, and the government realized it would be difficult to ban similar herbicides at home and not overseas, especially when original priming focused on the controllability and safe nature of the chemicals. As the evidence mounted and dialogue continued, the US government ultimately changed its policy. By April 1970, the government suspended Agent Orange from use by the United States in both Vietnam and at home.<sup>142</sup>

### **Analysis**

These case studies demonstrate the roles of government, media, and society as actors and how they determine the manner in which the United States conducts its current and future wars. Reviewing the cases studies, different aspects of priming, media interpretation, and duration variables demonstrated that society does in fact broadcast recognizable signals, through the media, of what weapons effects it is willing to tolerate. This bracketing shifts over time, and all three actors involved in the discourse play an active role in driving or correcting any shifts. Indicators of these shifts include: stagnant government priming, coverage juxtaposition or media elite cueing, broad diverse demographic unification, a weapon becoming synonymous with the war itself, and protests from the scientific community. Recognizing how society broadcasts, diligent operational planners will be able to recognize the public’s signals within this debate and identify if strategic leaders should adjust how they legitimize operational actions or if new means are required to achieve operational ends.

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<sup>141</sup> Jack Anderson, “Vietnam defoliation may deform babies,” *The Montana (Butte, MT) Standard*, Feb 5, 1970.

<sup>142</sup> Committee to Review the Health Effects in Veterans of Exposure to Herbicides, *Veterans and Agent Orange: Health Effects of Herbicides Used in Vietnam*, 92.

In both case studies the government engaged in priming to preserve the public will. The government priming narratives had similar and consistent aspects. Both narratives focused on the enemy or war production targets. Each one provided estimated casualties to the public. Additionally, each appealed to authority of high government officials to demonstrate the effectiveness toward achieving victory, justifying the requirement for the weapon's effects. The case studies differed in terms of the quantitative amount of coverage of the weapons effects, the diversity in official government priming, and ability to show progress to victory.

The firebombing of WWII received great attention from the pilots that flew the missions to strategic leaders that authorized the raids. Many of the articles had firsthand, unapologetic, details of firebombing's destruction and effects. Progress toward victory was depicted through the raids. Even as counter arguments emerged after Dresden and Tokyo, in 1945, the government countered with the fact that the raids enabled the fulfillment of policy objectives. Thousands of enemy civilian casualties meant hundreds of miles of progress and softening of the enemy for the inevitable Allied invasion. Additionally, the large bombing raids of WWII were one-sided or disproportionate against civilians. Therefore, firebombing was, in part, perceived as a reaction to the German provocation and bombing. The Allies were able to prime and maintain their narrative of the enemy as an existential threat.

When the debate in the public intensified during the Vietnam War, the government failed to alter or increase its priming. The narrative followed the same script-like format, consisting of location, action, and enemy casualty counts. Additionally, the government attempted to frame that napalm thwarted the enemy terror tactics on the villages of South Vietnam, reminiscent of the WWII retaliatory argument. The difference is that it lacked the first-hand accounts and personal commentary of leaders. Most of the articles used command spokesmen or official Pentagon statements. As the debate picked up, the media focused on service members' response to the protests, allowing for the more personal, informal dialogue and understanding found in WWII. The government relied on editors and producers of weapons to defend the use of napalm, but as

the time passed they offered fewer public defenses in the media. Napalm, as a weapon to help the military win in battle, became viewed as a disproportionate and indiscriminate tool terrorizing civilians. Ultimately, it became a symbol of the failed Vietnam policy that focused too much on firepower while ignoring the Vietnamese populous.

The difference with Agent Orange had less to do with the anti-war movement than the larger, growing environmental movement. In 1961, a year after Agent Orange's first trials in Vietnam, Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*. Writing specifically for the greater public, she depicted the slow poisoning of people and the environment through chemical pesticides.<sup>143</sup> This book helped ignite the grassroots environmental movement, which called for greater protection and responsibility from the government and primed the public against defoliants in war.

Carson and the environmental movement foreshadowed the consequences of the Vietnam War herbicide and defoliant program. Carson warned of the risk of attempting to “control a few unwanted species by a method that contaminated the whole environment.”<sup>144</sup> The nation was rallying to halt the destruction of nature in the name of progress and prosperity.<sup>145</sup> Carson's descriptions of this destruction resonated with the public as they examined the impacts and dangers of Agent Orange.<sup>146</sup> Most striking was the description of the havoc spread “indiscriminately from the skies,” the primary method of delivery of the defoliants in Vietnam.<sup>147</sup>

The environmental movement also contributed to governmental accountability, a larger theme in the counter napalm and Agent Orange discourse. Elite officials' decision to use these new chemical herbicides at home and as a weapon in Vietnam was done without priming the

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<sup>143</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: First Mariner Books, 2002), x.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>146</sup> “Chemical Transports Threat to Sea – Scientist.”

<sup>147</sup> Carson, *Silent Spring*, 154.

greater public.<sup>148</sup> As the weapon's use became publicized, actors from the scientific and environmental communities expressed serious concerns, but the media largely ignored these isolated concerns and the government continued the herbicide campaign. It took a united scientific community taking action, including formally petitioning the government to alter the herbicide program. This, in turn, sparked the public's concern, which was expressed through the initial protests against napalm being held outside of the private factories producing the weapons. Eventually, this momentum spread court cases against chemical producers. Ultimately, the mounting evidence against these dangerous chemicals caused concern to not be focused on the impacts in Vietnam, but rather on the impacts they could have, at home, such as through spillage and decreased property values.

The scientific and environmental community was able to demonstrate Agent Orange's impacts on US citizens' lives. Kirkpatrick Sale calls this bottom-up, public reaction to issues that could have an intimate affect on ordinary Americans the "NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) syndrome."<sup>149</sup> Sale described that these grassroots movements are resilient and effective because of their focus at the local level minimized disparate constituencies.<sup>150</sup> Agent Orange and napalm are examples of this effect, a groundswell of local activism galvanized a national consensus.

In both case studies the public was provided with ample, timely, and accurate information on events and weapons employment. Accurate information is critical to the public's ability to broadcast its limits on war. The firebombing figures provided were specific and in exhaustive detail compared to napalm. Two aspects seemed to contribute to the detail. First, the grand scale of operations provided more details of this new warfare phenomenon. Second, the government provided more primary source outlets broadcasting the information, such as bomber aircrews.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>149</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 58.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 58.

Newspapers descriptions of napalm employment were specific as well, but they were not novel, nor as dramatic. Napalm was not new, and by the time of the Vietnam War it was an established weapon system. There were no grand air-armadas darkening the skies to drop napalm as there were for firebombings WWII. The figures associated with napalm were not on as grand of a scale either. Numbers of enemy killed listed in battles were usually less than 50, as compared to the dramatic loss of life with firebombing.

These details were in large part due to the media's proximity to weapons employment. Unlike WWII firebombing, the media was able to witness the immediate effects of napalm. The media was also on the ground before and after to witness the more long-term effects of Agent Orange. As the media started reporting from the areas impacted and published visual images, the counter debate began to emerge from the public. This is important because it demonstrates that the media's role and attitude remained constant in both wars.<sup>151</sup> The media reported the facts and did not try to protect the military reputation in one war and destroy it in another.<sup>152</sup> In both cases, the media brokered what it saw as a worthy story, provided a space for dialogue, and eventually fostered debate.

The debate over weapons use evolved throughout the wars. Initially, the media reported the facts and provided a space for the government or military arguments and comments. As greater details occurred and the wars progressed, citizens and editors began to write letters demonstrating their approval or dissent. If the media saw value in promoting discourse, it moved articles from within the newspapers to the front page. The media's perception of the debate winner was seen in the amount of physical space and positioning of the articles.

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<sup>151</sup> Berinsky, *In Time of War*, 38.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

A military conflict's duration influenced the public's tolerances. In WWII, the firebombing debate did not really gain steam until four years into the war, in 1945. A similar timeline emerged with napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam. The debate in the media ratcheted up around 1965. As the war extended into a second decade, the weapons were garnering international attention and action, such as the United Nations reports and treaty proposals banning these specific weapons. A war's length provided more time for counter arguments to gain momentum and be broadcasted to the broader public.

The political spectrum consensus with the counter government arguments is another signal that emerged in the case studies. Firebombing in WWII enjoyed large public support due, in part, to a foreign policy, shared by both Republicans and Democrats, broadcasted to the public by the government through the 1940 presidential campaign. In that election Republicans nominated Wendell Willkie, an "unshakeable internationalist," sharing the same foreign policy objectives as Democrat President Roosevelt.<sup>153</sup> In Adam Berinsky's book, *In Time of War*, he explains that WWII was a period of time when political polarization was the rule, yet, the public as a whole stood behind the government's actions.<sup>154</sup> During the Vietnam War, polling data shows there was actually less political partisan polarization, yet the public shifted its support against the use of napalm and Agent Orange.<sup>155</sup>

Polling data and political party platforms were only one aspect of the demographic signals. From newspaper articles in the napalm case study one can see new segments of society join in the debate. Early on in the conflict, there was no substantial negative coverage of napalm in the United States. Protests began as isolated gatherings outside of chemical producing plants and letters to the editor from conservative religious stances. Over time, napalm protests became a

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<sup>153</sup> Berinsky, *In Time of War*, 99.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

fundamental message of the overarching anti-Vietnam War movement. This growth crystalized beyond editorials and city squares to include more segments of society. Evidence is demonstrated in the newspaper articles that covered homeowner NIMBY concerns about property values due to their proximity to napalm production factories. Another example is seen when shareholders file lawsuits against napalm producing companies to limit napalm sales. This counter priming constituted a broad, bipartisan effort unbounded by political or social affiliation.

Agent Orange was halted because of the type of societal attention it received. Media attention to Agent Orange did not come remotely close to that of firebombing and napalm. Yet, it the public was able to sway the government; altering operations and tactics. From the case studies, the scientific community and the larger environmental movement were the driving forces enabling change. The government could not ignore mounting scientific and scholarly evidence. As evidence mounted, the government altered its priming throughout the Vietnam War. Arguments from the scientific community carried more influence than did the larger population of napalm protesters. This represents another signal of populace tolerances. If relevant and legitimate, specialized sects of society, such as environmental science or economists, exert energy and resources to reach a community consensus on a weapon they are signaling. Agent Orange did not receive as much media coverage because of the fact that the government adjusted messaging and ultimately use of the weapon. Granted, this was a new weapon and the government initially did not understand the long-term ramifications on people or the environment. As more research and evidence became available, the scientific community forced the government to recognize Agent Orange was outside acceptable tolerances of society. This adjustment meant that Agent Orange failed to grow into a symbol of the larger conflict as firebombing and, more so, napalm did.

## Conclusion

As the historical evidence suggests, society broadcasts recognizable signals expressing their tolerance of weapons effects. The limit, or bracket, may shift as was seen with napalm and Agent Orange in the Vietnam War, or they may remain constant as seen with firebombing in WWII. Society is able to engage in discourse with the government through the media, acting as a moderator. Astute operational planners will be able to recognize the public's signals within this debate and identify if strategic leaders should adjust how they legitimize operational actions to the public, or if new means are required to achieve operational ends.

The two case studies identified five signals. The first, and most important, signal was an absent or lethargic government message in the face of a changing public dialogue. Evidenced by the evolving priming for firebombing during WWII, the military adjusted its message. At the beginning of the war firebombing was part of the overall strategic bombing campaign. As the war dragged on, the government then needed to further explain how firebombing specifically was a legitimate tactic. Finally, government priming adjusted by explaining that firebombing was a precursor for the ground invasion and victory argument. With napalm, the government maintained the message that it was a legitimate weapon throughout the entire conflict and, therefore, failed to fully address new public concerns.

Ignoring the changing narrative may permit a weapon to become a negative symbol of the conflict, another signal. The napalm case study demonstrated this with the sub-headlines and the slogans represented at the protests. This only occurred once the perceived weapons value reached a public consensus, encompassing citizens across political and social spectrums. While it was negative with napalm and Agent Orange, the firebombing of WWII proves that it can be a positive element, but it can shift.

This shifting is evident by the next signal, the amount of coverage and the juxtaposition of arguments within media outlets. The prominence of one argument, supportive or counter to the government messages, is a potential indicator of the media's perception of the more pervasive

argument. Identifying a shift is key. Even with today's increased media outlets and social media, the front-page and article placing litmus test can still be utilized. The advantage for modern planners is the ability to establish social media and web-based news and article filters, empowering one to assemble and organize legitimate sources to determine the pulse of operations and weapons use without scouring and reading every media source.

Sources such as professional and scholarly journals need to be included in planners' purview as well. In the Agent Orange case study, the scientific community proved that the most legitimate argument could sway policymakers and alter military operations. This case study also recognized that the public favored preserving the environment over destruction in a military conflict with limited objectives. Agent Orange demonstrated that when the government recognized and acknowledged valid public counter arguments it was able to avoid an extremely negative domestic struggle.

The ramifications of recognizing signals were evident in the two case studies. The government took the necessary steps and adjustments to address any concern with firebombing. With Agent Orange, the US military recognized that continued use of the defoliant would create detrimental conditions beyond its intent and the scope of responsibility. The government's failed adjustment to napalm contributed, in part, to the overall anti-Vietnam War movement. Did this impact the use of napalm in ongoing operations? No, but it led to the United Nations treaty, signed by US allies, banning napalm's use. The discourse shaped public opinion of the military and warfare for future conflicts.<sup>156</sup> By not recognizing society's signals being broadcast through the media, military planners risk losing the required domestic support of an operation and possibly removing weapons employment options for future operations. As Joseph Nye explained in his book, *Future of Power*, military planners must remember, "The evolution of public

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<sup>156</sup> Bernard D. Nossiter, "U.N. Members Sign Treaty on Napalm and Land Mines," *New York (NY) Times*, Apr 11, 1981.

diplomacy from one-way communications to a two-way dialogue model treats public as peer-to-peer co-creators of meaning and communication”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 108.

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