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AD-A180 210

AMERICAN NATIONAL WILL AND THE VIETNAM WAR

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEOFFREY G. PROSCH

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US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. A180210	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) American National Will and the Vietnam War		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Individual Essay
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC Geoffrey G. Prosch		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 23 March 1987
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 22
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) National will is the strategic link (Clausewitz calls it the "center of gravity") in the success of any war. Growing disillusionment of the American people led to a loss of national will and, ultimately, to the defeat of the United States in Vietnam. Destruction of the enemy's will to continue to fight is not a new strategy. This essay describes some of the causes of America's inability to mobilize the national will in support of the war: ever-changing aims, absence of a sound military strategy, lack of a declaration of war, failure to mobilize the reserves, unfair draft deferment policy, insuf-		

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

AMERICAN NATIONAL WILL AND THE VIETNAM WAR

An Individual Essay

by

Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey G. Prosch

Lieutenant Colonel Clayton Newell, IN
Project Adviser

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013-5050
23 March 1987

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Geoffrey G. Prosch, LTC, IN

TITLE: American National Will and the Vietnam War

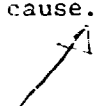
FORMAT: Individual Essay

DATE: 23 March 1987

PAGES: 20

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

➤ National will is the strategic link (Clausewitz calls it the "center of gravity") in the success of any war. Growing disillusionment of the American people led to a loss of national will and, ultimately, to the defeat of the United States in Vietnam. Destruction of the enemy's will to continue to fight is not a new strategy. This essay describes some of the causes of America's inability to mobilize the national will in support of the war: ever-changing aims, absence of a sound military strategy, lack of a declaration of war, failure to mobilize the reserves, unfair draft deferment policy, insufficient economic sacrifices, dishonesty and ineptitude of our national leaders, micromanagement by top leaders of tactical decisions, and a biased press. America lost the war not because of failure on the battlefield, but because we failed to sustain the national will of the people in support of our cause.



Sadly, I believe that apathy and disunity at home led to the betrayal of millions of Southeast Asians. The war that was won by the heavy bombings of North Vietnam in December 1972 was lost in the following months by a mood of disunity and by a weakness in the national character....

Jeremiah Denton
U.S. Senator¹

AMERICAN NATIONAL WILL AND THE VIETNAM WAR

The opening quotation by Admiral (later Senator) Jeremiah Denton, the senior U.S. prisoner of war in the Vietnam conflict, summarizes the thesis of this article: Growing disillusionment of the American people led to a loss of national will and, ultimately, to the defeat of the United States in Vietnam.

The importance of American popular support for the war, as well as world opinion, was clearly understood by our enemy, the North Vietnamese. They understood that American "public morale" would be our key strategic weak link, and its manipulation was an essential element of their strategy. In 1962 Ho Chi Minh, the North Vietnamese leader, stated during an interview at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi:

The Americans are stronger than the French. It might perhaps take another 10 years but our heroic compatriots...will defeat them in the end. We shall marshal world public opinion (emphasis added) against this unjust war....²

Destruction of the enemy's will to continue to fight is not a new strategy. Carl von Clausewitz, the preeminent military theorist, wrote

in 1832, "When we speak of destroying the enemy's forces: The moral element must also be considered.... The very faintest prospect of defeat might be enough to cause one side to yield."³ According to Vo Nguyen Giap, the senior North Vietnamese commander, the French lost their war in Indochina for the same reason. Their people simply lost the will to continue to fight.⁴

General Fred C. Weyand, former U.S. Army Chief of Staff, offered poignant testimony to the importance of Clausewitz's "moral" element:

The American Army really is a people's Army in the sense that it belongs to the American people who take a jealous and proprietary interest in its involvement. When the Army is committed, the American people are committed, when the American people lose their commitment, it is futile to try to keep the Army committed.⁵

This article describes some of the causes of America's inability to mobilize the national will in support of the war which doomed our military and political efforts to maintain freedom in South Vietnam. While all of the causes described in this article are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, they will be explained separately. The result of their collective effects was the collapse of U.S. national will and support for the American cause in the Vietnam War, and ultimately the first defeat for the nation.

One of the primary reasons American popular support for the war eventually eroded was the ever-changing aims of the war. Without a consensus concerning war aims, the whole legitimacy of the war effort was called into question. This problem of changing American goals in the war was reinforced by General Bruce Palmer, the deputy Commander of

U.S. Forces in Vietnam and later the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army.

In The 25-Year War, a detailed analysis of the French and American involvement in Vietnam, Palmer wrote:

The very heart of the basic problem posed by Vietnam was the failure of our political leaders to grasp why it was necessary to go to war. In the absence of that understanding, it was difficult, if not impossible, for our government to explain the war to the American people and get them directly and personally involved.... War must be perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the people and of the warriors entrusted to do the fighting.⁶

Ho Chi Minh, on the other hand, realized how public opinion was affected by perceptions of war aims. Ho clearly and repeatedly articulated the overriding objective of the war to his people: conquest of South Vietnam and reunification.⁷ In contrast, an examination of the U.S. official justification for our involvement in Indochina from 1949-67, conducted by the University of Nebraska, revealed 22 separate American rationales for our presence in Vietnam.⁸

A related reason for the loss of popular support for the war was the inability of the United States to develop a sound military strategy. This inability is not surprising since military strategy is "the art and science of employing armed forces...to secure policy objectives...."⁹ If policy objectives or war aims are uncertain or constantly changing, it is impossible to devise and articulate a coherent military strategy for their attainment. President Nixon offered a supporting view in the role of strategy and how its absence contributed to decaying national support for the war.

The leaders of the U.S. in the crucial years of the early and mid-1960's failed to come up with a strategy that would produce victory. Instead, first they undermined a strong regime [Diem], and then simply poured more and more U.S. troops and material into South Vietnam in an ineffective effort to shore up the weaker regimes that followed.¹⁰

Harry Summers, in his celebrated book On Strategy, offers a detailed analysis of the war and explains America's defeat due to a failure to adhere to the classic principles of war and the tenets of Clausewitz. According to Summers, while most tactical engagements in Vietnam were victories for the Americans and every U.S. campaign was successful, ultimately it was the absence of a national strategy that led to the disintegration of national will, capitulation, and loss of the war. This point is illustrated in a telling, personal anecdote which he recounts as follows:

'You know you never defeated us on the battlefield,' said the American Colonel in Hanoi in April 1975. The North Vietnamese Colonel pondered this remark a moment, 'That may be so,' he replied, 'but it is also irrelevant.'¹¹

American support for the war waned not only because of drifting war aims and the consequent absence of strategy, but also because the American people were never truly involved in the war. Their steadfast support was never secured or harnessed. This absence of the commitment of the citizenry was made manifest in four distinct ways: The lack of a declaration of war, our failure to mobilize the reserves, our policy of granting draft deferments, and finally, our attempt to prosecute the war without the economic sacrifices that a war entails.

Summers writes that a declaration of war is critical because it "is a clear statement of initial public support which focuses the nation's attention on the enemy," and makes the prosecution of the war a shared responsibility of both the government and the people.¹² Our founding fathers understood the importance of invoking the national will and had drawn the rules for doing so by including in our Constitution the words, "The Congress shall have Power to Declare War, to Raise and Support Armies, to Make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the Land and Naval Forces."¹³

Summers further noted that during the era of the Vietnamese War,

A formal declaration of war was seen as a useless piece of paper, in much the same light as many saw the marriage certificate. In the 1960's and early 1970's, there were many, especially among the trendy and sophisticated who saw marriage as an antiquated institution. By avoiding marriage, they thought they could avoid the trauma of divorce, just as some thought by avoiding a declaration of war, they could avoid the trauma of war. But thousands of years of human nature and human experience are not so easily changed.¹⁴

The second reason the individual involvement of the American people was never invoked was the reserves and national guard were never really employed.

According to Summers, as a consequence of our failure to mobilize the reserves, we failed also to mobilize the national will. The reserves are, in fact, our civilian warrior reserve--private citizens under arms--the clenched fist of the American people since the minutemen. In failing to commit the reserves to combat, America lost what Clausewitz called "the strength of the passions of a people mobilized for war."¹⁵

The third factor which contributed to the ability of the American people to absolve themselves of any involvement in the war was the procedures by which the draft was effected. The most salient aspect of our Vietnam draft policy was the granting of deferments for college students. This policy allowed the upper- and middle-class American youth, and by extension their parents, to buy their way out of the military and the war simply for the price of tuition.¹⁶

According to General William C. Westmoreland, the U.S. Commander in Vietnam during the crucial years, and later Chief of Staff of the Army, this draft policy contributed greatly to anti-war militancy on college campuses. The draft age Vietnam generation nurtured on "war stories" of World War II and Korea from their fathers and uncles felt

a sense of conscience as they sat out a war."¹⁷ To appease their consciences, and through the process psychologists call "rationalization," they convinced themselves that the war was immoral. This rationalization justified both their nonparticipation and their protest. But, in so rationalizing, they suffered guilt--sort of a psychological hernia. For many Vietnam draft deferees, the rupture still exists, unmelded, today.¹⁸

Finally, the American people were never involved in the war because they were not required to make the economic sacrifices, through increased taxes, which would have been necessary to prosecute fully the war and simultaneously maintain U.S. military strength to meet commitments in other areas of the world.

General Westmoreland credits President Kennedy with successfully arousing the will of the people "to pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."¹⁹ But, President Johnson's policy of guns and butter (i.e. the decision to pay the cost of prosecuting the Vietnam War and maintaining the Great Society) dictated a "limited" war.²⁰ Westmoreland and General Dave R. Palmer, in his book Summons of the Trumpet: U.S.-Vietnam in Perspective (cited by Summers as the best single volume source on the conduct of the Vietnam War), both criticize Johnson for failing to "level" with the American people about the extent and nature of the sacrifices required for a protracted, limited war of attrition. This failure resulted in the "credibility gap" and contributed to dwindling public support for the war.

Johnson's principal military advisor was Robert McNamara, who was largely responsible for developing and implementing U.S. strategy for the Vietnam War. McNamara developed a reputation in the Army Air Corps, at Ford Motor Company, and later at the Department of Defense for skillfully automating and "systemizing" bureaucracies.

Stanley Karnow, in his comprehensive book Vietnam--A History, takes McNamara to task:

McNamara had been a brilliant corporation executive who could scan a balance sheet with unerring speed and skill...But the statistics from Vietnam failed to convey an accurate picture of the problem, much less offer solutions. For the missing element in the "quantitative measurement" that guided McNamara and other U.S. policy makers was the qualitative dimension that could not easily be recorded. There was no way to calibrate the motivation of Viet Cong guerrillas. Nor could computers be programmed to describe the hopes and fears of Vietnamese peasants.²¹

Thus, national policy, as demonstrated by Congress' failure to pass a declaration of war, the President and Congress' failure to mobilize the reserve, the granting of draft deferments for college students, and the President's attempt to establish the Great Society while fighting the war, all absolved the American people of any involvement in the war or commitment to victory. It is not surprising that initial popular support for the war disintegrated. In fact, it may be remarkable that it lasted as long as it did.

President Richard M. Nixon identified another cause of the disintegration of national will and popular support for the war--the dishonesty of our civilian and military leaders. According to Nixon,

They misled the public by insisting we were winning the war and thereby prepared the way for defeatism and demagoguery later on. The American people could not be expected to continue indefinitely to support a war in which they were told victory was around the corner, but which required greater and greater effort without any obvious signs of improvement.²²

Nixon added that it was not only the dishonesty of our national leaders, but also their ineptitude which contributed to the decay of national will and the willingness of the American people to support the war. In his view,

More nuclear power in our arsenal would not have saved Vietnam. More U.S. conventional forces would not have saved Vietnam. Vietnam was lost, not because of a lack of power, but because of a failure of skill and determination at using power. These failures caused a breach in public trust and led to a collapse of our national will.²³

Arthur T. Hadley, in his important critique of America's armed forces, The Straw Giant, illustrates the incompetence of top civilian and military leaders of the Vietnam era in another important respect, the preoccupation with the specifics of combat at the tactical level while ignoring the larger questions of the war. He noted that while "neglecting the thorough consideration of basic war aims and issues, the White House and Pentagon continued to be bogged down in details that should have been left to the field commanders."²⁴ Of course this problem is related to a previously described phenomenon--American war aims were never clearly articulated because the leaders who should have done so were too ineffectual or too busy with minutia to undertake the truly important tasks. The result, again, was the gradual erosion of public trust of our leaders and the decay of national will.

The final factor which had a significant effect on national will and which played a crucial role in its disintegration was the press. According to President Nixon, the press abrogated its obligation to offer unbiased and objective reporting. Instead, the press became a powerful element in the manipulation of public will. According to Nixon:

In retrospect, it is remarkable that the public continued to support our efforts in Vietnam to the extent that it did for as long as it did. As Newsweek columnist Kenneth Crawford observed, this was the first war in our history during which our media were more friendly to our enemies than to our allies. American and South Vietnamese victories, such as the smashing of the Tet Offensive in 1968, were portrayed as defeats. The U.S., whose only intent was to help South Vietnam defend itself, was condemned as an aggressor. The Soviet-supported North Vietnamese were hailed as liberators.²⁵

Television also played a unique role in shaping American perceptions of the war and in building or destroying consensus for its conduct. Pulitzer Prize winning Journalist David Halberstam, who covered the Vietnam War for the New York Times, described the vital importance of television. He wrote:

Television speeded everything up. It was simple and it simplified. It was deeply dramatic, and it reached a huge new national audience. Television could do certain things powerfully, effectively, and dramatically, and with the total truth. And it could just as easily obscure the truth, and neglect serious gray areas of public policy.... Television heightened the interest in the war in Vietnam, heightened for the first time the enthusiasm for it, probably quickened its demise, and left people saturated, long before the war was in fact over; it was over in people's minds while it was still unfinished upon the battlefield.²⁶

On the other hand, Summers takes a somewhat different view of the role of the press and the locus of responsibility for its sometimes distorted reporting. According to Summers, in the battle for world opinion, the U.S. Government was simply not as skillful as the North Vietnamese in orchestrating the media and world opinion. In the final analysis, he does not blame the press for the failure of American will, but rather the horror of war that, through the media, so influenced the American people.²⁷

As time passes following the May 1, 1975 South Vietnamese surrender--after an overwhelming North Vietnamese conventional combined arms attack--would-be historians continue to analyze the war, write their books, and speculate in their final chapters on the "larger lessons" of the Vietnam War. It has been almost 13 years now since Congress passed the War Powers

Resolution denying Presidents Nixon and Ford the means with which to enforce the Paris Accords of January 1973, the effect of which was to abandon the South Vietnamese to dwindling supplies and to face a well-supplied, Soviet-supported North Vietnamese Army. At the same time American ground advisers were withdrawn and air support was terminated. Significantly, the first invaders to enter the compound of the South Vietnamese Presidential Palace were not barefoot guerrillas, toting World War II carbines, but instead, an NVA tank crew with a large main gun. In fact, General Giap's account of the final North Vietnamese offensive in 1975 reads not like the recounting of an insurgency, but instead, like a Leavenworth practical exercise in mid- to high-intensity operations.²⁸

In retrospect, close analysis of a wide variety of sources which purport to explain the reasons for the United States failure in Vietnam, reveals a consistent theme which echoes and reechoes in each source. Americans lost the war not because of failure on the battlefield, but because we failed to sustain the national will of the people in support of our cause.

Epilogue

President Reagan recently got in trouble with the American people (Summers' "remarkable trinity" of war: People, Army, government, which must be in harmony for success) for not listening to his top cabinet advisors, concerning sale of weapons to Iran--a state supported sponsor of terrorism. In WWII, General Joseph (Vinegar Joe) Stilwell made a practice of surrounding himself with talented people and considering their advice because "the higher the monkey climbs the flag pole, the

more he shows his ass."²⁹ Marine Corps Commandant David Shoup, SACEUR Lauris Norstad, Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway, and General Douglas MacArthur were among prominent former military leaders who strongly advised Secretary McNamara and President Johnson against involvement in a protracted, limited land war in Vietnam. The "best and the brightest" people in the Department of Defense, to include our Army General officers, remained silent. Some, such as McNamara, have refrained from commenting publicly about the Vietnam War since their departure from government service. McNamara's recent book, Blundering Into Disaster is not an explanation of his oversight of the deployment and gradual buildup of American forces in Vietnam, but rather guidance on how America can survive the first century of the nuclear age. Some of our top Vietnam era Army General officers (with pensions secure) are now writing books challenging our involvement in Vietnam. This is a severe indictment of our Army's top leadership during the Vietnam War and history will not be kind to them.

Compare their performance with that of Army Chief of Staff MacArthur when the Bureau of the Budget announced that War Department appropriations would be reduced \$80 million. MacArthur asked for a conference with FDR. Roosevelt was adamant: "Funds for the regular army would be cut 51% and funds for the reserves and National Guard would be reduced."³⁰

These were very tough times for our Army: some twenty-five thousand penniless WWI veterans, many disabled, and their families were encamped in Washington, D.C. petitioning the government for a cash bonus, the Army strength had been reduced to less than 130,000, only twelve postwar tanks were in service; the only officer authorized a sedan was the Chief

of Staff; the West Point Class of 1919 had sixteen years in grade as Lieutenants; and Fortune magazine in 1935 rated the US Army eighteenth in strength in the world (behind Belgium and ahead of Greece).³¹

MacArthur's reaction to Roosevelt in the oval office was dramatic; his voice trembling with outrage, he said:

When we lose the next war, and an American boy with an enemy bayonet through his belly and an enemy boot on his dying throat spits out his last curse, I want the name not to be MacArthur, but Roosevelt. You have my resignation as Chief of Staff.³²

MacArthur turned toward the door, but before he could leave Roosevelt said quietly, "Don't be foolish, Douglas; you and the budget people can get together on this and work something out." Outside Secretary of War Dern said jubilantly, "General you've saved the Army." MacArthur vomited on the steps of the White House after the ordeal.³³ None of the 1960's generals made a stand like MacArthur. Today with severe Army budget cuts and an officer reduction in force looming (while the Navy's 600-ship program is protected with an increase in Navy officer strength) do we have any Army leaders prepared to make a stand?

Strengthening the US Army's ability in the operational art of war is an admirable goal. Senator Gary Hart, Robert S. McNamara and the many other military reformers' focus on strengthening the operational level of war is not misplaced--it is insufficient. Hart deliberately ignores strategy in favor of improved operational art and tactics in his recent book America Can Win, claiming that strategy changes too frequently in today's politics of shuttle diplomacy (does this sound familiar to our lack of a central focus and strategy in IndoChina?).

Having plenty of Rommels, or Pattons, or Westmorelands at one's disposal counts little in the absence of a Bismark, a George Marshall, or a U. S. Grant. For it is the latter types who provide a clear appreciation not just for the operationally desirable but for the strategically possible.³⁴

The tag over the left pocket of our battle dress uniform jacket reads U.S. Army. The U.S. means us--all of us as a people. When America is aroused, historically, we turn to the Army. The hard lesson that we continue to relearn is:

You may fly over a land forever, you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it, and wipe it clean of life--but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground the way the Roman legions did by putting your young men in the mud.³⁵

It is our duty as professional Army officers to insure that when our civilian leaders, normally still the "best and the brightest" in this country, develop a strategy to fight and win the next war, that it is a strategy that secures the steadfast support of our people.³⁶

ENDNOTES

1. Denton, Jeremiah A. When Hell Was in Session. Traditional Press, 1982, p. 181.
2. Ho Chi Minh. Ho Chi Minh On Revolution--Selected Writings 1920-1966. Bernard B. Fall (Ed.), Praeger Publishers, 1967, p. 355.
3. Clausewitz, Carl von. On War. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, (Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret), 1976. Cited in Summers, Harry. On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnamese War. Presidio Press, 1982, pp. 18-19.
4. Giap, Vo Nguyen. How We Won the War. Recon Publications, 1976, p. 10.
5. Cited in Summers, Op. cit., p. 11.
6. Palmer, Bruce. The 25-Year War: America's Role in Vietnam. The University Press of Kentucky, 1984, p. 97.
7. Ho Chi Minh, Op. cit., p. 354.
8. Cited in Summers, Op. cit., p. 98.
9. Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5, Operations. Washington, D.C., 1986, p. 9.
10. Nixon, Richard M. The Real War. Warner Books, 1980, p. 119. The subject of a winning strategy in Indochina is a great debate topic and fertile grounds for another article. Richard Nixon, in his most recent book, No More Vietnams, 1985, and General Bruce Palmer, Jr. provide insight into our fundamentally flawed strategy in Indochina. They explain how President Eisenhower believed that Laos was the key domino in Southeast Asia. Defending Laos was the major specific action Eisenhower urged on President-elect Kennedy when they met in January 1961. Eisenhower told Kennedy that an Indochina regional strategy was needed and it must include control of Laos. If Laos were to fall into communist hands, Eisenhower said we would have to "write off all of Indochina." Unlike the American administrations after Eisenhower, Ho viewed all of Indochina not as four separate countries, but as one strategic theater. In 1962 in Geneva, fourteen countries signed a treaty granting Laos neutral status and pledging to withdraw their military forces. All countries complied except North Vietnam who never removed its 7,000-man contingent left to guard the Ho Chi Minh Trail. By 1970, North Vietnam had stationed almost 70,000 troops in Laos and had transported over 500,000 troops via the Laos road networks into South Vietnam. Today Vietnam still has

significant forces in Laos. The Geneva agreement in 1952 to abandon Laos violated President Eisenhower's proposed theater strategy and paved the way for the communist victory in South Vietnam in 1975. General Bruce Palmer predicts that we could have achieved a similar status quo enjoyed in South Korea today if early in the Vietnam War we introduced a multinational peacekeeping force with Divisions from SEATO (Korea, Australia, U.S.) stretching from the Vietnam DMZ through Laos to Thailand. Their mission would have been to prevent North Vietnamese insurgency and to enforce the 1962 Geneva accords. This strategy would have been perceived as legitimate by the U.S. people, it could have produced a victory in South Vietnam, and it could have preserved the friendly governments in Laos and Cambodia.

11. Summers, Op. cit., p. 1.

12. Ibid., p. 21.

13. Constitution of the United States, Article I, Section 8.

14. Summers, Op. cit., p. 17.

15. Clausewitz, Op. cit.

16. Hadley, Arthur T. The Straw Giant: Triumph and Failure: America's Armed Forces, Random House, New York, 1985, p. 280.

17. Westmoreland, William C. A Soldier Reports. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976, p. 297.

18. The fact that many of our current congressional and future executive leaders sat out the war may continue to have a subtle effect on U.S. foreign policy. The 1984 and 1988 Presidential aspirant Gary Hart, for example, spent ten years as a "professional" college student during the draft era--including three years of study at the Yale Divinity School. Although he earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree, he opted not to be ordained. Upon completion of his ten-year college stint, he had passed through the window of eligibility for the draft and selected other alternatives of service as an attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice and as Presidential Campaign Chairman for Senator George McGovern. He later may have felt some of Westmoreland's "twinges of conscience"--causing him in 1980 to accept a commission as a LT J.G. (inactive) in the U.S. Navy Reserve and in 1981 to create and co-chair the Congressional Military Caucus. In his recent book, America Can Win, he advocates a strong U.S. conventional military force and he champions an aggressive "maneuver warfare" strategy (a la Air, Land, Battle). (Source: 1986 Congressional Staff Directory).

19. Kennedy, John F., cited in Westmoreland, Op. cit., p. 411. On the eve of Kennedy's famous inauguration speech in January 1961, Premier Nikita Krushchev announced the new Soviet strategy of "wars of national liberation"--a low-cost effort using surrogate forces in order to avoid direct confrontation with the United States. Nixon claims that this was in fact a declaration of war and that we are now fighting a "real war." Laos, Cambodia, and Mozambique in 1975; Angola in 1976; Ethiopia in 1977; South Yemen in 1978; and Nicaragua in 1979 have been brought under Marxist communist domination and within the Soviet sphere of influence--over 100 million people. In his October 2, 1985 speech before the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, Secretary of State George Shultz put it all into perspective:

We know now that the scope of President Kennedy's commitment was too broad, even though it reflected a keen understanding of the relevance of our ideals to our foreign policy. More recently, another administration took the position that our fear of communism was inordinate and emphasized that there were severe limits to America's ability or right to influence world events. I believe this was a council of despair, a sign that we had lost faith in ourselves and in our values. Somewhere between these two poles lies the natural and sensible scope of American foreign policy.

20. During a 5 February 1987 interview at Carlisle Barracks, PA, General Westmoreland was critical of our "fighting the war on the cheap"--when referring to Secretary of Defense McNamara's attitude. Westmoreland further cited how McNamara had emphasized fiscal restraint in the war by explaining "at the end of the war we do not want to accumulate large quantities of surplus equipment as we had done in World War II." For more information on how McNamara and the "whiz kids" introduced planning, programing, and budgeting to the U.S. Army Air Corps and Ford Motor Company, see Chapter 11, The Reckoning, by David Halberstam.

21. Karnow, Stanley. Vietnam--A History. The Viking Press, 1983, p. 254.

22. Nixon, Op. cit., p. 119. In a March 1987 letter, General Westmoreland responds:

"On page 8 you quote former President Richard Nixon alledging that civilian and military leaders were guilty of 'dishonesty'. I know of no military leader who should be painted with that brush. As for myself, I did on several occasions say publicly that we were making progress which we were.

Never did I, or any military man that I can recall, forecast victory in a military sense.

"'Winning the War' must be put in the context of our national objective which was not to conquer North Vietnam but to defeat enemy troops in South Vietnam, bring the enemy to the conference table and hopefully bring about a divided Vietnam with South Vietnam maintaining a non-communist government. Note bottom of Page 228, A Soldier Reports. I fear that Mr. Nixon has been influenced by not what military officers said but the interpretation by the media of what they said."

23. Ibid.
24. Hadley, Op. cit., p. 172.
25. Nixon, Op. cit., p. 115.
26. Halberstam, David. The Powers That Be. Alfred A. Knopf, 1979, p. 407. Did mass media heighten the guilt already experienced by draft evaders?
27. Summers, Op. cit., p. 39.
28. Giap, Op. cit., pp. 24-54.
29. Tuchman, Barbara W., Stilwell and the American Experience in China, p. 419.
30. Manchester, William, American Caesar, p. 154.
31. Coffman, Edward M. and Peter F. Hersly, "The American Regular Army Officer Corps Between the World Wars," pp. 1-3.
32. Manchester, Op. cit., p. 154.
33. Ibid., p. 155.
34. Record, Jeffrey, "Operational Brilliance, Strategic Incompetence: The Military Reformer and the German Model," p. 5.
35. Fehrenbach, T. R., This Kind of War, p. 427.
36. Secretary Weinberger in his November 1984 Press Club speech indicated before we again send our forces out to fight:

There must be some reasonable assurance that we will have the support of the people and their elected representatives in Congress. We cannot fight a battle with Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas, or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking our troops not to win but just to be there.

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